The Past as Resource in the Turkic Speaking World

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Ildikó Bellér-Hann

Introduction:
The Past as Resource in the Turkic Speaking World

Ildikó Bellér-Hann

Memory studies have enjoyed enormous popularity over the last decade or so, during which important theoretical advances have been supplemented by countless empirical case studies. The purpose of this volume is not to recycle or to replicate what has been said before but to draw attention to the importance of memory, and by extension to the ways in which history has been perceived and instrumentalised, within the Turkic speaking world. In doing so, we wish to contribute to attempts to bring Turkic Studies in line with ongoing debates and new research perspectives in related academic disciplines.[1] The aim is to fill a gap in the literature on Turkic Studies, where issues of memory and strategies of dealing with the past have been hitherto neglected.

The Turkic Speaking World

Let us begin by clarifying the notion 'Turkic speaking world', since for some readers the concept itself may appear questionable if not downright dubious. The Turkic speaking world has been the focus of Turkic Studies (also known as Turcology) ever since the origins of the discipline in the late nineteenth century. Early studies comprised efforts to decipher the Turkic runic inscriptions and to map, describe and classify the Turkic languages and their dialects as well as to understand their history. Linguistic studies almost inevitably entailed an interest in the literatures of Turkic speaking groups, as well as their oral traditions and ethnography.

In later decades Turkic or Turkish Studies continued to preserve the basic philological and literary orientation of the formative period, but the disciplinary boundaries have been modified at many teaching and research institutions, allowing for broad programs that include Ottoman and Central Asian history, literatures and cultures. No consensus has yet been reached concerning the definition of what constitutes the discipline. Uncertainties continue to be perpetuated by the partial inclusion of Turkic Studies under labels such as Middle Eastern Studies, Oriental Studies, Islamic Studies, etc., labels, which are also conspicuous

1 This volume has emerged from a panel held at the 29th Conference of German Orientalists in Halle/ Saale, Germany, in October 2004. Two of the original participants published their papers elsewhere, and the papers of Eiji Miyazawa and H. Neşe Özgen were commissioned for this volume.

in the titles of academic journals. The waters are further muddied by the fact that the Turkic speaking groups of the Caucasus and Central Asia are sometimes included in the definition, while at other times the study of modern Turkey and its historical predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, is taken to exhaust the field.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Turkey failed to establish itself as the main point of cultural, economic and political orientation for those newly independent states of Central Asia in which the titular majority is held by Turkic speakers. In line with geo-political realities as well as with established historical traditions, these states have continued to look to Moscow's guidance. However, cultural contacts and exchanges have been established and strengthened, facilitated both by linguistic relatedness and by shared religion. Turkic speaking communities have often made conscious efforts to establish economic, religious, scholarly and other contacts with each other as well as beyond the perceived linguistic boundaries, and in an increasingly globalised world links have become livelier than ever before. Such contacts take place not only at the level of international politics, or at official and semi-official institutional levels, but also through multitudinous individual initiatives. Turkic speaking Muslims of the former Soviet Republics and from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China nowadays regularly take part in the pilgrimage to Mecca; Turkish businessmen and their goods are increasingly present in Central Asian markets; and, following the demise of the Soviet Union, the earlier influx of Central Asian refugees to Turkey has been followed by new waves of entrepreneurs and students. The re-invigoration of pre-socialist cultural contacts between these regions and the emergence of new forms of exchange strengthen the academic case for a broadly conceived discipline of Turkic Studies, and also the case for expanding beyond the narrow confines of descriptive philology. We do not mean to suggest that the Turkic speaking world should be perceived and preserved as an isolated unit of enquiry; rather, it should receive the recognition it currently deserves as a classificatory category, which will be modified in future as a result of new trends, both in scholarship and in developing processes of globalization.

The undeniable linguistic, cultural-geographical and historical connections are to some extent reflected in the fact that a number of scholars trained in the traditional mould of Turkic Studies moved on to study other Turkic languages and cultures after first mastering modern Turkish. The new political constellation, which has emerged over the last fifteen years, has been favourable for scholars, enabling many who started their careers researching in one geographical area of the Turkic speaking world to diversify into other regions and to develop a comparative perspective.

Efforts to promote area studies such as Turkic Studies may appear futile at a time when socio-cultural anthropology, a large discipline defining itself through its research methods rather than through real or imagined geographical, political

or linguistic criteria, is exerting a strong influence throughout the social sciences and humanities. It must be emphasised that it is not our purpose to essentialise the Turkic speaking world. But we do believe that sticking to the convention-sanctioned disciplinary label Turkic Studies/ Turcology has a number of benefits and is conducive to the introduction of wider scholarly perspectives from related disciplines, which define themselves on a geo-political, linguistic or historical basis. The broad definition of Turkic Studies provides a framework for understanding the multi-faceted interaction and exchanges between Turkic speaking groups, as well as for comparative studies that generally have little to do with the genetic relationship between languages; rather, geographical and ecological factors, a history of colonialism, forms of nomadic pastoralism and interaction with sedentary neighbours in the course of history, religion, migration patterns, deportation, contacts with the outside world, styles in policy-making, etc. are likely to be the major variables in comparative analysis.

The traditionally narrow self-definition of Turkic Studies meant that it remained completely isolated for many decades from social science studies of Turkic speaking groups. These were pioneered by the British anthropologist Paul Stirling who conducted the first rigorous empirical study of a village in Central Anatolia in 1949-1950. From the 1960s onward anthropological and sociological studies in and about Turkey multiplied, but the rest of the Turkic speaking world remained by and large a closed world for the international community of social scientists. During this period Soviet and Chinese (in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) scholarship addressed specific aspects of local minority cultures, focusing particularly on those details, which traditionally constituted the core of the philological enterprise: language, literature and perhaps folklore. For a number of reasons this trend is continuing in the post-socialist period: custom and inertia in the academic world is one factor; the attractions of these subjects for the prevailing nationalist discourses is another; under repressive regimes it is generally more prudent to study folklore than to study the political role of religion, economic inequalities or the unequal distribution of power.[2]

It follows from the above discussion that the Turkic speaking world must be approached as a contingent construct which has emerged in the course of history – just like most other disciplinary classifications. While it cannot be presented as a continuous geographical area, geographical continuities are often salient. The historical continuities are plentiful, but so are the moments of rupture. One may of course question the homogeneity implied by the term, since a great majority of Turkic speakers are not monolingual. Many speak a Turkic language as a first language and another (Russian, Chinese, Tajik, German, Dutch or French, or

[2] In recent years some excellent studies dealing with the social history of the Soviet Union have been published, some also paying attention to Turkic groups (Fitzpatrick 1996, 1999; Martin 2001; Michaels 2003).

another Turkic language) as a second language, or are truly bilingual. Conversely, speakers of non-Turkic languages have been incorporated and thoroughly integrated with Turkic speaking majorities. The Turkic speaking world reveals itself as a complex and diverse space in which various groups assert their identity through manipulation, subversion or promotion of selected elements of past experience. The papers in this volume demonstrate how the past can serve as a resource to create or perpetuate group cohesion.

A further benefit from retaining Turkic Studies to denote a large unit of enquiry is that it facilitates the de-centring thrust of post-colonialism, especially with regard to the Caucasus and Central Asia. Moreover, the area-studies approach has tended to encourage interdisciplinary perspectives, and to give greater voice to non-European societies, to subalterns, to the non–elites, to marginal groups, and to persons whose stories might at first sight appear unimportant or peripheral, or even muted. Local narratives, often competing with each other, the stories of more or less marginal, recognised or tacitly recognised ethnic, religious or professional groups and the contested voices within one and the same group can all become audible and important, and so can one single individual's account of his/her experience of history. The efforts of local scholars and artisans to mobilise selected symbols of the past may be compared with the orchestrated efforts of a new state to mobilise the symbols of the past in self-legitimization. Multiple, parallel and competing voices which may at first appear irreconcilable may complement each other in revealing lived history, showing individuals, groups and subgroups in the process of promoting their understanding of history as well as their sense of social justice.

In short, the frame of Turkic Studies allows us to combine an interest in elites with the study of ordinary people, and ultimately to accommodate all those voices which have hitherto been neglected, ignored or overlooked as trivial, unimportant or, in some cases, even as non-existent.

The past as resource

Scholarly interest in the field of memory has ranged from psychoanalysis to archaeology and the history of art, but it has been most intense at the broad interface between the humanities and social science studies (Antze and Lambek 1996; J. Assmann 1992; A. Assmann 1999; Boyarin 1994; Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1980 [1950]; Huyssen, 2003; Pine, Kaneff and Haukanes 2004; Ricoeur 2000; Watson 1994, Welzer 2001). In public discourse memory has been 'invoked to heal, to blame, to legitimate. It has become a major idiom in the construction of identity, both individual and collective, and a site of struggle as well as identification' (Antze and Lambek 1996: vii). It also reveals and hides; the past and the present are connected through simultaneous appropriation and distancing, recollection and forgetting. As a means through which people organise their past and

construct their present it is always historically situated, which explains why there is a dialectical relationship between memory and history (Nora 1989: 9).

One of the central tenets of memory studies is contextualization: one needs to ask how, by whom and for what purpose memory is put to use (Zemon Davis and Starn 1989). Memory can be, and often is, instrumentalised to achieve very different ends; it may be used to support or to question claims concerning the distribution of power, or the drawing of boundaries to ensure inclusion or exclusion. It has the power to make the absent and the distant present; it can be a source of legitimising power, prestige or historical privileges, of perpetuating, inventing and denying traditions, but it can equally serve as a locus of resistance. It underpins and shapes identities of persons, groups and even states, and in turn it is subject to intentional or unintentional modifications, selection and distortion. It comes as no surprise that it is intimately connected to the notions of morality and accountability (Antze and Lambek 1996). The factors shaping and influencing memory range from individual narrative strategies, through myths and religious orientations to secular ideologies. Memory is something we can use but also lose over time, in other words, memory itself is subject to historical change (Zemon Davis and Starn 1989: 2). Memory studies have contrasted (and connected) individual and collective memory (Halbwachs 1980 [1950]), cultural and communicative memory (Assmann 1992), while Connerton's tripartite classification distinguishes personal, cognitive and habit-memories (Connerton 1989), but the socially constructed nature of memory and its present orientation are generally recognised by most authors. Nora has pinpointed specific *lieux de mémoires*, which can range from commemorative rites, oral narratives, memoirs and diaries to forms of visual representation that straddle the boundary between memory and history (Nora 1989: 23). Memory is transmitted through narratives which typically lay claims to truth, and some authors define memory as narrative (Antze and Lambek 1996: xiv). Such narratives may include anything from personal reminiscences to lineage genealogies, death rituals, or the official legitimating remembrance of the state. Literary works may also be understood as expressions and transmitters of social memory.

The relationship between history and memory has often been discussed in terms of an opposition, albeit a negotiable one. In contrast to earlier dichotomies which had distinguished between people with and without histories (*Kulturvölker* and *Naturvölker*), between 'hot' and 'cold' societies, Marxist insights and post-modern endeavours have pointed out that official history tends to represent the interests of hegemonic groups (Pine et al. 2004: 8). While recorded, 'official' histories often pay insufficient attention to the unequal distribution of power and insist on hegemonic discourses, memory studies have allowed for competing versions of history, which uncover counter- and subversive narratives and give voice to views, which have previously remained marginalised, unrecognised or even muted. States, but also smaller social units such as descent groups, occupa-

tional or political factions, typically promote their own version of history. In imperial China one of the first acts of each new dynasty was to produce its own dynastic annals in order to legitimise the hegemony of the new rulers; the way in which history was rewritten by the totalitarian states of the 20th century was basically the same, but similar processes may be replicated with the transmission of oral tradition, the difference being merely of an institutional nature (Zemon Davis and Starn 1989: 2). While official history tends to insist on a chronological account of events, memory's chronological accuracy is often deficient: it recalls events in fragmentary ways, jumps to and fro in time, evokes impressions, sounds, visions, and emotions and interprets events through the lens of group interests in order to promote identity claims. Introducing local memories into history enriches our understanding of the diverse and contested nature of lived history. Arguably, it is contested memories that can save history from becoming another type of fiction (Zemon Davis and Starn 1989: 4). It may, nevertheless, be useful to differentiate between dominant discourses imposed by state ideology or scholarship, alternative or competing narratives and silences. The discussions around these themes continue unabated, and it is impossible to summarise them all here. In choosing to focus on the past as a resource, in this volume we have followed the present trend to blur the boundaries between the two categories by exploring the grey zone in between.

It is accepted wisdom that remembering takes place as a basic contrast to forgetting, but like most dichotomies this one too deserves closer scrutiny. Forgetting is not merely an alternative way of implicit remembering (Pine et al. 2004: 1). In the production of history it is influenced by a number of forces, motivations and purposes, ranging from state prohibition through fear of retribution, shame and legitimation of power to issues of resource entitlement. Often these considerations become tools of exclusion and inclusion. It is through selective remembering and forgetting that social relationships are created, perpetuated or denied; remembering and the interpretation of what is remembered thus can become important tools of social control.

Like memory studies, oral history has its intellectual and methodological roots in European traditions, and many studies continue to take their inspiration from European history. But research into the art of producing and transmitting oral narratives has also been conducted among people who did not produce their own written histories before the establishment of colonial administration. Such research perspectives have so far not been employed widely in Turkic Studies. The reasons are diverse. Turkic speaking groups have had a long history of literacy. Those, which came under the influence of Russia and China have been included in the history writing of the imperial power. Those that have come under the influence of Islam have inevitably taken over elements of the rich literate tradition of the Islamic world. The associations of Turkic groups with multiple centres of literacy have perhaps hindered recognition of the importance of

memory transmitted outside the officially institutionalised channels.[3] Political isolation and inaccessibility and the lasting hegemony of totalitarian states, which insisted on promoting their own version of history have impeded the introduction of the alternative perspectives that we develop in this volume. Turkey itself has certainly gone through important changes in this respect. The new wave of democratization, which began in the 1980s has opened up countless new debates and increasingly allowed for research into unofficial interpretations. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the liberalization of the economy in China have not yet had a comparable impact in terms of liberalizing the politics of the past, but these changes have certainly opened up the way for more contact with intellectual currents abroad, and there are good grounds for optimism here as well.

The Papers

Implicitly or explicitly, the eight papers in this volume all address the question of how remembering and forgetting are used by groups and individuals to organise their pasts. All are concerned with the ways in which different versions of history are mobilised as a resource for understanding or legitimising the present or the future. As noted above, these approaches have rarely been applied to the study of Turkic speaking communities. With few exceptions, anthropological studies in Turkey have tended to focus on contemporary societies, while modern western scholarship has only recently begun to pay attention to other Turkic-speaking groups in the former Soviet Union, China and Europe. In post-Soviet societies political upheavals have caused dramatic changes in social relations at all levels, and scholarly attention has concentrated on analyzing post-socialist transformation. In modern discourses considering the past, the socialist period is frequently mentioned but rarely explored in detail (Watson 1994). At the same time a number of excellent historical studies have been published exploring aspects of social organization and social relations during the Soviet period, but these rarely touch upon the post-Soviet period (Michaels 2003; Fitzpatrick 1996, 1999). The main gap in the existing literatures, for both the Turkic speaking countries of Central Asia and other parts of the post-socialist world, is how past and present are linked through personal reminiscences, through the impact of past experiences on evaluating, interpreting and understanding the present and projecting the future, and through the manipulation or mobilization of received traditions to convey novel messages or construct new ideologies. It goes without saying that the perspective of the historian can be fruitfully complemented by approaches from other disciplines.

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[3] The oral epics of Central Asian Turkic groups are a notable exception; but these have rarely been considered to have historical value of any sort.

The papers cover a large geographical area from the Aegean to Siberia and a multiplicity of topics, and they employ a variety of methods. Yet they are held together by much more than the fact they are case studies taken from Turkic speaking groups or states in which the titular group is Turkic speaking (while explicitly or implicitly drawing attention to the internal diversity of these apparently homogenous entities). The central focus of almost all papers is the utilization of the past for the construction of identity, be this national, ethnic, religious, professional or individual (as in the contributions of Friederich and Neyzi). In one way or another, all papers take the contemporary situation as a baseline, and most authors draw on materials based on the first hand knowledge and experience of the people and places they describe. Past and present can of course be linked in many different ways, but there is an almost common concern with *instrumentalisation* as a result of selective remembering or forgetting, whether by groups or by individuals.

The four papers dealing with Turkey focus on events and groups which highlight the historical and contemporary ethnic, religious and linguistic heterogeneity of Anatolia (Miyazawa, Kehl-Bodrogi, Neyzi, Özgen). The anthropologist Kehl-Bodrogi, whose extensive knowledge of the Alevis is based on her long term fieldwork in Turkey and Europe and familiarity with Alevi discourses looks at the symbolic importance of the myth of Kerbela for the Alevis in reinforcing their communal cohesion and legitimising their political claims *vis-à-vis* the state and the majority. Mass migration into the cities and adaptation to an urban lifestyle entailed the collapse of traditional institutions and the interruption of the traditional transmission of religious knowledge. By the 1970s religion had lost much of its previous significance in the formation of Alevi identity. In the 1980s a religious revitalization followed. Kehl-Bodrogi considers the events in Sivas in 1993 as a watershed in Alevi interpretations of the myth of Kerbela. Formerly they had drawn a parallel between Kerbela and their own fight for a proletarian revolution, but after Sivas, Hüseyin's martyrdom served as a symbol of the Alevis' struggle for the interests of their own community. Alevi theorists' discourses on their community's history reveal a multiplicity of interpretations, and their vision of contemporary issues and future priorities requires careful selection.

Özgen's contribution takes as a point of departure a well-documented, specific historical event, the "33 Bullets Incident" of 1943, which involved the murder of thirty-three Kurdish villagers accused of smuggling in Van-Özalp. Using the insights of the "sociology of border" and Cultural Studies, she examines various interpretations of an event that has long been controversial in Turkish political history. Going beyond these, Özgen uses the techniques of oral history, relying on the analysis of in-depth interviews with key persons as well as on written documents, to uncover subaltern narratives that reveal the heterogeneity of the tribal structure and show how the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion shift with the changing political climate. The case study also demonstrates how mem-

ory selectivity is mobilised by people in border regions to establish their relations with the state.

Although the papers of Kehl-Bodrogi and Özgen have been written from different academic perspectives and deal with very different topics, both are concerned with the construction of group identity through diverse and highly contested reinterpretations of the past, which change over time. Like Özgen and Kehl-Bodrogi, Miyazawa too is concerned with the role of the past in identity construction among a non-majority group within the Turkish nation state. He has carried out fieldwork among the Circassians in Turkey and, using the evidence of published intellectual discourses as well as oral history, considers how three versions of local history are put forward by different social groups. The intellectuals' version of history is embedded into Turkish national ideology and is thus in line with the homogenizing tendencies of the modernists' project. Among locals the only meaningful status difference was between descendants of former nobles (*werkhs*) and descendants of former slaves. The former group claimed to have the only authentic version of local history, and denied slave descendants any knowledge of history whatsoever. By conjuring up an imaginary class struggle and emphasising specific historical events, the descendants of the *werkhs* produced a coherent narrative, which explained their own economic demise and the ascendance of the ex-slaves. Their exaggerated binary representation masked the economic heterogeneity within these groups. In spite of the stated ignorance of history among slave descendants, Miyazawa has managed to elicit numerous details of the ex-slaves' versions of history, which emphasise a local versus outsider dichotomy in order to obscure their own low social origins. Unlike the descendants of the *werkh* descendants, they never presented themselves as a homogeneous community; rather, material differences determined the degree to which they appealed to the past as a resource.

Like Miyazawa and Özgen, Neyzi also relies on the methods of oral tradition. But in contrast to the previous papers, all engaged with issues of collective memory in 20th century Turkish history, Neyzi considers the burning of Izmir in the life history of one elderly informant from a local noble family. She begins by setting out official Turkish and Greek discourses as a background against which she projects Gülfem Iren's reminiscences. These fluctuate between two narratives, the Turkish national narrative on the one hand and on the other, a cosmopolitan perspective of the type also found in Istanbul and Salonica before the First World War. Neyzi shows that it is possible for one and the same person to draw on contrasting narratives. She also suggests that the formerly dominant nationalist narrative may now be fading as a more cosmopolitan narrative re-emerges in the course of current public debates in Turkey concerning identity, globalization and a new interest in alternative histories, which challenge the constraints of Kemalist modernity. While demonstrating the importance of memory in the shaping of individual identity, this case study also exposes its thoroughly social nature.

The papers on Central Asia and Siberia focus on the problems faced by Turkic speaking societies and groups in the post-Soviet space (Aydıngün, Schönig), the question of cultural continuity (Günther) and the great potential for further memory studies in the region (Friederich). Like Neyzi, Friederich's subject is a single individual. His paper analyzes the private diary of Khäsän Sadiq ughly Urmanov, born in the early twentieth century in the Tatar village of Äji. The diary was not written for publication and records the author's reflections on the 1920s as he experienced these years as a young man. It was a turbulent decade in the history of the young Soviet Union, and one that brought important changes in the young diarist's life following his migration to Uzbekistan. Friederich challenges the widespread view, embedded in both Soviet propaganda and in the western scholarly literature, according to which all aspects of life in the Soviet Union were thoroughly permeated by Soviet ideology. Friederich argues that the author's stance, showing more interest in his own fate and personal happiness than in the major historical events of his time, reflected typical attitudes of his age. The diary was a reaction to the over-politicization of everyday life in the 1920s; of course its contents may also be shaped by fear and self-censorship. Whatever the motivations, in recording events of his own life, Khäsän Sadiq ughly Urmanov presents key events of his personal life against the backdrop of major historical events, which he refers to selectively, perhaps consciously or unconsciously omitting some of the most unpleasant and disturbing of the latter.

While Friederich's analysis argues against the ubiquitous presence of overarching ideologies in the early Soviet era, Schönig and Aydıngün address the influence of state and nationalist ideologies on group identities and their conscious exploitation of selective evocations of the past in the post-socialist era. Aydıngün's paper on state symbols in Kazakhstan may be read as a counterpart to the private diarist's selection of contemporary events to be preserved for the future. She looks at how the young Kazakh state remembers through instrumentalising selected elements from the past in order to legitimise itself in the present. A few key elements have been central to the construction of Kazakhstani national identity, notably official state symbols, such as the national flag, the state emblem and the national anthem. In an effort to reclaim their history and emancipate their new state from the Soviet legacy, the new elite have carefully selected symbols to promote an all-embracing Kazakhstani identity, acceptable not only to the titular group but also to non-Kazakh citizens. The symbols selected reflect both ethnic nationalist and civic territorial principles. The language policy, which in the short history of the young state has gone through several modifications, also displays a certain hybridization; both communicative and symbolic functions are considered by the author. Through interviews with representatives of various nationalities Aydıngün shows how the inclusivity of these symbols allows for their acceptance to all groups, albeit for different reasons. She points out that it is still too early to gauge the impact of these policies; in any case, the

successful consolidation of an all-inclusive Kazakhstani identity will also depend on ethnic discrimination at the level of everyday practices.

Schönig also looks at manifestations of nascent ethnic nationalism in post-Soviet space. Like many other small groups in the Russian Federation, the modern Khakas, a Turkic speaking group, have been busy constructing a respectable, even heroic past in an effort to emancipate themselves from the Soviet legacy. Activists represent the Khakas as an ancient ethnic and linguistic unit (rather than merely an administrative one), the cultural heirs of the Yenisey Kirghiz, whose runic inscriptions can be linked to the folklore of the modern Khakas. The runes are increasingly used as an identity marker, e.g. in decorating objects sold as souvenirs. Schönig argues that the many linguistic inconsistencies and mistakes in modern use of the old runes amount to a blatant abuse of the past in order to promote an ethnic nationalist project.

Günther's paper looks at the complicated interplay between remembering and identity construction within a highly distinctive occupational group, the acrobats of post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Using empirical data, especially life histories, collected during extensive fieldwork, the author reports on the ambiguities of a supposedly marginalised group. Far from considering themselves marginalised, the acrobats take pride in their profession and construct their collective identities through promoting versions of their history. The stories serve as legitimation of the acrobats' profession, within which the individual's place is typically confirmed through claiming to belong to a particular lineage or through evoking the legendary ancestors of the profession. These origin legends can be used to assign a special role in the Islamisation of Central Asia, while other legends connect the profession to the local landscape and to pre-Islamic times. These contested legends give insight into the special religious powers attributed to Central Asian acrobats; through them, their narrators place themselves in the very heart of Central Asian culture.

In one way or another, all the papers emphasise the role played by the past in constructing, de-constructing and re-constructing social identities; all pay attention to ideology and its instrumentalisation to legitimate claims not only to material resources but to intangible social status. Thus Kehl-Bodrogi's analysis of shifting Alevi interpretations of a key event in the distant past is embedded in the context of the group's changing ideological orientation. Similarly, Özgen explores centre-periphery relations in the framework of multiple interpretations of a single historical event, contrasting diverse official interpretations with local narratives of the major participants, and showing how the competing voices reflect different political, social and economic agendas. Miyazawa shows that among the Circassians different social groups present history or choose to remain silent about it in order to legitimate their present economic and political conditions, while the contested narratives of Günther's acrobats are also put forward to legitimate their profession and promote a corporate identity. The papers

of Neyzi and Friederich both focus on the individual's construction of a personal past, but demonstrate that this is a thoroughly social product, influenced by state ideology and a range of alternative discourses. This influence may assume a negative, reactive form when, as Friederich shows for the Soviet case, an ostensibly ubiquitous ideology is consciously or unconsciously excluded from the individual's record of events. Finally, Schönig and Aydıngün's papers look at on-going efforts in post-Soviet space to mobilise selected elements of recorded history and culture in order to promote the political agendas of an ethnic movement and a new sovereign state respectively.

Another theme running through several of the papers concerns language – both in terms of official legal standing and symbolic power. However, and this point is crucial for a discipline which defines itself with reference to language, the papers also demonstrate that language is not necessarily the most important criterion of identity. In the flux of identity construction, new patterns of internal stratification and competition for resources, not to mention transformations in the religious and cultural context, other factors may come to the fore in mobilising the past as a resource. Thus, while language plays a central role in the ideology of the new Kazakhstani state, it is by no means the only factor to receive emphasis. It is through language that alternative histories are articulated and the papers of Günther and Miyazawa show that particular individuals or groups are credited with special capacities in this respect. However, such recognition cannot completely prevent alternative voices – in the Circassian case, those of the slave-descendants – from telling a very different tale. Constructions of the past may also be shaped by script changes, as Friederich and Schönig point out in very different contexts. In the former Soviet Union the Tatar diarist's descendants could not access his work for seventy years as a result of the change that rendered the Arabic script incomprehensible to the younger generation brought up with the Cyrillic alphabet. By contrast, Khakas nationalists appropriate and exploit the ancient runes to promote a modern, ethno-nationalist ideology, with little regard for scholarly accuracy and rigour.

Taken together, the papers show the limits of the attempts of modern states of varying political orientations to impose homogenising views of history and identity. They draw attention to the value of exploring the complex interplay between memory and history in a large geographical area, which has not hitherto received much attention in international scholarship. In this brief Introduction I have tried to show that a regionally defined discipline can serve as a suitable framework for hitherto neglected fields of research, above all through encouraging interdisciplinarity. Like the agents in the chapters, which follow, the practitioners of Turkish Studies need to be selective in mobilizing their own historical conventions. The regional self-definition should not be fetishised, but these papers demonstrate that, for the time being at least, it remains a productive resource.

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The Burning of Smyrna/ Izmir (1922) Revisited: Coming to Terms with the Past in the Present

Leyla Neyzi

There are historical events, which, traumatic as they may be in and of themselves, become larger than life as they are inscribed onto the narrative of the nation. The burning of Izmir is such an event. Taking place in mid-September 1922, after the entry of Turkish forces into Greek-occupied Smyrna/ Izmir, the event has a different meaning in Greek and Turkish national history. In Greek national history, the burning of Izmir represents the loss of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and the destruction of the vision of a Greek conquest (*megali idea*) of Asia Minor. The burning of Izmir is inseparably linked to the death of many thousands and the forced migration of over a million Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects (*Rum*) from Turkey to Greece (Hirschon 2003). The burning of Izmir is much less marked in the Turkish national narrative in comparison with the "liberation" of Izmir from Greek occupation by the Turkish army on September 9, 1922. In fact, some observers have remarked upon the notable silence in the Turkish public sphere concerning this event (Millas 2003).

In this article, I revisit the burning of Izmir through the life history narrative of Gülfem Iren, an elderly Smyrniote/ Izmirian and witness to the burning of her native city. I show that as a member of a family of local notables, Iren moves between two different and contradictory narratives in telling her story. One narrative parallels the national narrative, while the other might be characterized as a local, Izmirian narrative that harks back to intercommunal relations in cosmopolitan Ottoman Izmir. I suggest that whereas the former prevailed in the past, the latter has come to dominate in the present. I argue that Iren's life history narrative, coupled with the sheer weight of cultural production and debate on the recent past in Turkey suggest that Turkish society is at a turning point, at which not only society's "others" but its very elites are coming to terms with the past and re-evaluating what it means to be Turkish.

Can the experience of "winners" in war be characterized as trauma?[1] As I show below, in the case of Izmirian Turks, trauma may stem from their experiences under the Greek occupation, a sense of shared urban identity with the "losers," and guilt from the bloodshed that occurred during the Greco-Turkish War. The debate over Izmirian identity points to the contradictions of Turkish national

[1] The work of the German writer W.G. Sebald is a case in point, being as much about the suffering of Jews during World War II as about the suffering of the wandering German writer in exile (Sebald 1997).

identity, in so far as the native Muslims of Izmir had culturally more in common with their Christian (and Jewish) Izmirian neighbors than with the Muslim immigrants from former Ottoman domains who replaced them and became their compatriots in the Turkish Republic.

The Historical Context

Located on the western coast of Asia Minor, Izmir is one the oldest urban settlements in the world. Incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century, it remained a provincial town until the 17th century. Gradually, Izmir emerged as a cosmopolitan city of economic strength and cultural sophistication (Goffman 1999). Its population grew and diversified, including Greek Orthodox (*Rum*), Armenian, Jewish and Muslim Ottoman subjects as well as Europeans – Italians, French, English, Dutch, and Germans. Trade and industry were largely controlled by Levantines and native Christians, who benefited from the granting of trade privileges to Europeans and those under their protection. In the 19th century, Izmir became a regional power on the order of Salonica and Istanbul, also legendary port cities. In many ways, Izmir developed a cosmopolitan identity, which transcended the boundaries of particular ethno-religious communities (Kechriotis 2004). As the Ottoman Empire weakened, however, and the age of nationalism began to drive communities apart, a tragedy was in the making. The rise of Greek and Turkish nationalism and World War I sealed Ottoman Izmir's fate. In the rush to colonize the "sick man of Europe" Izmir was a great prize.

Following its defeat in World War I, Turkey was occupied by Great Britain, France and Italy. With the backing of the British, the Greek army occupied Izmir on May 15, 1919. As the Ottoman government in Istanbul acceded to the occupation of what remained of the Empire, a resistance movement emerged from within the military and bureaucratic elite. Mustafa Kemal, an officer in the Ottoman army, emerged as the leader of this movement. A National Assembly was called in the central Anatolian town of Ankara. It is from this base that the Turks would fight a battle on three fronts: against the Armenians in the east, the Greeks in the west, and the French in the south (Shaw and Shaw 1977, Zürcher 2004).

Izmir was occupied from 1919 to 1922. During this time, a protracted and bloody war was fought between the Turks and the Greeks on the western front. This was not only a fight against foreign occupation: it also took the form of internecine warfare as some native Christians, including Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) and Armenians joined the Greek army. After a series of battles, which took a heavy toll on both sides, the Turks managed to defeat the Greek army, entering Izmir on September 9, 1922.

It was several days afterwards, on the 13th of September when the Turkish army, including its leader Mustafa Kemal, had already entered the city that Izmir began to burn. This date has remained vague in Turkish collective memory,

allowing some to report erroneously that the fire occurred before the Greek retreat.

The circumstances in which the fire started remain a matter of contention. Once it had begun, the wind carried the flames in the direction of the famous *Frenk* or European neighborhood. By the time the fire had burned itself out several days later, this legendary neighborhood was completely destroyed. In the chaos that ensued, much violence took place. While those holding European passports were able to leave, Christian Ottoman subjects (Greek Orthodox and Armenians) tried desperately to escape while the Turkish army and local Turks settled their scores (Umar 1974).

Any discussion of the burning of Izmir inevitably raises the question of responsibility. Not surprisingly, the national narratives of Greece and Turkey raise no doubt about the culprit: according to the Greek (and Armenian) narrative, it was the Turks (Housepian 1998), and according to the Turkish narrative, it was the Greeks and/ or the Armenians who burned Izmir (Lowry 1988). A few sources, on the other hand, suggest that at the very least, Turkish inactivity played a part. Bilge Umar, an art historian and Izmirian, writes:

Turks and Armenians are equally to blame for this tragedy. All the sources show that the Greeks did not start the fire as they left the city. The fire was started by fanatic Armenians. The Turks did not try to stop the fire. (Umar 1974: 326)

This is how Lord Kinross, Atatürk's biographer, describes the event:

> This internecine violence [between the Turks and Armenians] led, more or less by accident, to the outbreak of a catastrophic fire. Its origins were never satisfactorily explained. Kemal [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk] explained that it had been deliberately planned by an Armenian incendiary organization. Others accused the Turks themselves of deliberately starting the fire under the orders or at least with the connivance of Nured-Din Pasha. (Kinross 1965: 324)

Falih Rıfkı Atay, a journalist and contemporary of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who was in Izmir at the time wrote in his memoirs:

> Were the ones responsible for the fire simply the Armenian incendiaries, as we were told at the time? Many suggested that Nurettin Paşa [the Commander of the First Army and governor of Izmir] had much to do with it.

He significantly adds:

> Why were we burning Izmir? Were we afraid that if the mansions, hotels and bars remained, we wouldn't be rid of the minorities? This is not simply an act of destruction. It has to do with a feeling of inferiority as well. It's as if any part that resembled Europe was fated to be Christian and foreign, and surely not ours. Would reducing the city to bare land be sufficient to protect its Turkishness? (Atay 1965: 324-5).

Atay suggests that the Turkish victors identified Izmir's cosmopolitanism with the native non-Muslims and resident foreigners, and strove to destroy the past in order to create a new, Turkish Izmir. But, where did native Izmirian (Muslim)

Turks stand? Was there not a cosmopolitan elite of Muslim background that shared an urban identity with the so-called *gavur*[2] Izmir?

The debate as to who burned Izmir continues up to the present. One of the aims of this paper is to muddy the waters further and to suggest that greater ambiguity enters the picture as one moves from national narratives to local narratives. Let me make it clear, however, that my goal is not to reach "the truth" about what happened in Izmir. Rather, I am interested in what narration of the event tells us about the relationship between history, memory and identity in the present. Using the case of the burning of Izmir, I suggest that a cosmopolitan Izmirian identity is re-emerging in Turkish (re-) constructions of the past in the age of globalization.

The Aftermath: Izmir Under the Turkish Republic

The Turkish Republic was established on October 29, 1923. Members of the Ottoman dynasty were forced to leave the country. A series of reforms established Turkey as a secular republic looking to the West as its model. The new Turkey necessitated a new history, which would establish the basis for a new Turkish identity. The population of Asia Minor was conceptualized in this narrative as a homogeneous population with shared values, a shared ethnic identity and a shared language. This had serious consequences for communities not defined as "Turkish" due to religious or ethnic background (Neyzi 2002).

Greece and Turkey agreed at Lausanne in 1923 that the Greek Orthodox population of Asia Minor (excepting Istanbul) would be exchanged with the Muslim population of Greece (excepting Western Thrace) (Hirschon 2003). Thus, the bad blood that had come between Christian and Muslim Ottoman subjects meant that families on both sides would be forced to leave their homeland, their property and their neighbors behind, resettling in what amounted to a foreign land–but which was constructed in the national narratives of the two countries as their homeland.

There was no room for ambiguity in either the Greek or the Turkish national narratives, which mirrored one another (Herzfeld 1986). Greece was transformed by the influx of refugees from Asia Minor. This encounter resulted in much suffering on the part of the refugees and in the rise of distinct cultural products such as music, novels and memoirs (Politis 1998). The Center of Asia Minor Studies in Athens recorded the recollections of refugees (Umar 2002, Millas 2001). To this day, Greeks with origins in Asia Minor maintain a distinct identity, as a recent highly acclaimed Greek film from 2003, *Politiki Kouzina* ["A Touch of Spice" directed by Tassos Boulmetis, though a literal translation of the title reads "Cuisine of the City" or "Political Cuisine"], shows.

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2 A pejorative term for non-Muslims.

In Turkey, it was the "liberation" of Izmir that was celebrated. The emphasis was on building a new, Turkish Izmir and on erasing the past. The fire zone was transformed in the 1930s with the construction of the Izmir fair grounds and a monument commemorating the liberation of the city by Mustafa Kemal (Kırlı 2002).

The Present: The Transformation of the Public Sphere

Following the military coup of 1980, a debate gradually emerged in the public sphere in Turkey about the history of the Republic in general, and about national, ethnic/religious and regional identity in particular. This was triggered by a number of factors, including the rise of Islamism, the rise of a Turkish and Kurdish diaspora in Europe, the conflict between the Turkish army and the Kurdish separatist movement PKK, the coming of age of a new generation known as the "post-80 generation," the rise of a global media, negotiations on Turkey's accession to the European Union, and postmodernist debates on identity (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997). The rediscovery of history in Turkish society in the post-1980 period suggests that the attempt by the Kemalist modernity project to construct a new identity has been constrained by the multicultural past of the Ottoman Empire. It also suggests that Turkey's incorporation in the global economy and accompanying debates on cultural identities have created the conditions for the rise of nostalgia and a new interest in memory and history.

In the case of Izmir alone, in the last decade, historical studies, journalism, memoirs, novels and documentary films about the history of the city have proliferated. Some of these works represent the pre-Republican past in nostalgic terms, and focus on historical continuities. In a recent novel by Mehmet Coral (2003) for example, a Turkish man subjected to hypnosis in the course of psychoanalysis finds that he also has a Greek *persona*, and the novel tells the story of the tragedy of the Greco-Turkish war from a humanist perspective. Significantly, the novel is entitled, "Izmir: 13 September 1922" – a departure from the previous silencing of this event. Researchers who have translated the narratives of Greek refugees from Asia Minor from Greek into Turkish have underscored the importance for the Turkish public of hearing both sides (Umar 2002; Millas 2001). Cultural production in Turkey has become highly diversified, reflecting the charged debate on national identity.

Oral History

Today, few individuals remain alive who experienced the occupation of Izmir and its aftermath. Little research on the experience of either native Izmirians or immigrants existed in Turkey until recently. Recent studies, with few exceptions,

have been based on historical documents (Berber 1997), or take the form of fictionalized accounts (Yalçın 1998).

Oral history can make an important contribution to debates on recent historical events which are highly contentious and/ or about which the historical record remains largely silent (Butalia 2000). Oral history narratives speak to issues in the present even as they ostensibly focus on events in the past. Accounts of past events are always recounted in light of contemporary events and concerns. The subjective and presentist nature and narrative structure of oral history make it a useful means of studying how the past is understood, interpreted and experienced by subjects in the present (Portelli 1997). Oral historians have mined life history narratives to come to terms with the ambivalence, ambiguity, contradiction and lack of cohesion, which characterize subjective experience and its articulation in everyday life (Passerini 1999; Ochs and Capps 2001). While oral history has been viewed as providing an alternative to official/ national/ public narratives (Perks and Thomson 1998), as I show in the case below, the relationship between national and local narratives is a complex one, as oral history narratives often draw on a variety of sources.

While oral history began with a study of elites, it has since become better known as the study of "the people without history" (Wolf 1982), particularly the nation-state's (or global economy's) "others" presumed not to have a voice of their own (Perks and Thomson 1998).[3] My own recent work has focused on oral histories of minorities in Turkey (Neyzi 2002). This research convinced me, however, of the need for oral history research on elites in order to better understand the process of construction of national identity in Turkey, which faces the danger of being taken for granted in the literature.

If oral history is to be characterized as a mixed genre (Portelli 1997), elite oral history is a mixed genre par excellence. As I show below, the oral history narratives of elites tend to include references to a multiplicity of sources.

Finding an Informant

I became interested in working on Izmir as a result of a series of meetings between Turkish and Greek academics from 1999 to 2001 at Sabancı University, Istanbul and Panteion University, Athens. The goal of these meetings was to use the case of the burning of Izmir as a means of investigating the construction of national narratives in Turkey and Greece.

Little previous oral history work has been conducted on this subject in Turkey. Few witnesses remain. I chose to interview an elderly informant from a promi-

[3] This presumption and the complex power relationship between oral historians and their informants that it engenders has been addressed by many authors (Passerini 1997, Portelli 1991) and continues to pose a challenge to oral historians.

nent native family in Izmir. Gülfem Iren was born in 1915. I recorded conversations with Gülfem Iren over four meetings.[4] My goal was to develop a long-term relationship with my informant and to see how she would speak of the burning of Izmir at different periods within the same interview and across different time periods. I aimed to contextualize the narrative of the event in the interviewee's life as well as in the period of narration.

Gülfem Iren was seven years old and about to enter second grade at the time of the burning of Izmir. She considers her experiences up to that age as among the most memorable (and traumatic) of her whole life. In speaking about her life, she would come back time and again to events she viewed as central to her childhood: the occupation of Izmir, the burning of the town of Manisa, the burning of Izmir and its aftermath.

In interviewing Gülfem Iren, I tried as much as possible not to intervene as she told me her life story her way. When I interviewed her, Gülfem Iren was at a stage in her life when she had retired from active life, and she spent much of her time thinking about and in a sense reliving her childhood in her imagination. Iren told me that although she had always been interested in the history of her family and of Izmir, she spoke little about it to anyone: 'It's the first time I speak at home about these things. There was no need.' She added, 'No one asked me for these stories with any curiosity.' At the same time, as a highly intelligent, articulate adult, Gülfem Iren remained engaged with the present. While unable to go out much, she followed the news, including recent debates in the media. She made a point of following publications on the history of her native city. Her reading included novels and memoirs of Turkish and Greek Izmirians. Her life story narrative invariably speaks to the Turkish present and its engagement with the past.

Gülfem Iren was also aware of and articulate about the ways in which her own feelings and beliefs changed over time. While speaking to me, she would often debate with herself, and the contradictions in her narrative became more and more apparent. Our conversation flowed in and out of, and became part of, the debate in contemporary Turkey about national identity. Iren shared books on Izmir with me. Eventually, she herself became moved not only to speak, but to write. At the age of 87, she decided to write her memoirs (Iren 2004).

As a person deeply interested in the history of her native city, Gülfem Iren realized the significance of her role as witness. Yet she was also aware of the complex relationship between history and memory. At one point in our conversation, for example, she said, 'I wonder if a stranger who doesn't know me listens to all this, would they think it was the fruit of the imagination or would they believe it to be the truth?'

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4 I interviewed Gülfem Iren on April 11, 2001, August 8, 2001, August 17, 2001 and September 17, 2003.

Local Elites

On her father's side, Gülfem Iren belongs to the renowned Katipzade family. The family traces its lineage to a local magnate (*ayan*) executed by the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II at the beginning of the 19th century. It was Mahmut II who initiated the centralizing reforms aimed at wresting power from the hands of regional notables. The many heirlooms in Iren's possession include a genealogy that traces the Katipzade family back to their "murdered" ancestor. It is from this central event in her family history that Gülfem Iren's own relationship to the center of power, whether Ottoman or Republican, stems. According to Iren, the fact that his descent from a local notable is recorded in her father's birth certificate suggests the control over the ages maintained by the center over regional contenders for power. Today, the family maintains a foundation (*vakıf)* in Izmir established in Ottoman times, of which she is now the oldest member. According to Iren, what became the residence of the governor in the famous Konak area of Izmir was originally built for her forebears. Her family is mentioned in a history of the city (*Üç Izmir* 1992).

Iren tells an unusual story about the way her elder sister, a doctor, defied Mustafa Kemal when they met at a reception in Izmir. This anecdote is very unusual given the adulation of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey:

> My sister returned to Turkey in 1925. The War of Liberation had ended; Izmir lived with Atatürk. There was a reception in the governor's palace. The hat reform had just taken place. My sister wore a hat she brought from Europe. They were introduced. My sister sat inside in an armchair, with her back to the window. Strolling in the garden, Atatürk came to the window and said, "Lady doctor, take off your hat." Turning around, my sister said, "If that is an order, no." "No," he says, "It is not an order. It is a request to see your beautiful eyes." "Then I will" she says and she does.

On her mother's side, Iren belongs to another well-known Izmir family, the Sahipzade. As if speaking of the recent past, she casually says, 'My mother is *Selçuklu*'[5]. Originally from Erzurum, this family is said to have arrived in Izmir many generations before by way of the city of Afyon. Whereas her father's family, the Katipzade, were landowners who owned agricultural land, Gülfem Iren's mother's family were industrialists who owned urban real estate.[6] Iren's great-grandfather Mustafa Efendi was a Muslim rentier and industrialist who owned land in the neighborhood later destroyed by the fire.[7] Mustafa Efendi became extremely wealthy by establishing three factories in Izmir: a foundry, a

5 From the Seljukid Empire, 11-13th c., which predated the Ottomans in Asia Minor.

6 Frangakis-Syrett (1999) notes the lack of studies on the Muslim merchants of Ottoman Izmir. Partnerships such as that of Gülfem Iren's grandfather with local non-Muslims were not uncommon.

7 The existence of absentee Muslim landowners in the largely non-Muslim neighborhood destroyed by the fire is rarely noted.

factory that produced rose oil, and one which produced silk thread. Gülfem Iren says her mother gave her a candlestick produced in this foundry with the words, 'Keep and cherish this product of our bloodline.' Partners in this venture included the Khedive of Egypt and a Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) merchant from Izmir.

Iren spoke in detail of her maternal grandfather, Mehmet Şevki Bey, a fascinating man educated in a Jesuit university in France as well as at Al-Azhar in Cairo. Iren recounts how her grandfather, who earned the nickname "*Gavur* Mehmet" for his close relationship to Europeans, went to Al-Azhar in Cairo in order to be recognized as a learned man in the Muslim tradition (*ulema*). She says, 'I believe he tried to be a European with the Europeans, and a Muslim with the Muslims. You might call him a Muslim dandy. I imagine him as an unhappy man.' Iren's depiction suggests that her grandfather represented a new Muslim elite which emerged from the traditionally insular Muslim community into a new relationship with the non-Muslim bourgeoisie.

According to Iren, her father was the first person in the family to become a professional. Her father became a lawyer, her uncle a doctor. To be a professional rather than a bureaucrat or a landowner was new. This is how she describes her parents' life:

> Izmir was a very modern place. My mother was covered in the Muslim neighborhood, but when they would go to the European neighborhood my father would say, "Please remove your veil." In Izmir there was a famous hotel of white marble called the Kramer Palace. Everyone would sit on the terrace in summer; there was music, a very snobbish setting. They would go there, drink beer together. My mother told me that my father would have her sit a little to the back with himself in front as if to give her some camouflage.

Iren's description shows that women's roles in the public sphere varied according to which neighborhood they inhabited: the Muslim or the *Frenk* (European) neighborhood. It also expresses the mixed feelings of the Ottoman male *vis-à-vis* this change.

Gülfem Iren was born into a comfortable, wealthy home in the suburban neighborhood of Karşıyaka dotted with the summer homes of Izmirians. This is where she was raised although the family was originally based in the Muslim neighborhood in the city proper. She remembers a large, close, extended family whose members distinguished themselves from others by a kind of feudal arrogance ('*azamet*'). When Gülfem was a child, for example, her mother did not allow her to bring schoolmates home. She remembers the household help:

Until my mother's time, each daughter would take her Circassian maid and black nanny with her into her new home at marriage. In our house, Vartyu [the Armenian seamstress] sewed me the most fashionable dresses until I was seven. The ones working inside were Muslim. But the others [the non-Muslim help], they were more knowledgeable.

Iren's family had its roots in the Muslim neighborhood, which was in the foothills of Izmir, separated from the European neighborhood located along the sea shore. Speaking of the city as a whole, Iren underscored its cosmopolitan character, which also shaped its Muslim population: 'They named Izmir "*Gavur* Izmir". In Izmir, Muslims lived within a Levantine world. My grandfather was educated at Al-Azhar in Egypt but he read books in English and French, played the piano, rode horses.' According to Iren, Izmir's cosmopolitanism is reflected in its dialect and cuisine: 'In the Izmirian dialect, nouns commonly derive from Greek, Italian or French. For example, an oval serving plate is known as *piyate*. A fork is *peron*, an apron, *prostela*. The cuisine of Izmir is mainly Greek and Armenian. My father spoke Greek well. During the occupation of Izmir, it saved his life.'

Iren makes a distinction betwen Izmir and Istanbul, the Ottoman capital. According to her, Izmir was more cosmopolitan and more autonomous. There is a tone of defiance to her words as she compares the two great cities:

> We are really different because Izmir was a cosmopolitan place. It is not like Istanbul. Istanbul means the traditions of the Ottoman Empire. In Izmir, Muslims are within a Levantine lifestyle. So in Izmir, you do not kiss the hem of the Sultan's or the Pasha's robe. There is hand-shaking and doffing your hat.

The Occupation of Izmir (1919-1922)

Izmir was occupied by the Greek forces on May 15, 1919. A time of celebration for much of the Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) population, this was a time of mourning for the Muslim population. The violence perpetrated by the Greek Orthodox population collaborating with the occupying forces is well documented (Umar 1974). While very young at the time, Gülfem nevertheless has a few memories of the occupation period. One pleasant memory involves a visit to the European neighborhood. She remembers being allowed to choose earrings in a jewelry shop, and being served lunch in her father's law office in the same neighborhood.

Other memories are less pleasant. Gülfem vaguely remembers her father arriving home at the time of the occupation, when what saved him were his Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) friends and his command of the Greek language. At a time when 'the ones who wore the fez' were being shot in the streets, her father's Greek friends concealed him in their club, sending him home wearing a hat and accompanied by the club guard (*kavas*) whose blue uniform with gold stripes she still recalls.

Iren's anecdotes provide evidence of networks based on friendship, co-residence, occupation, lifestyle and shared language(s), which tied individuals from different ethnic-religious communities together.

There is also a scene she recalls in the marketplace in Karşıyaka where a man was killed with a bayonet for refusing to spit on a Turkish flag:

> We got off the boat in Karşıyaka. There was a crowd in the marketplace. My mother held me by the hand. They were telling the Turk to spit on the Turkish flag. There was shouting and crowding and we couldn't get through and they killed the man for not spitting. I couldn't forget it for a very long time. There was a red flag on the ground and I remember the shirts with blue and white stripes the shopkeepers used to wear. I don't know who the Turk was. But I know they killed him.

Father's Death

Iren's father died during the occupation of Izmir. She was seven years old. It was in the spring of 1922, several months before the liberation. She was about to begin her second year in primary school. Her father traveled to the nearby town of Manisa, where the family owned agricultural land. It was necessary during the occupation to get a permit to travel by train. While able to obtain a permit to travel to Manisa by train, he was unable to get one to come back. Being forced to walk back through the mountains on foot, he became ill upon arrival, dying shortly thereafter of pneumonia. This early death was a terrible blow to the family. His wife was left at the age of forty with her children in an occupied city.

For Gülfem, the loss of her father was the beginning of a series of disasters linked to the occupation:

> We could only live together until I was six and a half. That is why I still suffer from being fatherless. During holidays when everyone celebrated, I would cry. Sometimes I would hide behind a curtain or under a quilt, repeating to myself, "Father! Father!" and listening to the sound of my own voice.

She initially blamed the occupation for her father's death: 'When I was a child, they were my enemy. I used to say, "They killed my father." Later I said it was his fate, but I can never cover my loss.'

Trauma in Manisa

After her father's death, Gülfem's childhood was marked by a second disaster the family experienced on the verge of the Turkish victory. It was late August, the harvest time for grapes. Her father, who would have made the trip to the family properties, was dead. Her mother and aunt had no one to help them except their elderly father. Taking Gülfem, her aunt's two children and their black nanny along, the three adults traveled to Manisa. There is in Iren's possession a historic photo taken in the family garden for the permit they needed to travel by train. Anxiety clouds the faces of the adults in the frayed black and white photograph.

While at their estate outside Manisa, Gülfem's mother got an urgent message from her father to come into town. The Greek army was on the retreat, destroying everything in its wake. Trying without success to get a permit to travel back to Izmir (the train only carried the wounded from the battlefield), the

family stayed at the home of the Karaosmanoğlu family in Manisa, also a family of regional notables. During this time, they were robbed by a militia of Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) and Armenians. Gülfem recalls her fear as the bandits forced open the secret door to their hiding place – she claimed that the family had been betrayed by their Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) servants. She remembers the intruders destroying the Turkish flags that they were preparing in the hope of a Turkish victory. The whole town fled to the hills. It was here that they would remain 'for three days and three nights.'

Gülfem says she never recalls Manisa without a shudder. At the time, she was ill, burning with malarial fever. She remembers her thirst, the taste of the brackish water she was forced to drink, the inedible paste women made to pass for bread. But most of all she remembers the fear. The families hiding in the hills above Manisa lived in fear of being massacred by the retreating Greek army:

After escaping the militia towards dawn, we climbed up a dry stream bed to hide in the hills. As we climbed, the city was burning, and we were lit by its light and warmed by its heat. It burned for three days and three nights. I saw the windowpanes of houses explode like bombs. Sacks of grapes stuck together, bubbling like jam. Dead cows and horses, balloons with their legs in the air. Ancient trees keeled over, their roots burning like logs. I did not forget these things. The heat, the hunger, the fear, the smell... After three days we saw the dust rise in the valley below. Turkish soldiers on horseback; we thought they were Greeks coming to kill us in the hills. I remember three soldiers carrying green and red flags. People kissed the hooves of their horses, crying "Our saviors have come."

Once back in town, Gülfem's grandfather asked the Turkish commander to give them protection. They traveled by ox cart among the soldiers on their way to Izmir. Iren has never forgotten this trip:

> Coming from Manisa. Even today when I tell this story I am shivering. That same mountain road my father traveled on the year before. We left at dawn, arriving in Bornova [a suburb of Izmir] by evening. A trip we could make in twenty minutes today. Imagine the tableau: An ox cart, and inside it an old gentleman in Islamic headdress, two ladies, three children, and a black nanny. The road, strewn with goods, the corpses of humans, and animals. The smell. In the month of September, traveling through the mountains, our heads and mouths covered. I saw a crucified body in front of a burnt building. I don't know if it was a man, woman or girl, but at that age I saw that crucifix.

The Burning of Izmir

When Izmir began to burn in mid-September, Iren remembers her grandfather taking the children to watch the fire:

> It was a couple days after we arrived from Manisa. They said "Izmir is burning." My grandfather took us three children. We went to the shore. All together, we watched the

> city burn. Red flames arose out of the black-and-white smoke. My grandfather climbed upon a rock. He watched for a very long time. When he saw the fire cross over into our property, he climbed down. "Bless you" he said, "What can we do? That's gone now too." My grandfather patted our heads. "Thank God, we are alive" he said.

When I asked her how she had felt at the time, Iren replied:

> I felt nothing. For I had lived it already. We burned in Manisa. People accepted the fire, they accepted the dying as well as the killing. I felt nothing. It was only afterwards that I realized what it meant. This was my childhood.

We do not know the "truthfulness" of Iren's account. I did find, however, that she told these stories in very similar ways in different conversations. She claimed that these traumatic experiences remained vivid in her imagination up to the present. She also mentioned that the family continued to speak of these events at home, which she claimed may have been another reason for her to retain her memory of them.

Responsibility

When I raised the question of responsibility, Gülfem Iren began to debate this issue with herself as well as with me: 'You are asking me who burnt Izmir. There are three answers. The Armenians burnt Izmir. The retreating Greeks burnt Izmir. The Turks burnt Izmir.'

After our first conversation, Iren consulted one of her oldest friends, an elderly lawyer also from a native Izmirian family. She reported back to me:

> I told him, "There is a young lady who asked me a question, and I want your opinion, who burnt Izmir?" He said, "The Greeks." I said, "Are you sure? How did the fire begin?" He said, "There was an ammunition depot near the Armenian church."

Gülfem Iren told me that when she pressed her friend further, he said that a well-known lawyer of the time had given evidence concerning the arms depot near the Armenian church: 'He showed them the place, and they burnt it.' Iren told me that her friend seemed to regret having spoken, and she was unable to speak with him since he is now very ill. Continuing to debate with herself while talking to me, she asked: 'Did the Armenians torch that depot or did the Turks? I think it is possible that the Turks started the fire. Or if they didn't start it, they did nothing to stop it.' She added, speaking about the Izmirians in the aftermath of the war: 'And then, we didn't say afterwards, "The Greeks, the Armenians burned it." There is also that. So we must have been guilty. But I may be wrong.'

An anecdote Gülfem Iren tells about Mustafa Kemal ties into her narrative about the fire, emphasizing Turkish inactivity if not culpability. While expressing the usual –and very earnestly meant – adulation of persons of her generation for the man who liberated Izmir, she does more. She asks what Mustafa Kemal did – and didn't do – during the fire.

Gülfem Iren suggests in her narrative that the liberators of Izmir, "outsiders" nevertheless, sat back while her city burned. In this section, she uses the present tense: note the short, hurried sentences which give an immediacy to her account:

> Izmir has not burnt yet. The city is liberated. Atatürk arrives. The Kramer Hotel becomes his headquarters. Atatürk stays at the Kramer Palace for days. His future wife comes to take him to her family home. After Atatürk leaves, Izmir burns, and the Kramer Palace burns. They let it burn. Atatürk was there.

Intriguingly, on the other hand, Iren then goes on to justify the Turks' action: 'They torched an arms cache, saying 'this is the only way we will clean the dirt'. In her narrative, she keeps repeating this disturbing phrase: 'cleaning (or cleansing) the dirt.' [*pisliği temizlemek*]. Iren says:

> A great clean(s)ing took place, but were they right or wrong? They were right to some extent because the Ottoman Empire was crushed. It was easy for foreigners to pull pieces off a dying state. Where the fair is now thousands of Armenians and Greeks and Jews were living. That was the only way to clean the dirt. They did it to clean the place. To empty it because they were hiding and they had to search from door to door to find them. Clean(s)ing was necessary to establish the Turkish Republic. There was no other choice. You could not have such a cosmopolitan Republic.

Iren then backtracks, acknowledging with equal fervour what has been lost:

> I still ask myself whether this should have happened. If my father died because they did not give him a *laisse passer* [travel permit], many others died as well. In the old days, Muslims, Greeks, Armenians and Jews belonged to this land, and trusted in one another. This land belonged to them as much as it belonged to us. We say "it is our homeland," yes, thank God for today, but it is as much theirs as it is ours.

Here, Iren underscores the shared suffering and the former trust between individuals and the shared sense of belonging to place – the cosmopolitan city of Izmir.

Violence, Trauma and Silence

According to Iren, when she was growing up, what amounted to a conspiracy of silence existed about the fire in Izmir. She asks herself now, why this silence? She suggests, in a brief and oblique aside, that pressure exerted by the military might be one reason that discussion of the fire was avoided at the time. Today, she feels that this silence needs to be confronted once and for all:

> You know what makes me angry? No one is looking for the reasons behind this sad story. They covered it up. People felt like it was a good thing that it was cleaned up, but no one would talk. It shouldn't have happened. Seventy-five years have gone by.

She tries to explain the reasons behind the silence:

> They [the Turks] were finished, exhausted. They had no strength left, material or moral. They came to Izmir, but how? On their last legs. It was such a miracle, this 9th of

> September. Nobody thought this victory would happen. When it happened, they were aghast, it was erased. That horror was suddenly erased. That fear was ended, a great joy took its place and they forgot what happened.

The fire is rarely mentioned in Turkish literature or Turkish history textbooks. Early Turkish narratives about the fire, in so far as they exist, are often narratives of joy, as the fire becomes linked to the liberation of Izmir (Gündüz 1928).

Speaking in the present, however, Iren remembers the horror and the violence and is able to empathize with the other side:

> I saw their dead in the sea. It had happened before. In '19 it happened; the ones with the fez were thrown in. This time it was the ones who wore the hat. I saw the dead. The bay of Izmir was not cleaned for months. A huge fish gets caught in a fisherman's net, they pull it in, open its bowels and a bag of jewels falls out. *We* came back; we were home, but for months on end from in front of our door in Karşıyaka we would watch our soldiers pass with bayonets, in front of them desperate Greek men with their hair on end, their beards grown. They took them in a column, their hands tied and shot them in the mountains. Every evening. Not just a day or two but for months and months.

The Aftermath: Continuity or Rupture?

The national narrative focused on rupture. Speaking in the present, Iren focuses instead on continuities. She suggests that the cosmopolitan culture of Izmir survived for years:

> Everything did not end right away. There are old habits, old relations, old ways of living that continued for a long time. The old population was very cosmopolitan. No one forgot that for a long time. The jokes half in Turkish half in Greek. And such liberty. Everyone would go out into the garden in the afternoon, drinks would be served, people would chat, some played backgammon, people laughed amongst the roses, the scent of jasmine...

She recalls with nostalgia:

> My grandfather had a botanical garden. He had brought and planted trees from all over the world. Even after these calamities it was such a habit that every season hyacinth and tulip bulbs would be brought over from Holland. A day would come when all would bloom. And on that day, everyone would know, the Greek, the Armenian, the Jew, the Muslim, that in Mehmet Şevket Bey's house there is a flower exhibit. Friends and strangers would tour the house, and when ready to leave, they would be offered the juice of whatever fruit was in season. This is a tradition, and if you don't do these things you feel like a part of you is missing.

Iren speaks of etiquette, politesse, friendship, neighborliness, traditions, rituals, language and all the components that go into a shared urban culture.

At the time of our interview, Iren shared with me a copy of a novel by Kosmas Politis (1998 [1963]), a Greek writer of Smyrniote origin. She said:

> I really found myself in this book. My childhood. I lived what he wrote about. For example children's games in the neighborhood, the words they used, the toys. I grew up

> with them, I used them, I know. Because months and years went by, and old Izmir lived with all its traditions. It lived after its Greeks and Armenians had left, because there is always habit. For example, he speaks here of the streets in the fire zone. He says, "Fasula, Çikuta." He says, "Rose Street." I know. I didn't live there, but I know.

Here, Iren speaks no longer as a member of an ethnic-religious community, but as an individual member of a shared urban culture.

Although they were fellow Muslims and compatriots, native Izmirians kept the Muslim immigrants who had come to Izmir through the population exchange at arm's length for decades. Iren says:

> For the people of Izmir the newcomers were very primitive. They were seen as outsiders. They didn't fit in, not for years. By and by there was mixing and mingling and a new generation emerged.

Iren makes clear here the difference in class and culture between Izmir's elites and the new immigrants. She shows that establishing a shared identity requires time. Most of all, a shared identity requires a shared history.

According to Iren, Izmir gradually lost its urban culture as its natives had known it. This is why, for her, who wasn't forced to leave, the city has nevertheless become a place in her imagination:

> Izmir is very important for me. I don't feel this when I am in Izmir. I feel it when I am far away. Before the occupation, in the *Rum* Izmir in those days, the best of everything could be found. Even that which could not be found in Istanbul could be found in Izmir. Then a dead era began. Izmir lost its snobbery; it adjusted to the population that came and it stopped being Izmir in every way: in living, in taste, in conversation, in friendship. Everything was burnt, destroyed; all those knowledgeable people were gone. A bunch of peasants and shopkeepers had come, unfortunately that's what they were. They washed the fine furniture in the Greek houses with soap, they broke the colored crystal glass, they destroyed everything. It wasn't their fault; they didn't know, it wasn't the place for them. This was a calamity within a calamity. Fire, destruction, war, killing and then with their arrival, another war.

Here, Iren refers to her fellow citizens as enemies! She suggests that the city was destroyed not only by the fire but also by the administrators and residents who are outsiders. This attitude is very similar to contemporary attitudes in the city of Istanbul towards migrants from villages, which has resulted in nostalgia for the former, cosmopolitan Istanbul of Ottoman times. Despite the elitism of this particular approach, Turks are beginning to recognize the importance of shared history as the basis of identity.

What the Kemalists viewed as new, as modern, Izmirians experienced as regression: for they had already achieved a sense of a shared identity in the public sphere. For Iren, Ottoman Izmir was more developed, more evolved than Republican Izmir. The cosmopolitan past became the provincial present.

Ultimately, for Iren, her sense of identity comes from her family and the place where she has her roots: and this includes the others who feel the same–those who share a cosmopolitan Izmirian identity.

Conclusion

As I have shown in this paper, we find the splitting of Gülfem Iren's life story narrative into several, contradictory narratives. The dominant narrative is one in which Iren's allegiance is to the locality, the Izmir of her childhood and the cosmopolitan past. This makes her remember in a particular way and regret the war and the fire:

> Should this have happened? I still think about that, for they had rights in this land as much as we did. Didn't their ancestors come from this land? We say it is our country, our land, yes, we are thankful, but it is theirs as well as ours.

At the same time, Iren identifies with the national narrative:

> To establish the Turkish Republic this had to be done. Clean(s)ing was necessary. It was inevitable. You could not have such a cosmopolitan Republic.

While the two narratives that run side by side in Iren's story seem to contradict one another, they both belong to her. Like many Izmirians, and many Turks, she is caught between Turkish nationalism and a cosmopolitan identity based on the social relations that prevailed in urban centers such as Izmir, Istanbul and Salonica before the war forced everyone to take sides. Her life story narrative suggests that while the nationalist narrative may have dominated in the past, the cosmopolitan narrative is (re)emerging in the present, in dialogue with current debates in the public sphere concerning identity politics, globalization and the meaning of the past in Turkey.

Today, there is greater discussion than ever before in the public sphere about the past, whether viewed through the more comforting lens of nostalgia or through the more sobering lens of personal and collective trauma. The question of identity and its relationship to history is a deep wound in Turkish society, which requires a deep incision in order to heal. Facing the experienced past, rather than a comforting nostalgia, also means facing up to the violence perpetrated in this society in the twentieth century. In Izmir, what should not be forgotten is the human tragedy that was experienced by all, including a six-year-old girl, and that a beautiful city and way of life were lost forever.

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The Role of Kerbela in the (Re-) Construction of Alevism in Turkey

Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi

In its editorial published in September 1987, the liberal Turkish monthly *Nokta* (No. 30) announced the impending end of Alevism, a large and officially still unrecognized heterodox Islamic minority in Turkey. Due to a thorough secularization and the dramatic breakdown of its traditions and socio-religious institutions, Alevism at that time actually seemed to be about to lose its characteristics as a distinctive community and to become a mere chapter in history. The early 1990s, however, brought about an unexpected community revival, accompanied by a political movement aimed at the official recognition of Alevism as a 'faith community' (*inanç topluluğu*) and as a distinctive collective identity (*kimlik*). In this process, the preoccupation with the group's history has become a crucial issue. In this paper I discuss the significance of the historical event of Kerbela for Alevism in general and for the current, ongoing process of revitalization in particular. I shall argue that the re-evocation of the 'myth of Kerbela' enables the Alevis[1] to reinforce communal cohesion and at the same time to legitimize political claims *vis-à-vis* the state and the majority society.[2]

Concealment, Secrecy and Mourning for the Righteous – Alevi Identity in Retrospect

In Turkey, the term Alevism (*Alevilik*) designates a large socio-religious community, members of which are both of Turkish and Kurdish ethnic origin. Though the different regional groups hold a wide range of divergent views about religion, they all share a strong negative attitude towards Islamic law, which they regard as the mere outer (*zahiri*) dimension of the prophetic revelation. Instead, the Alevis lay claim to being the custodians of the inner (*batini*) meaning of the faith, which remains hidden from ordinary humans. Stressing the superiority of the 'faith of the heart' over the 'faith of the tongue', they regard the observation of rituals proscribed by the Shari'a as not binding for them. Another shared charac-

1 In Turkey, the term 'Alevi' is used in the sense of the 'followers of Ali', while in other parts of the Islamic world 'alawî usually designates the Alids, i.e. the direct descendants of Ali ibn Talib, the cousin of the Prophet Mohammed.

2 The transcription of Arabic, Persian and Turkish personal names and place names follows the modern Turkish spelling. However, terms frequently used in English (such as Shi'a, Shari'a) follow the English usage.

teristic is the veneration and even divination of the fourth Islamic Caliph, Ali, and an altogether strong attachment to the twelve Imams of the Shi'a.[3]

Because of their leading role in anti-Ottoman upheavals, the numerous heterodox groups which later came to be known as Alevis experienced serious persecution by the state in the 16th century, as a result of which they withdrew into marginality.[4] Expelled as heretics and subjected to propaganda regarding their alleged immorality,[5] they took refuge in the well-known Shi'i practice of *takiye*, the concealment of one's religious and social identity. While *takiye* first of all served the protection of the group in a hostile environment, it comprised also a 'non-prudential' dimension, 'based on the need to conceal secret doctrines from the uninitiated' (Kohlberg 1995: 345). In traditional Alevism,[6] access to the group's teachings was restricted to those who were born into the community and underwent a particular initiation ceremony (*nasip alma*). Religious knowledge was transmitted orally within a great number of 'holy families' (*ocak*) and passed down to the initiated lay members (*talip*) of the community. For centuries, the exclusive possession of a truth inaccessible to non-group members formed an essential part of the consciousness of being an Alevi. Awareness of possessing a secret testified to group membership. From the insiders' perspective it invested the participants with a special, positive status, which compensated them for experienced humiliations. In view of their continuing stigmatization in the Republic of Turkey and the political ban on the articulation of deviant collective identities, this 'social mimicry' has remained for the Alevis until very recently a necessary survival strategy.

As a religious community that borrowed a large part of its doctrines from the Shi'a, the event of Kerbela is of crucial importance for Alevism: its members see in their allegiance to 'the people of the house' (*ehl-i beyt*) the birth of their community.[7] For them Kerbela became an origin myth. Kerbela is the place where, in 680 A.D. in the Islamic month of Muharrem, Ali's son Hüseyin, together with his family members and followers were slaughtered by the soldiers of the Caliph Yezid in an unequal battle fought for the Caliphate. Traditionally, the anniversary of the tragedy was commemorated with ten to twelve days of mourning (*matem*), consisting of fasting, abstaining from shaving, washing, changing one's

3 For the history and religion of the Alevis see Kehl-Bodrogi 1988; Dressler 2002.

4 At that time the diverse heterodox groups of Anatolia were mainly called Kızılbaş (literally 'red head') or simply *rafizi* (heretic). As a collective term for the group in question, Alevi did not emerge before the end of the 19th century.

5 Thus the Alevis were – and are sometimes even today – accused of promiscuous orgiastic practices performed in the course of their religious ceremonies.

6 I use the word 'traditional' to designate Alevism prior to the beginning of the dissolution of the community in the 1950s.

7 'The people of the house' (*ehl-i beyt*) refers to the Prophet Mohammed, his daughter Fatima, Ali, cousin of Mohammed and husband of Fatima, and their sons Hasan and Hüseyin.

clothes, sexual intercourse, and the like. In memory of the agony of thirst that Hüseyin and his family suffered in the desert of Kerbela, during the mourning period the Alevis in particular refrained from drinking water. However, the Muharrem-*matem* was not the only occasion where Kerbela was remembered. In fact, the Alevis incorporated the commemoration of the tragedy in each of their communal celebrations (*cem*).

Traditionally, *cem*s were held several times a year. [8] They lasted the whole night from Thursday to Friday and were led by a *dede* or *pir*, the usual designations for members of 'holy families', whose authority is based on their (assumed) descent from the Prophet Mohammed.[9] The first part of a *cem* was usually devoted to the settling of disputes, which may have occurred in the community. The ritual of reconcilement (*rızalık*) marked the transition to the religious part of the ceremony, which itself consisted of various stages and reached its emotional peak in the ritual of *sakka suyu*[10] in which the event of Kerbela was re-enacted anew. The ritual, which cannot be treated here at length, began with a prayer recited by the *dede*, the opening words of which were as follows: 'Allah, Allah, with the help of the saints, for the love of Mohammed Ali, for the honour of the pure souls of all those who endured thirst and suffered martyrdom with Imam Hüseyin in Kerbela'.[11] Amid the participants' loud curses on Yezid, the *sakka*, a ritual specialist, entered the scene carrying a bucket of water symbolizing 'the water of the martyrs of Kerbela'. In remembrance of the agony of thirst which the latter once endured in the desert while being cut off from the Euphrates River by Yezid's army, the *sakka* walked along the rows of the assembled and gave them a drink one after the other. While the water was being distributed, the singers and lute players (*zakir)* sang laments (*mersiye*) in which the most tragic moments of the tragedy were recalled. The participants accompanied the laments with ecstatic exclamations of sorrow and love for Hüseyin. It was especially this phase of the *cem*, which showed strong resemblance to the *zikr* of Islamic mystics. Sitting on their knees, the participants, men and women alike, swayed to the rhythm of the music beating their thighs and loudly uttering the words "Allah Allah". Everyone cried and some participants even fell into ecstasy and had to be carried out to calm down. To give just one example of the *mersiye*s usually sung during the ritual:

> The army of Yezid has taken the Euphrates
> It has forgotten God, Muhammad, and the faith
> It has dried the water flowing to Kerbela
> Your wounds upon me, Imam Hüseyin!

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8 For a detailed description of a traditional *cem* see Kehl-Bodrogi 1988; Yaman 1998. For *cem*s in the diaspora see Karolewski 2005 and Sökefeld 2005. An excellent literary description of a rural *cem* in the early twentieth century is found in the novel by Kaygusuz (1991).

9 Hence the designation *evlad-i rasul* (children of the Prophet) for members of such lineages.

10 *Sakka suyu*, literally 'the water of the water carrier'.

11 Throughout the article, all quotations from Turkish and German have been translated by the author.

Lacking water, the people of the house became martyrs
The son of Ali endured [the pain]
The Yezids should drown in a flood of curse
Your wounds upon me, Imam Hüseyin!

The damned Şimir cut his head
And placed it in front of Yezid
May all his relatives be cursed
The *dede* sacrifices himself for you, Imam Hüseyin![12]

The *mersiye*s led over to the next and final part of the ceremony, by now taking place in the early morning hours: this was the *lokma* or communal meal. Martin Sökefeld (2005: 210) rightly calls the *cem* 'a communal ritual..., which sanctifies the participating community itself.' In it, the ritual of the *sakka suyu* had a particular significance as it ensured that knowledge of and identification with a past considered one's own would not be forgotten. In *sakka suyu* the self-perception of the group as having supported the morally superior side in the battle between good (represented by Hüseyin) and evil (represented by Yezid) was thus repeatedly reinforced and the boundary between them and the outsiders was reasserted. Here we witness the construction of the 'significant other', i.e. the Sunnis: following the principle of responsibility for the deeds of one's ancestors, the Alevis hold the Sunnis responsible for Yezid's betrayal of the Prophet's family. This dichotomy based on the Kerbela tradition has survived in the colloquial speech of the Alevis, who among themselves still use the term Yezid to designate their Sunni compatriots.

Integration and Politicization of the Alevis

After being defeated by the Ottomans in the course of the 16th century, the Alevis never entered the political arena again. Forced into social and spatial marginality and more or less tolerated by the state authorities, they continued to live in accordance with their own norms and values, which sharply contrasted with those of the majority population of the Empire. The profound changes following the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, however, induced the gradual integration of the Alevis into the wider society. Their mass migration into the cities from the middle of the 1950s onward 'brought them into closer contact, and sometimes in direct competition, with strict Sunnis, from whom they remained socially separated for centuries' (van Bruinessen 1996: 8). The adaptation to urban life and modernity brought about dramatic changes for the community.

12 In Turkish original: *Yezid'in ordusu Fırat'ı tuttu / Hak'kı Muhammed'i dini unuttu / Kerbela'ya akan suyu kuruttu / Yaraların bana İmam Hüseyin! Susuz şehit oldu ehli ayali / Dayandı dayandı evlad-ı Ali / Boğsun yezitleri lanetler seli / Yaraların bana İmam Hüseyin! Kesti kafasını Şimir i lain / Götürdü önüne koydu Yezid'in / Soyuna sopuna lanet Yezid'in / Dede kurban sana İmam Hüseyin!* (Kaygusuz 1991: 206)

The traditional socio-religious institutions collapsed and the transmission of religious knowledge from one generation to the other was interrupted. The tradition of the *cem*s came to an end, and religion altogether lost its former significance as a crucial element of Alevi identity. The process of secularization became especially accelerated in the 1970s, when in the course of the political polarization of the country the Alevi youth took sides with the left and became actively engaged in various (Turkish and Kurdish) leftist organisations including some militant ones. For an entire generation, being an Alevi was tantamount to being a revolutionary (*devrimci*). The nearly collective shift from the former religion-based identity to one defined in terms of a political ideology was accompanied - and actually made possible - by the divestment of Alevism of its religious dimension and its re-interpretation as a 'way of life that intends to transform the existing system through revolutionary consciousness' (Hacı Bektaş Veli Turizm Derneği 1977: 197) For the new socialist generation - and actually the entire left - Alevism altogether appeared as a (proto-) socialist ideology, and its central figures such as Ali, Hüseyin, the thirteenth century popular mystic Hacı Bektaş, and the 16th century poet and rebel Pir Sultan Abdal were re-interpreted as early socialists and revolutionaries who fought against the exploitation and oppression of their time. As Peter Bumke (1979: 544) noted concerning the Alevi youth in the Tunceli region,

> …in their songs and discussions the martyrs of Kerbela are equated with the left-wing victims of the armed conflicts which took place in the cities, and with those persons who had identified themselves as Marxist-Leninist guerrillas and who were hanged or shot dead after 1971.

The young revolutionary generation expressed its political actions in the symbolism of Kerbela in very much the same way, as did the Iranian Shi'ites in their struggle against the Shah regime. In his excellent analysis of the significance of the 'Ashura rituals for the demonstrations and street fights in 1978 in Iran, Hans Kippenberg (1981) demonstrated in a historical perspective that for the Shi'ites, the memory of Kerbela has always served as a point of reference in actual social and political conflicts. It is obvious, he notes, that 'the ritual of 'Ashura has always had the additional function of a discourse which expressed and generalized current experiences. Collective conflicts.... shaped the memory of the battle of Kerbela, and repressed its former interpretation' (Kippenberg 1981: 243).

Investing them with new meanings, young Alevis also appropriated the religious hymns of Alevism. They sang traditional songs such as 'My Ali, why are you sleeping, your time has came' (*Alim ne yatarsın günlerin geldi*) during political party meetings and demonstrations as appeals for armed resistance against the Yezids of the present, represented by contemporary fascists and religious extremists. Occasionally, for the sake of unambiguous understanding, whole songs were re-written and became in this form the common property of the entire leftist movement. To quote just one example:

Original version

Come oh souls let us reach unity
Let us strike a blow on the unbelievers
And avenge the blood of our Hüseyin
I trust in God the Almighty[13]

New version

Come oh souls let us reach unity
Let us strike a blow on the oppressors
And avenge the blood of the poor
Come into being, long live socialism[14]

The fascist and radical Islamist movements, which directed their respective propaganda efforts against the Sunni population, took advantage of the traditional Sunni-Alevi animosities in regions with a religiously mixed population. 'Spreading rumors that Alevis had bombed a mosque or poisoned a water supply unfailingly drew Sunnis into the extreme right camp' (van Bruinessen 1996: 8). Thus the originally religious divide became increasingly transformed into a political one. The second half of the 1970s witnessed numerous violent clashes between Sunnis and Alevis that at the end of the decade culminated in a number of anti-Alevi pogroms in the towns of Çorum, Malatya, Kahramanmaraş and Sivas (cf. Eral 1993; Şahhüseyinoğlu 1999).

The overall political changes induced by the military coup in 1980 affected the Alevis in various ways. The military, which claimed that its aim was the pacification of society after a decade of political turbulence, 'did not treat the extreme right with anything like the severity that they reserved for the leftists and the Kurds' (van Bruinessen 1996: 8). A huge number of Alevis, over-represented in both the Turkish and Kurdish leftist movement, were imprisoned, were forced to go underground or to seek refuge in Western Europe. Additionally, the Alevis as a whole became subjected to attempts to religiously assimilate them to a degree that they had never witnessed before in the course of their history.[15] Forcible assimilation, alongside the increasing Islamization of Turkish politics and society induced a community revival among the Alevis, in the course of which religion once again has gained crucial importance in defining their collective identity. This process was further supported by the discrediting of their political utopias after the worldwide collapse of socialism. Many Alevis began to view their

13 In the Turkish original: *Gelin canlar bir olalım / Münkire kılıç çalalım / Hüseynimizin kanı alalım / Tevekkeltü taalallah.*

14 In the Turkish original: *Gelin canlar bir olalım / Zulüme kılıç çalalım / Yoksulun kanı alalım /Yaşasın var ol sosyalizm.*

15 Thus, for example, religious education based entirely on Sunni Islam, was introduced as an obligatory part of the school curriculum. Alevi children were obliged to participate. In addition, mosques were built in a great many Alevi villages by order of the provincial authorities, which went so far as to make infrastructural improvements dependent on the villagers' attendance of the prayers led by Sunni imams.

previous association with the radical left as a big mistake, which – to quote an often heard comment – 'gave the deathblow to Alevism'. This development culminated in the foundation of community based volunteer associations (*dernek*) following 1989, when Turkish politics became somewhat liberalized and the ban on associations was relaxed. Leader- and membership of most of these *dernek*s consisted mainly of former leftist activists who - under the motto 'From now on we will strive for Alevism' (Çamuroğlu 1997: 26) - decided to use their extended networks and political experiences in support of the community they belonged to by birth. With the publication of the so called 'Alevi manifesto' (*Alevi bildirisi*) in one of the leading Turkish newspapers, these former Marxists launched an identity movement that aims at the official recognition of Alevism and the end of the discrimination against them by both state and society.[16] This movement, however, did not achieve mass support until 1993, when the Alevis once again became victims of violence.

Sivas and the Politicization of Alevi Identity

On July 3, 1993 a demonstration by radical Islamists took place in Sivas, a town in eastern Turkey inhabited predominantly by Sunni Muslims in an area of villages populated mostly by Alevis. The target of the demonstration was a cultural festival organised by the town's Alevi association to commemorate the sixteenth-century Alevi poet and rebel Pir Sultan Abdal, regarded by the Alevis as a symbol of the nonconformist, rebellious tradition of their community. The festival was attended by a large number of famous Alevi intellectuals and artists. The most prominent guest was the author Aziz Nesin, a self-declared atheist, incidentally of Sunni origin. Nesin has long been a thorn in the side of the Islamists because of his anti-religious views and his support of the translation and publication of Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses in Turkish. Taking Nesin's presence as an occasion to protest against the 'enemies of religion', on the second day of the festival, ten to fifteen thousand people surged onto the streets after the Friday prayer, demanding Nesin's immediate death and the implementation of Islamic law. Then the mob stormed the hotel where Nesin and other guests of the festival were staying, showered it with rocks and finally set it on fire. The siege of the hotel went on for eight hours with neither the police nor the fire brigade interfering; a clear sign of the involvement of the city's authorities in the event. While Nesin escaped alive, by the end of the day thirty-seven people had died in the flames.

16 For a German translation of the Alevi manifesto see Kehl-Bodrogi 1993. For more detailed discussions of the Alevi revival movement and its causes see Kehl-Bodrogi 1992, 1993; van Bruinessen 1996; Çamuroğlu 1997.

What has become known as the 'event of Sivas' (*Sivas olayı*) has been evaluated and interpreted in different ways by different actors. Praising the 'heroic Muslims of Sivas' (*Taraf* (January 1994)), the radical Islamist media did not hide its satisfaction with the violence of the mob. The more moderate religious and right-wing media, though distancing itself verbally from the acts of violence, appreciated the 'legitimate reaction of the people to the provocation caused by Nesin' (*Söz* (August 1993)), a view which was also embraced by government circles and by most sections of the Turkish media. Liberal and democratic circles interpreted the event mostly as a riot against the secular state, planned far in advance by radical Islamist circles.[17] All parties were anxious, for political reasons, to stress that what had happened in Sivas was in no way a 'denominational conflict' (*mezhep çatışması*) between Sunnis and Alevis. As for the latter, however, there is not the slightest doubt that the violence was targeted against them as a collective and that Nesin served the Islamists merely as a pretence for subjecting the Alevis to a 'massacre' (*toplum katliamı*).

That the riot happened to take place during an Alevi festival and that, with one exception, all the victims were of Alevi origin makes it difficult to ignore its anti-Alevi bias. The fact that the demonstrators destroyed not only the statue of Atatürk, the founder of the secular Turkish Republic but also that of Pir Sultan Abdal, which had been erected by the festival organisers some time earlier, symbolically points to the character of the event as simultaneously anti-secularist and anti-Alevi.

The massacre had a strong mobilizing effect on the Alevis, who increasingly felt the necessity to strengthen their community in order to be able to defend themselves against the growing influence of radical Islamism in view of the inability - if not unwillingness - of the state to protect its Alevi citizens. The experience of becoming victimised again led to a dramatic increase in the number of Alevi associations both in Turkey as well as in the European diaspora, and there was a marked increase in the membership of the already existing organisations.[18]

Sivas caused a turnabout also among the Alevi combatants affiliated to militant leftist and Kurdish nationalist organizations. The leftists initially looked at the re-emphasis of Alevi identity with considerable scepticism, calling it 'confessionalism' (*mezhepçilik*) and its protagonists 'leftist converts' (*sol dönükler*). However, as it became obvious that, in the wake of Sivas, the Alevis decided to take control of their own cause instead of allowing themselves to be treated as the taken-for-granted basis of the political left, there came a gradual revision of opinion. Many feared that a continuing negative attitude toward the Alevi movement

17 For an overview of media articles see Sivas Kitabı 1994.

18 Thus for example, while prior to Sivas the Pir Sultan Abdal Association merely had three branch offices their number increased to more than thirty after the event. In 1993 the number of Alevi associations in Germany raised from 40 to 100.

could further distance the Alevis from the left. On the other hand, in the aftermath of Sivas, the remainder of the Alevi left tried to mobilize the Alevi movement to further their own political ideology. This point can be aptly illustrated by the following quote from a book written in jail by Hamit Baldemir, a member of the 'Unity of the Turkish Communist Party' [TKP(B)], [19]:

> 'As long as the leftists regard them [the Alevis] as their rivals, they only cause harm to themselves…It is necessary to turn these organizations into one mass organization…in order to position themselves against the political system in the interest of the realization of their claims.' (Baldemir 1994: 157; 159)

After Sivas, the initially rather reserved tone with which the Alevis publicised their claims, gave way to another, more offensive one. This change of tone could be observed especially during the annual festival in the central Anatolian town Hacıbektaş (named after the saint buried there), which since the end of the 1980s has become a large public event attracting masses of Alevis from all over the country and from Europe. In 1994, one year after the Sivas massacre, young men and women turned up for the first time in Hacıbektaş wearing red headbands with symbols of Zülfikar, Ali's legendary sword, and the names of Ali and Hüseyin. Although the Alevis usually reject the idea that there might be any similarity between them and the Shi'ites in Iran, my comment that they looked like Iranian holy warriors did not irritate the young people at all: 'If need be, we will fight like Hüseyin in Kerbela. There will be no second Sivas.'

In the preceding phase of politicization the Alevis used to draw an analogy between their fight for a universal proletarian revolution and the events of Kerbela. Following Sivas, Hüseyin's martyrdom in the desert served once again as the symbol of a struggle, this time, however, for the interests of their own community. However, as I shall try to show below, it was not the motif of fighting but the motif of suffering in Kerbela, which became central in the discourse of the increasingly strong Alevi movement.

History as the Repetition of Kerbela

The return to the community and the demand for official acknowledgement forced the Alevis to explore consciously their defining characteristics and collective identity. To a great extent this is being achieved through reference to the past. Typically, the vast majority of the Alevi literature, which emerged in the course of the 1990s as the very product of the revival process itself, focuses on the question of history (cf. Vorhoff 2003: 99). That dissonant voices are heard in this process of discursive self-definition is hardly surprising, given the highly heterogeneous na-

[19] A splinter group of the Turkish Communist Party. In contrast to the latter's political stance often criticized as 'pacifist' by the former, the TKP(B) considered armed resistance legitimate.

ture of present-day Alevism. While back in the 1960s the majority was made up by peasants, industrial and seasonal workers, since then a middle class has emerged from the ranks of small entrepreneurs, civil servants, doctors, lawyers, teachers, academics, etc. In addition, there is yet another, albeit small group consisting of large industrial investors and capitalists. Individual Alevis have also successfully penetrated the highest echelons of Turkish politics. It is only natural that within such a large, heterogeneous group with an approximate membership of 15-20 million people there should be many disagreements concerning the collective interests of the community. In addition to the religious, political and ideological contradictions, at a time when ethnic and national discourses stand in the centre of attention, the ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity of the Alevis are also put to the test (cf. Kehl-Bodrogi 1998, van Bruinessen 1997).

Thus each individual or group that represents the Alevis in public claims to tell their true history. Appropriately, today, many competing histories of the Alevis are in circulation, according to where their respective narrators wish to position themselves in the contemporary political landscape of Turkey. Depending on which specific moment of the past is chosen at any given point in time, some narrators define the Alevis' historical role as the keepers of an 'original, pre-Islamic' Turkish culture, while others identify Alevism as a Kurdish national phenomenon. And while from one point of view, the Alevis may take on the role of the most loyal Kemalist allies in the early years of the Republic, from another perspective they appear as the victims of Kemalism itself. Here, like in the controversial discussion of the positioning of Alevism *vis-à-vis* Islam, discourses on history serve above all the discussion of contemporary issues and questions of the future.[20] But no matter how antagonistic the definitions of Alevism are, all historical reconstructions agree on the description of Alevi history as an infinite story of suffering and pain (*Leidensgeschichte*), the starting point of which is the murders of Kerbela. The following portrayal of Alevi history, taken from an Alevi web page is only one – if somewhat solemn – example of this self-image of permanent victimization:

> For over 1400 years the mass murderers have not stopped massacring the Alevis. So much pain, cruelty, oppression, humiliation, butchery… Is this the fate of the Alevis? Oh, earth, are you not satisfied with so much blood?[21]

> Though the victim discourse could be traced in the group's literature already at the beginning of the 1990s, it became particularly dominant in Alevi self-portrayals after the event of Sivas which was soon labelled as the 'second Kerbela'. Or, in the words of the bard (*aşık*) Yazıcıoğlu: 'The massacre of Kerbela / Happened in Sivas' (*Kerbela kiyimi / Oldu Sivasta*) (quoted in Dressler 2002: 253). Sadık Eral's book on anti-Alevi massacres (*Alevi katliamları*), published some months after the Sivas event, represents Alevis as the

[20] For a detailed discussion of the divergent positions held by Alevi writers and community spokesmen see Vorhoff 1995 and 2003.

[21] From the website "Alevikonseyi", *www.alevikonseyi.com/katliam/katliam.html.*

> victims of history in an exemplary way. Eral too starts the *Leidensgeschichte* of the community with the 'painful and unjust event' of Kerbela, stressing that it 'was the first massacre inflicted (...) upon them [the Alevis], but not the last' (Eral 1993: 16). Eral continues the series of massacres with the Ottoman persecutions of Alevis in the sixteenth century, followed by the pogroms in Çorum and Kahramanmaraş in the late 1970s and concluding with the murders in Sivas some twenty years later (Eral ibid.).

For the Alevis, Sivas became, beside Kerbela, the event, which 'cannot be forgotten and cannot be allowed to be forgotten' (Assmann 2002). New commemorative rituals ensure that the imperative 'We do not allow that our martyrs should be forgotten' (*şehitlerimizi unutturmayacağız*) is upheld. Memorials and demonstrations are held on the day of the tragedy in Turkey and in the European diaspora; moments of silence to remember the 'martyrs of Sivas' (*Sivas şehitleri*) open association meetings, conferences and the like; black-edged photos of the thirty-seven victims of Sivas are hung in the lounges of associations and displayed on their web pages, and Alevi periodicals dedicate special issues to Sivas, this 'bleeding wound of the Alevis' (Yıldırım 2005: 86), every year. In 1994, Alevi associations even introduced a campaign aimed at turning the site of the tragedy, the Hotel Madımak in Sivas, into a 'museum of deterrence' (*ibret müzesi*) in order to 'render the memory of our martyrs immortal' (Öner 2004: 6). These acts of remembering and the fact that a large number of Alevis own the 'Book of Sivas', a comprehensive documentation of the event and its aftermath, bear witness that in the structuring of collective memory the new media have replaced the *ayn-i cem*. Or, as it is expressed on one of the numerous Alevi web sites: 'As forgetful as human memory tends to be, as long as this book exists, the massacre of Sivas will remain fresh and alive in our collective memory and never be forgotten.'[22]

Conclusion

As it has been shown in this paper, from the middle of the 20th century onward Alevism has undergone a process of radical transformation, in the course of which it has largely lost its main characteristics as a distinct socio-religious minority. Renewed interest in the community since the beginning of the 1990s has led to various efforts for the reconstruction of community structures and the re-strengthening of Alevi collective identity. In this process, the preoccupation with their own past has become a crucial issue, a phenomenon, which is described by Jan Assmann as generally characteristic for restoration movements:

> Every drastic break with continuity and tradition can lead to the emergence of a past, if such a break is followed by an attempt to start everything anew. New beginnings, renaissances and restorations take the form of resorting to the past. To the degree that they open up the future, they also produce, reconstruct and discover the past. (Assmann 2002: 32)

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22 *www.aleviten.com/gunceltarih1208031.htm.*

Consistent with the programmatic nature of the movement, its protagonists tend to focus on the (re-)construction of the history of the Alevis, aligning it with contemporary political conditions and strategies, rather than researching its history. The case of the Alevis thus supports understandings of the past as a 'social construction, which is informed by current means of reference and the need to attribute meaning to the present' (Assmann 2002: 48). The past as it is preserved in the collective memory of the group and elaborated today in Alevi literature, however, is not a mere invention but rather the product of a 'selective accentuation and reconstruction' (Bader 1995: 108). Defining Kerbela (680), Çaldıran (1514), Maraş (1978) and Sivas (1993) as the cornerstones of their past, the Alevis choose from a 'variety of possible pasts' (Giesen 1999: 49) those elements which seem to them relevant for the perpetuation of their identity and for the support of collective action in the present.

As part of the traditional Alevi 'culture of remembering' (*Gedächtniskultur*), Kerbela is best suited for these purposes. It helps to maintain Alevi identity as a 'counter-identity', understood as an identity, which is 'developed and maintained against the dominant culture as it is typically the case with minorities' (Assmann: 2002: 154). Kerbela is perceived as a line of demarcation between one's own group and the outsiders, between those who remember the tragedy and those who do not care about it. Or, in the words of a web article: 'The Alevis commemorate even today the injustice committed against them, while the Sunnis hardly ever take notice of that massacre.'[23] Kerbela, and with it the past constructed as a story of suffering, constitutes the brackets which hold the community together beyond the many controversies. It engenders a sense of belonging upon its members, which turns them into a collective. In the reactivation of the memory of Kerbela and the interpretation of all subsequent attacks on Alevis as its re-enactment, the past begins to influence the present and assumes a permanent character. As for the outside world, portraying themselves as the eternal victims of the respective political elite and the majority society helps to underline the legitimacy of their claims, i.e. the end of discrimination and equal participation in mainstream society.

The replacement of the interpretation of Kerbela as the symbol of resistance with its interpretation as the symbol of victimization corresponds altogether to the overall shift in Alevi political orientation taking place since the mid-1980s. The Alevis' current struggle for recognition came about following a long period of active involvement with socialism. This development mirrors the overall 'paradigm change of contemporary politics' (Benhabib 2002: 49) since the beginning of the 20th century. As Nancy Fraser (1997: 2) pointed out with respect to post-1989 developments:

23 *www.alevi-bochum.de.massaker/kerbela.htm.*

> Many actors appear to be moving away from a socialist political imaginary, in which the central problem of justice is redistribution, to a 'postsocialist' imaginary, in which the central problem of justice is recognition. With this shift, the most salient social movements are no longer defined 'classes' who are struggling to defend their 'interests', end 'exploitation', and win 'distribution'. Instead, they are culturally defined 'groups' or 'communities of value' who are struggling to defend their 'identities', end 'cultural domination' and win 'recognition'.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, after centuries of invisibility, Alevism has become an indispensable element of Turkish politics and society, and Alevi identity has lost much of its stigmatized character. By demanding their *de jure* recognition, the Alevis have abandoned *takiye* once and for all and have come to the fore. By making previously concealed beliefs and practices public, Alevism has been transformed into a written - if not yet codified - public religion. Even if the Alevi movement has not yet achieved its main goal, the official recognition of the community or the legalization of its religious practices, the state meanwhile largely tolerates community based organizations and their manifold cultural, political and religious activities. This is not at least due to the support of secular circles even inside the state apparatus, which see in Alevism a necessary bulwark against Islamist tendencies.

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The Past as a Resource for the Slave Descendants of Circassians in Turkey

Eiji Miyazawa

This article explores social memory of Circassians of Turkey.[1] It asks if the past can serve descendants of Circassian slaves as a resource. Can they empower themselves by re-counting history, which is seemingly more likely to disempower them? To tackle these questions, I look at oral histories of three different sets of Circassians (the modernist intellectuals of an urban ethnic organization, wealthy nobles and well-off slave descendants of an Anatolian plateau) in the light of Ardener's concept of mutedness. The comparison shows that the first two oral histories served complementarily to mute the people of slave origin. Nevertheless, some individuals belonging to this category related their own empowering history, partly appropriating this articulate framework.

Introduction

Over a million Circassians (*Çerkes/ Adıge*) were exiled when the Russian conquest of the North Caucasus became decisive in the mid 19th century, as the result of the century-long process of military campaigns and colonization aimed at settling the Cossacks.[2] These predominantly Muslim refugees were settled in the Ottoman territories. Uzunyayla in Central Anatolia was one of their first settlements.[3] Uzunyayla is a plateau fifty kms in diameter, located at 1,550-1,630 m above sea level, stretching from the Pınarbaşı district of Kayseri province to two neighbouring districts of Sivas province. Circassians originally founded seventy-one villages there.

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1 Parts of the materials in this article have been included in my unpublished Ph.D. thesis on the political aspects of social memories of Circassians in Turkey (Miyazawa 2004). My research in Turkey (September 1997- April 1999) was partly supported by the Central Research Funds from the University of London and by the Additional Fieldwork Award from the School of Oriental and African Studies. I briefly returned to the area in the Summer of 2004. I am grateful to Fethi Açıkel, Zeynel Besleney, Prof. Chris Hann, Nancy Lindisfarne, Prof. Michael Meeker, Lina Mufti, Seteney Shami, Prof. Richard Tapper, Prof. Sami Zubaida, as well as the editor of this book, Ildikó Bellér-Hann, for giving me valuable comments on earlier versions of this current work.

2 In this article, I use the term "Circassians" as a generic category encompassing descendants of displaced people from the North Caucasus, of which the *Adıge* is a major group. Circassians are called *Çerkes* by Turks. I underline Circassian (Kabardian) words, as in *Adıge*, when they appear the first time, to distinguish them from Turkish words. As for the Latin transcription of Kabardian words see *http://www.kafder.org.tr/bilgibelge.php?yazi_id=380*.

3 Habiçoğlu 1993: 167-9.

During my research in 1997-1999, approximately ten thousand Circassians were still living in sixty-two of these villages and the district town of Pınarbaşı. The villagers were engaged in grain cultivation and animal husbandry. The Kayseri Caucasus Association (*Kayseri Kafkas Derneği*) estimated that twenty-five to forty thousand Circassians were living in the urban centre of the province.

Among Circassians who settled in Uzunyayla, Kabardians, one of the major groups of the *Adıge*, were the most populous. They were joined by both *Adıge* (Hatukoys and Abzekhs) and non-*Adıge* groups, the latter including Abazas (Ashkharwas and Ashwas), Chechens and Karachay Turks. Some scholars call the Kabardians "aristocratic" Circassians since they had the most elaborate status hierarchy of any peoples of the Caucasus.[4] The most important categories were the princes (*pssı*), the nobles (*werkh*), the freemen (*lhxukhel'*) and the slaves (*pssıl'* and *uneut*).[5]

The master-slave relationships among Circassians were perpetuated in Anatolia, where the exploitation of slaves even intensified among the exhausted refugees. The Ottoman government relied more and more on Circassians in Anatolia for the supply of *cariyes* (female domestic slaves), as it gradually restricted the trade of slaves, nevertheless resisting the total abolition of slavery.[6]

I started my research in Uzunyayla with an interest in reconstructing the history of the re-formation and transformation of a Circassian society in the diaspora.[7] While many of the local nobles, or *werkhs*, were very articulate about history, I had difficulty eliciting historical accounts in Üçyol village (a pseudonym), the central location of my research, where more than half of the population were said to have slave origins.[8]

Actually, some of the residents of Üçyol were willing to speak about the past, but I could not initially recognize their stories as history. Why was this the case?

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4 Quelquejay 1962: 22.

5 I use the term "slaves" for Circassian bondmen with some hesitation. According to one of the early monographs on Circassians, *pssıl's* (those attached to a lord) were of Circassian origin and almost their masters' partners with their own personal assets: *uneuts* ("domestic slaves"), on the other hand, were descended from war hostages of different ethnic origin and were not allowed to have separate households (Baj 1995: 109-110, originally completed in 1921). The difference between these two social categories was not upheld in Uzunyayla, where locals commonly talked about slaves in general terms (*khejer*; *köle*). They did not have a concept of serfs inseparable from the particular pieces of land, though it might be more appropriate to consider *pssıl's* as serfs.

6 Erdem 1996; Toledano 1998.

7 Prior to my research, I had spent two years in Kayseri (1994-1996). I had many contacts with members of different Circassian associations in Kayseri and beyond. Stories I heard from them shaped my understandings of Circassians.

8 There was a vigorous dispute in Uzunyayla over how the status categories should be defined and which family belonged to which group. Current ideas of noble and slave status seemed to have little to do with people's historically factual origins. To categorise different families into separate status groups, I follow generally accepted reputations. Reification of speakers' identities has seemed inevitable in my attempt to enable the voiceless to speak.

I suggest that there was indeed a "history", with its own form and message, in what they told me. This raises the question of how the past might have served as a resource for those Circassians who supposedly had no history to tell.

To tackle these issues of silence of Circassians of slave origin, I employ the idea of muted categories that Ardener proposed for discussing the cultural mechanism by which subjugated groups are deprived of their voice.[9] Only a limited number of people have the ability to be articulate in any given society, whereas others are inarticulate.[10] Ardener's concept of articulation refers to the capacity of commanding language, including both the ability to perceive things and express oneself clearly as well as a claim to authority which demands that one be listened to by subordinate others. The latter, whose voices cannot be fully realised, remain muted.

How were the *Üçyollus* (the people of Üçyol) muted by the articulate narrative of Circassian history? To answer the question, I compare three different sets of oral history produced by Circassians. These are the Oral History formulated by urban-based Circassian ethnic organizations, the History told by *werkh* notables who originate from Uzunyayla, and the "history" related by those wealthy *Üçyollus* who are descended from slaves.[11]

To examine these different verbal representations, perhaps, the following issues could be considered. Who spoke with authority? What resources authorised their voice? How were these resources distributed? What events were recognised as historically significant? What social boundaries were stressed? How were the shared pasts emphasised at the cost of people's voice?

This inquiry will show that Circassian *werkhs* imposed silence upon slave descendants. On closer examination, however, we find that the latter were certainly relating a kind of history, even if it did not share a narrative with *werkh* History. It is the specific contents, forms, meanings and motivation of this muted history, which need examining.

I shall explain how people from affluent, former slave families were appropriating *werkhs*' historical narrative as a resource for constructing an empowering version of their history. De Certeau draws attention to the everyday practice of "making do", in which subordinate people cope with difficult situations by skilfully using the resources at their disposal to produce positive meanings and experiences.[12] I shall show how *Üçyollus* were "making do", resisting the dominant mode of knowledge production that silenced them, to raise their own voices with some success.

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9 Ardener 1975b.
10 Ardener ibid.: 130.
11 I refer to Circassians as an "ethnic" group and use the term "nation" to refer to the Turks.
12 de Certeau 1988: 29-39.

By this I am also responding to Ardener's insight that researchers often participate in the muting of subordinate groups.[13] A number of studies have been written by non-Circassian as well as Circassian researchers on Circassian ethnic organizations in Turkey.[14] It is illuminating that these works make almost no reference to the different Circassian status groups. These works discuss modern modes of social organization without examining the influences exerted by traditional Circassian organization. I hope that my examinations of both rural and urban Circassian voices may, however modestly, redress the neglect and open a new field of investigation.[15]

The Oral History of Circassian Modernist Intellectuals

The Caucasus Association and its Historiography

In this section, I briefly look at the historiography of Circassian intellectuals, limiting my account to an Oral History Programme promoted by the writers of a Circassian magazine. *Nart* is a bimonthly opinion and art magazine, published by the Caucasus Association (*Kafkas Derneği*; *Kaf-Der* hereafter).[16] I use the materials that appear in this publication selectively in order to present one of many different strands that constitute the historiography of modernist Circassians. By doing so, I am taking the risk of homogenizing the historical awareness of different members of *Kaf-Der* who embrace diverse political beliefs.

First, I will briefly summarise the activities of Circassian organizations, so that I can later analyze how the Oral History Programme is in line with the broad outlines of the historiography of Circassian intellectuals.

Circassians began to found ethnic organizations from the onset of the constitutional period, beginning with the foundation of the Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association (*Çerkes İttihad ve Teavün Cemiyeti*, founded in 1908).[17] More recently, there has been a resurgence of organizational activities parallel to the democratization of the country that started in 1984. The number of Circassian organizations has since increased during the 1990s. In 1993, the Ankara-based *Kaf-Der* was founded as an umbrella organization, under the leadership of the Ankara North Caucasus Cultural Association, known to have been a centre of leftist Circassians during the 1970s. *Kaf-Der* grew to have more than forty

13 Ardener 1975a: 72-74.

14 Bezanis 1994; Shami 1995; Toumarkine 2000; Ertem 2000; Kaya 2004, 2005.

15 See Bellér-Hann (1995: 500), for a comparative work on different historiographies of Laz on the eastern Black Sea coast.

16 Thirty-six issues were published between 1997 and 2003. Its publication was resumed by *Kaf-Fed* in 2004.

17 Taymaz 2000 is a useful source on the history of various Circassian ethnic organizations in Turkey.

branches nation-wide. In 2003, the Federation of Caucasus Associations (*Kaf-Fed*) replaced *Kaf-Der*, further incorporating some other associations that had formerly kept distance from *Kaf-Der*.[18]

Kaf-Der's principle activity included the preservation of culture and the promotion of mutual aid.[19] *Kaf-Der* also demanded the public recognition of Circassians as a discrete ethnic group of non-Turkic origin with its own culture and history, negotiating the restriction of the Turkish Republic's doctrines.

The active members of *Kaf-Der* were mostly urban middle-class intellectuals serving in such fields as the bureaucracy, law, business and education. They could safely be regarded to have internalised the Republic's ideologies, since they succeeded in acquiring relatively high positions within the existing state structures. At the same time, many key members of *Kaf-Der* seemed to be of established (i.e. *werkh* or freeman) families, whereas people of slave origin still appeared hesitant to play active roles in Circassian organizations.[20]

The Circassian intellectuals produced their historiography partly in relation to the official state discourse of Turkish history. The national political elite of Turkey equated modernity with Western modernity, epitomised by the nation-state, whose principles included centralization of power, secularism, democracy, homogeneity within the state boundaries, and national economics.[21] The Turkish Republic found the legitimacy of its rule in its departure from the old regime of the Ottoman sultan. The new nation-state restored two different sets of memories.[22] One was the Turkish national past in Central Asia, which placed the Republic in an evolutionist narrative, stretching from primitive tribal organization, passing through absolutism-feudalism, and culminating in a modern nation-state. The other was a myth that linked Turks to the ancient civilization of Anatolia, designating Anatolia as the homeland of the Turks. The Circassian intellectuals' historiography was shaped partly by virtue of being incorporated into this Turkish nationalist historiography.[23]

Muhittin Ünal's book titled "The Roles of Circassians in the Struggle for Turkish Independence" (1996) deserves a closer look. An ex-bureaucrat retired from the Ministry of Education, Ünal has served as president of *Kaf-Der* since 1996,

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18 Fifty-seven Circassian associations in Turkey are members of the *Kaf-Fed* (January 2008, *www.kafkasfederasyonu.org*).

19 See *Nart* (2001 Vol. 26: 13) for the principles of *Kaf-Der's* activities.

20 My observation is restricted to Circassians of Uzunyayla origin. The most numerous *Adıge* groups in Turkey, that is, *Shapsughs* and *Abzekhs*, are known for their democratic attitude toward traditional social classes. Certainly, many individuals from these groups have been playing important roles in Circassian associations.

21 I have found Yeğen 1996 and Mert 2001 useful to thinking about the roles that the particular concepts of modernity have played in forming national as well as ethnic identities in Turkey.

22 Lewis 1975: 11-13.

23 See Houston 1999 and Hirschler 2001 for Kurdish parallels.

and was elected president of *Kaf-Fed* in 2003. In this book, he presented Circassians as having actively participated in the Turkish Republic from its very beginnings.[24] He stressed Circassian contributions to the foundation of the Republic by underlining that many people around Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (the founding father of Turkey) were of Circassian origin. He dissociated Circassians from other non-Turkish groups that had organised separatist movements during the late Ottoman period and early Republican years.[25]

In this respect, Ünal presented a historiography that did not oppose the state's status quo, but instead underscored a recognition-loyalty reciprocity between themselves and the state. He was seeking a "public" history of Circassians that was acceptable to the state.[26] He presented a picture of Circassian history that could be shared by the great majority of active members of *Kaf-Der*, though his personal political views–he is known as an Atatürkist, close to the CHP–may have hardly represented the whole spectrum of diverse political ideologies embraced by other members.

At the same time, *Nart* writers saw Circassians as representatives of a past that the Republic rejected. For instance, they often referred to Circassians in Turkish terms associated with the past "tribal" organization of the Turks, i.e. *aşiret/ kabile* ("tribe"), *boy/ klan*, ("clan") and *sülale* ("lineage"), rather than seeing these units for what they often were, that is, dialect or family based groupings.[27] Further,

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[24] He initially intended to publish this book with the Turkish Historical Society, originally founded under the patronage of Atatürk to promote the study of Turkey and Turks (personal communication).

[25] The book was published during the period in which the separatist Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK) was threatening the country.

[26] Modernist Circassians shared the concern of the early Turkish nation-builders to present their own people as ancient and civilised, firmly rooted in human history as well as in the territory. See Atalay 1998: 14; Bağ 1999; Özveri 2000a, 2000b and Öğün 2001.

[27] See Özbay 1997a: 27; Hırka 1998 and Canlı 2002: 31. In the Ottoman official discourse, the stereotyped picture of *aşiret* as uncivilised nomadic people in the Anatolian hinterlands living in part on theft and brigandage facilitated the promotion of the policy of the forced settlement of semi-nomadic populations. See BOA, *İrade-i Meclis-i Vâlâ*, No: 20949 (23 *Şa'bân* 1278), for the implementation of the policy in Uzunyayla, where this went hand in hand with settling Circassian refugees (*http://kafkas.org.tr/belgeler/belge1.html*).
It is interesting to note that all these different levels in the presumed "tribal" structure are referred to by a single term in Kabardian, *lhepkh*. According to John Colarusso, *lhepkh* (lit. "blood-frame"), which originally meant clan, has been generalised to any human grouping felt to be linked genetically (personal communication). Kabardians in Uzunyayla most commonly use the term *lhepkh* to distinguish *Adıge* from other peoples from the Caucasus that settled in the region (e.g. Abaza). They also use the same term to distinguish themselves from other groups within *Adıge* (e.g. Hatukoy). *Lhepkh* is also used interchangeably with *unaghue* in reference to extended family or lineage, though the former tends to be used to emphasise prestige and loyalty. The lack of enthusiasm shown to mark separate levels of human grouping taxonomically may indicate that, historically, Circassians did not have an elaborate tribal organisation, assumed by Circassian writers. By contrast, Circassian intellectuals more often use *lhepkh* for Turkish *millet* ("nation") or *halk* ("people", "folk") in nationalist discourses, as in *Adıge/Çerkes lhepkh* or *Kafkas lhepkhxer* (pl.).

Circassian modernist intellectuals normally described Circassians as characterised by "feudalism" (*feodalizm*), by which they meant a well-defined, hierarchical structure of different social classes, sometimes likened to the "caste system" (*kast sistemi*).[28]

These self-images conceived Circassians in the very terms that the early modernists of the Republic associated with the Ottoman peripheries in their efforts to insist on the superiority of the new Turkish nation-state, modelled upon centralised, modern states in the West. The Circassian intellectuals frequently relied on the imagery of the primitiveness in describing Circassians' present social conditions. They presented Circassians as not having altered much over a long period.[29] By doing so, they reified Circassians as the "other" of the state, unable to share the temporal space with the state.[30]

Nart's *Oral History Programme*

Here, I aim to analyse the Oral History Programme as a particular instance of the Circassian intellectuals' historiography examined above. The *Kaf-Der* published a special issue of *Nart* (November-December 2002) devoted to oral history. It featured over ten short writings and interviews by many active members, such as some established writers of Uzunyayla origin including Ö. Özbay as well as the above-mentioned M. Ünal. Diverse historical themes that *Kaf-Der*'s modernist members regarded as especially significant for Circassians were discussed in the issue.

"The North Caucasus Oral History Project", conducted by the Youth Commission of the Istanbul North Caucasus Cultural Association (now the Istanbul Caucasus Cultural Association, a member of the *Kaf-Fed*), deserves a closer look. Its outline publicised in this issue, defined oral history as "the recording of

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28 See Huvaj (1997: 11, 2002: 9-10); Alparslan (2002: 44).

29 See Karaerkek (2002: 44), for instance. Educated Circassians often perceive the current state of their society as "semi-feudal" (*yarı-feodal*), acknowledging the lingering influences of the past social division.

30 Fabian's (1983) insight that "otherness" is produced by manipulating temporality is valid here. See Vali (1996: 45); Yeğen (1999: 567), for the roles of both state and Kurdish nationalist discourses in reifying Kurds as the "other" in their relation to the state. Another domain in which the internalization of the state ideology by educated Circassians is obvious is their frequent use of the idiom "guest" (*misafir*) in characterising the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. The use of this idiom conveys the idea that Circassians' presence in the territory of the "host" (*ev sahibi*: "house owner", i.e. Turks) is temporal and inauthentic, though tolerated. This articulated sense of "rootlessness" suggests that Circassian intellectuals are compelled to cope with what Ingold calls the "genealogical model", deeply implicated in the discourse of the Turkish nation-state. It is an assumption that privileges rootedness as the source of authenticity and legitimation, especially essential for "the state's sovereign entitlement to defend and administer its territory in the name of the nation" (Ingold 2000: 151).

knowledge left from the past, obtained as a result of appropriate questioning and direction", and having as its source "persons at the highest position in terms of both age and knowledge, [with whose death] the knowledge would be lost". It continued that it was essential to "find informants in the field with the highest capacity for reflecting and representing the specific local conditions".[31]

The outline provided a list of subjects to be studied: (1) informants' backgrounds, (2) "migration" (*göç*) from the Caucasus, (3) the physical environment of settlements in both the Caucasus and Turkey, (4) customary law, (5) marriage, and gender interactions, (6) table manners, (7) language, (8) the custom of fosterage (*atalık*), practised among noble families, and (9) the Turkish Struggle for Independence that led to the foundation of the Republic. Several further questions were listed under each of these nine headings. The subject that received the most attention concerned Circassian customs. Only two subjects related to historical events were addressed, both of which belonged to too remote a past to have been experienced firsthand and to be remembered by living generations of Circassians.

Other research topics also received some attention, including the "lineage" names, the "coats of arms" (*arma*) that only noble families owned, and the names of villages named after their founders or lords. The outline also mentioned that this project concerned "local history", with these research topics to be adjusted to the local contexts.

Nart also organised a "Contest of Family History Writing", publicised in the March-April 2003 issue. The advertisement of the contest stated that the aim of pursuing family history was to learn more about Circassian history. This objective was also highlighted in the several proposed subjects of research, all of which actually concerned the one-and-half-century-old "exile" (*sürgün*).[32]

Nart writers sought to recover family history and local history by means of oral sources. Their recognition of the need to collect and record experience-based testimonies of human history should be welcomed, given the fact that Circassians did not hand down their own history in written forms, independently of official histories of Russia or Turkey. The Programme had empiricist objects, seeking to reconstruct what actually had happened.

Elders, especially those elders who had grown up in the "guest room", were mentioned as knowing this objective truth.[33] In the past, the ostentatious social life in the guest room was the symbol of the aristocratic culture of wealthy *werkhs*. It was assumed that History would be lost for good once these *werkh* elders, who had learnt it while serving the guest in their youth, had passed away.

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31 Aycan 2002: 17 (translation by E. Miyazawa).

32 The proposed research topics included the social class to which one's family had belonged before the forced migration.

33 Alpan 2002.

The *Nart* writers produced a static image of history through the Oral History Programme. First, the Programme was interested in timeless cultural values epitomised in ethnic customs and an inflexible social hierarchy.[34] Both culture and structure were presented as features that set Circassians apart as a distinct group, transcending the experiences that related to the actual social conditions. This Oral History froze the past as a permanent condition.

Second, the Programme highlighted the Circassian Exodus and the Turkish Struggle for Independence. This resonated with the fact that the *Kaf-Der* members yearly held an anniversary ceremony to commemorate the displacement, and also sought to present Circassians as firmly integrated within the Turkish state.[35]

However, the arbitrary selection of these contents excluded many aspects of social history and failed to acknowledge the importance of the lived experiences over the last eighty years. This Programme was oriented to the past, rather than aimed at exploring the multifaceted links between the past and the present.

As such, it was far from a study of personal life history of the living generations of Circassians, for whom living in the Turkish nation-state as members of an ethnic minority group constitutes an important part of their experiences of modernity. Their crucial everyday events encompass, for instance, their participation in party politics and the market economy, as well as their accommodation to the modern legal and educational systems, which in part touch upon the issue of the use of Circassian languages in the public sphere. The ways in which they have been coping with these issues play no part in the historical narrative promoted by the Programme.[36]

The *Nart* writers constructed this Programme in an effort to recast the Circassian past in a new image appropriate to a modern setting. The acceptability of this history was directed also toward Circassians themselves. This could only be achieved by editing out "inappropriate" stories from historical accounts actually given by selected informants.

For instance, there was an insistence that "anachronisms" (*anakronizm*) be eradicated.[37] Given *Kaf-Der*'s nature, it is safe to assume that the stress on social divisions was not considered appropriate for a shared Circassian history. The

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34 The aim of the *Kaf-Der* included the collection, analysis and preservation of "Circassian cultural values" (*Nart* (2001) Vol. 26: 12).

35 The Russians declared their victory in the Russo-Circassian War on 21 May 1864. Tellingly, the representatives of various Circassian organizations in Turkey visited *Anıt Kabir* (Atatürk's mausoleum in Ankara) after a ceremony held to commemorate the 133rd anniversary of the Forced Migration in 1997 (*Nart* (1997) Vol. 2: 5).

36 More and more Circassian parents are giving Circassian names to their offspring. Circassians often talk about how these parents successfully dealt with civil servants at local branches of the Registry of Birth Administrations unwilling to register children with non-Turkish names.

37 Yançatoral 2002.

Programme accepted a hierarchy between different status groups as heritage, without questioning the *werkhs*' monopolising of political power, wealth, social privileges and honour.[38] However, the memories regarding the ruling class's exploitation of the lower classes and the conflicts between different groups had to be suppressed so as not to be articulated publicly.

In short, the Oral History Programme sought a modified image of society. Some princes and nobles led the tribal groups. Society was divided into many classes, whose harmonious relationships with one another were predetermined on the status basis. There was no class struggle. This denial of social conflicts gave the impression that there was no history at all in the Programme. This Oral History was unable to recognise people as agents who were aware of social contradictions and actively contributed to the production of historical events.[39]

The Programme suppressed multiple voices. Surely, any history presented by a non-Turkish group offers a "non-official" (*gayri-resmi*) alternative to the state's discourse. However, its reification of Circassian identity and ethnicity was not in line with recent works on oral history in different Turkish and Circassian settings.[40] These works aim at recovering the multiplicity of viewpoints and experiences that were suppressed by the homogenizing modernist project. In contrast, the voice of the ethnic intellectuals, raised through the publication of an opinion magazine, had silenced many other voices among the Circassians.[41]

The History of Werkh *Notables*

Two different versions of the oral history in Uzunyayla are to be compared in the rest of this article. I first look at a coherent story of history as recounted by elders of renowned, wealthy *werkh* families, including many individuals from families known as "lords" (*ağa*, *bey*) believed to have founded the villages in which they settled (hereafter I use History for this *werkh* History). They were the primary informants selected by the Oral History Programme. However, unlike the sanitised history promoted in the Programme, these privileged speakers recounted a narrative of an imaginary "class struggle" between *werkhs* and slaves, which resulted in the fall of *werkhs*. I then examine the process by which the resulting History muted the voices of slave descendants that represent alternative versions of Uzunyayla oral history.

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38 See also a report by a group of *Kaf-Der* Ankara Branch commissioned to study the traditional Circassian way of life, including social classes (Di Xabze 2000: 35).

39 See notes 53 and 54 below.

40 Neyzi 1999; Shami 2000a; Öztürkmen 2003.

41 See Ertem (1999) and Shami (2000b), for the mutedness of Circassian women. The comparison between two different muted categories of Circassians is an interesting subject to explore.

For the secular modernists of the ethnic organizations, the Circassians in Uzunyayla stood for the past in the two opposing senses that the past always bears in its relation with the present. On the one hand, they were considered to have preserved Circassian customs in near-original forms, thus serving as an important source of traditions.[42] On the other hand, they had a reputation for "backwardness" (*çağdışı*). Their cultural conservatism was interpreted as excessively influenced by Islamic religiosity, by competition between prominent figures, and by discrimination against the descendants of former slaves, especially persistent in the choice of marriage partner. Circassians in Uzunyayla epitomised the past, reifying the otherness that urban intellectuals turned Circassians into in order to contrast them with the modern state.

Among local Circassians, the only meaningful status difference was that between *werkhs* and slaves. Locals rarely claimed free-class origins (*lhxukhel'*) for their own family, and they were seldom referred to as having such an origin. People were compelled either to claim *werkh* status for themselves, or to remain silent about this title. To avoid being judged as slave offspring, they needed to demonstrate commitment to a "noble society" (*werkh toplumu*), actively recounting History in this public sphere.

Werkh elders were strongly motivated by the objective of maintaining their precedence over members of former slave families. Many *werkhs* had lost their wealth, whereas the latter had gained significant social influence, in the last one hundred years since slavery disappeared from Anatolia. For *werkhs*, using the past as a symbolic resource to retain social influence was perhaps more important than it had ever been. The issue of who was entitled to represent history, more than what had really happened, was at stake in the process of coming to terms with the past social injustice.[43]

The privileged local informants were certainly eloquent in telling their version of history. They regarded themselves as "masters of speech" (*söz sahibi*) endowed with "a right of speech" (*söz hakkı*), hereby claiming the authority to present "oral history" (*sözlü tarih*: "history articulated in speech"). According to them, one must be of *werkh* origin, first of all, to become "a possessor of words", but this status needed to be supported by both power and social experiences. The local notables supported their narrative with both types of resources, i.e. economic and symbolic. They formed a homogeneous group, sharing the same viewpoint from which they looked at Circassian society from above. They strongly identified themselves with the *werkh* class, a well-defined position that enabled them to talk about History decisively and coherently.

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42 See Ünal 1998: 46. Huvaj stated that Uzunyayla had been a "little Caucasus" a few decades before (1998: 16).

43 See Hodgkin and Radstone 2003: 1.

They claimed that "the right to speak" was not merely a customary right, but was supported by abundant practical experiences in the local community. The important public space representing *werkh* society was symbolised by the guest room. *Werkh* elders always claimed that they had acquired their knowledge in this site of communal commensality. The experiences gained there supported their authority as bearers of History and their self-confidence as social actors.

These speakers claimed that they monopolised knowledge. They recognised knowledge as significant only when it was articulated in *werkh* society. The capacity to know was identified with the capacity to speak "comfortably" (*rahat*). To "narrate" (*anlatmak*) was a causative action that made others "understand" (*anlamak*). The success of this causative action depended on a social authority that forced others to accept their arguments. Backed by both their ascribed high status and their acquired social experiences, wealthy *werkh* elders strongly felt that they were able to impose their own representation of history, and so, to silence any contesting voices.

In contrast, the *werkh* speakers considered slave descendants unable to recount History because the latter were not full social beings.[44] They were called people who "don't mix in society", "struggling with their own works". Without access to the valued public space, they were denied the capacity to possess valued knowledge, let alone to relate their versions of the localised Circassian history.

When I was visiting elders of well-known *werkh* families, I sometimes saw some other men keeping silent throughout my conversation with the elders. Similarly, knowledgeable *werkhs* who were answering my questions often did not ask others sitting at the same dining table about what they knew. Later, I was told that these men were neighbours from ex-slave families. Though present at the site of knowledge production, they were not producers of oral history.

To legitimate the situation, *werkhs* described them as still suffering from "trauma", caused by unspeakable memories of their ancestors' past hardships. These people were assumed to have an "inferiority complex" (*kompleks*), unable to feel comfortable in the presence of others. They were liars who could not tell the truth.

I now turn to the specific contents of History, highlighting the social distinction stressed by it. The *werkhs* considered the account of one's birth as a major constituent of History. I was often said to be studying people's "roots" (*kök*) or "origin" (*köken*). *Werkhs* presented their nobility as *asalet*, a word implying root and origin. They characterised their families as families "with roots" (*köklü, asıl*).

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44 Many *werkhs* said that slaves remained slaves until their masters manumitted them, even after they had been administratively freed through legislation by the state. The persistence of symbolic slave status was applied to the descendants of former slaves. See Patterson (1984: 42), for a comprehensive study of representations of slaves as non-persons as a means for facilitating and legitimizing slavery.

By contrast, those who descended from former slaves were said to lack History. They were "rootless" (*köksüz*), separated from their birth families, owned and traded by others in the past. The "uprooted" did not have a history worth mentioning. Here, the past was a burden for them, rather than a resource. *Werkhs* told me not to ask those people to teach me some History since it would hurt them.

Werkhs presented History in terms of a *werkh*-slave dichotomy, as if only a "class struggle" constituted the history that mattered. They described descendants of freed slaves as "rebels" (*isyancı*), accounting most events that shook Circassian society as having originated in slave rebellions.[45] The winners were always slaves.

According to the *werkhs*' "trauma" theory, their opponents always took the opportunity to revenge themselves on the former ruling class. The "rebellious spirit" was seen as the driving force of History. This assumption brought teleology into the *werkhs*' historiography, as examined below.

The *werkh* History stressed three events as turning points more than displacement from the Caucasus: "the Great Mobilisation" (*Büyük Seferberlik*), the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923), and the end of the horse trade in the late 1950s. The alternation in the mode of organising society and the replacement of primary social actors were mentioned at all these moments.

Seferberlik was known to have led to a sudden switch of leading groups among local Circassians. Locally, *Seferberlik* referred to an extended period of hardship and dispersion, stretching well beyond the First World War (1914-1918) to incorporate the Yemeni War in 1904 and the Turkish Struggle for Independence (1919-22). A few thousand local Circassians were believed to have been killed on the battlefields.[46] *Werkh* youths, who readily participated as "cavalcades" (*süvari alayı*), were annihilated, which left the arena to slaves, who escaped military service as their birth was often left unregistered.

Slavery was very often misrepresented as having been legally abolished when the Republic was founded.[47] Freed slaves, now able to use their own labour for themselves, worked hard and ascended materially. The w*erkhs* lost manpower and declined. Also, the end of the purchase of horses by the military in the late 1950s led to the growth of slave descendants' influence. *Werkh* families had their

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45 The defeat of the Circassians by the Russians was attributed to the betrayal by slaves who hoped for liberation by the Russians. The Communist Revolution in Russia, locally considered to have caused the Circassians' forced migration, was portrayed as a slave rebellion. Slaves themselves were sometimes referred to as "proletarians" (*proleter*) or even as Bolsheviks.

46 It was said that a few thousand soldiers conscripted from Uzunyayla died in the disaster of Sarkamış (January 1915), in which 90,000 soldiers froze to death.

47 The Ottoman government did not completely abolish slavery, nor was any law concerning the abolition of slavery enacted during the Republican era (Erdem 1996: xix). The trade of Circassian slaves was universally banned in 1909 (ibid. 151).

heyday in the early Republican years when they supplied the Turkish Army with horses.[48] *Werkhs* lost their most important income source due to the motorization of the army, while some former slaves, mere shepherds at first, accumulated wealth through the sheep trade.[49]

The theme of the *werkhs*' decline and the ex-slaves' ascendancy was repeated at these three points to construct a coherent narrative. Certainly, different explanations were given for the transformations that Circassian society underwent at each of these points. Nonetheless, the *werkh*-slave dichotomy served as a constant framework from which *werkhs* drew significance, lending History a paradigmatic force.

This theme was elaborated at many different turning points in order to generate a narrative of the fall from a Golden Age to a Dark Age.[50] *Werkhs* insisted that only an indefinite period continuing from the past in the Caucasus was worth writing about. This unspecified time was presented as an age in which Circassian society was firmly structured and the Circassian code of conduct (*Adıge xabze*/ *Çerkes usul*) governed the protection-service relationship of separate classes.

Circassians referred to the totality of their customs and values as *Adıgaghe* (*Çerkeslik*/ "Circassianness").[51] By *Adıgaghe*, *werkhs* often referred to the system of rights and obligations governing the relationship of different social classes as well as that between age groups. Circassian tradition was impossible to separate from the customs by which the wealthy class had dominated Circassian society.[52] *Werkhs* lamented that most of these customs had been lost. They presented the glorious days of the Circassians as having ended with the decline of the *werkhs*, an event that took place in an unspecific past.

The *werkh* History was unable to grasp actual social contradictions and oppositions, which are among the major factors that produce history. It interpreted Circassian social structure as a volatile matrix of conflicts, though static in itself. This simplified *werkh* - slave distinction did not do justice to the substantial class divisions between the rich and the poor. This History was transformed into an imaginary struggle between social categories that often lacked economic and po-

48 Horses branded with family emblems (*damga*) were a status symbol of nobility.

49 Many Circassians despise shepherding to the present period, considering it to have been slaves' work.

50 According to *werkhs*, labour migration to Germany was an opportunity for the poor to become rich, whereas *werkhs* who relied upon what resources they had went bankrupt. Enthusiasm for education, for which Circassians were reputed nation-wide, was attributed to the struggle of slave descendants to raise their social standing. Many *werkhs* understood the increased commitment to Islam among the locals as a reflection of the slaves' intention to gain social prestige.

51 See Ertem (2000: 300-301) for an ethnicity-centred redefinition of *Adıgaghe* among the members of a provincial Circassian organization.

52 Huvaj (2002: 10) stated that *Adıge xabze*, also called *werkh xabze*, carries clear marks of the "feudal period" to the present day.

litical substance. Actual people were denied agency and responsibility for historical events taking place under specific conditions.

Thus, History remained silent about recorded riots of slaves in Uzunyayla. According to official documents, local slaves occasionally opposed their masters violently.[53] These events have been purged from *werkh* collective memory. Slaves were not necessarily the socially weak. Some slaves successfully struggled for their own liberty. In spite of this, slaves have not been recognised as the agents of history up to the present day. This distorted imagination has caused some grave events to be forgotten.[54]

There was another domain of forgetting necessary to construct History. This coherent oral history was related by using the first person plural pronoun "we" to indicate authorship of the narrative. The *werkhs* constituted a socially but not necessarily an economically distinct class. The title of *werkh* did not always correspond with one's actual economic and political power. Those whose economic position did not match their high status often identified with the better-off sections of their kin group. The forgetting of past poverty as well as silence about present hardship made it possible for *werkhs* to present their families as corporate groups that owned slaves collectively and shared honour.

For *werkhs*, their social group and Circassian society was one and the same thing. Hence, their decline was interpreted as tantamount to the decline of the Circassians, who lost autonomy in their relation with the state. Members of former slave families were not regarded as constituent parts of this community. The general improvement of the standard of living among the poor section was not evaluated positively. It was denied any significance whatsoever for History. Thus, a relatively large section of Circassian society remained muted, unable to find a significant narrative in which to locate their experiences of empowerment over the last half century.

The History of the local *werkhs* and the Oral History of the urban intellectuals had so much in common, that the latter appears to have been produced in large

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53 The governor of Sivas province, to which Uzunyayla belonged till 1926, looked for help from the Porte in the face of strident demands by armed slaves for freedom in 1878 (Toledano 1998: 101-103). The slaves demanded that the government give them land so that they could buy back freedom. They knew that this policy had been successfully implemented in some other regions in Anatolia. A report of a British consulate in Kayseri on this riot mentions that, according to the governor of Pınarbaşı district (called Aziziye to 1926), there were two thousand slaves in Uzunyayla, including five hundred able-bodied men (British Parliamentary Papers, 1881, Turkey No. 6: 6).

54 A local notable sent a letter to the Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association in 1908. He reported armed clashes between the *werkhs* and slaves, who had made a public decision to fight for freedom. He called for governmental intervention as the only solution. In *Nart*, the grandson of this notable wrote that the government had decided to abolish slavery partly in response to this letter (Dumaniç 1999). In an elite historiography, a single letter written by a notable *werkh* man is sufficient to appropriate slaves' long-term struggles for freedom and better life conditions.

part by sanitising the former. Actually, these two sets of historical discourses were linked to each other. Circassian intellectuals were often first-generation migrants who travelled back and forth between urban centres and rural areas. They disseminated their modernist ideas to the rural areas, in which they learned the local discourse of history. Also, younger members of Circassian associations, including university students in provincial towns, further facilitated the exchange of historical thoughts. These two articulate historical discourses seemed to be serving complementarily to form a condition in which the voice of slave descendants cannot be easily heard.

Also, my own research, which had been informed by my prior contacts with many association members and which sought articulate, oral history, enhanced the slave descendants' mutedness. Since I did not speak *Adıgebze* (the Circassian language), my research often took the form of semi-structured interviews in Turkish. Mostly, I made notes of the meta-language with which *werkhs* discussed their own history and society.[55] I could not learn sufficiently "the common sense of the past" articulated and circulated in everyday conversations that people had among themselves in their own language.[56] The accounts of History that I gathered thus made some people speak, as seen in this section, while silencing others as will be discussed in the next section.

The "History" of Slave Descendants in Üçyol

The "history" that *Üçyollus* recounted has to be understood in its unequal relationship to these two dominant modes of making sense of history, especially History of the local *werkhs*. Üçyol in the 1990s was emerging as a centre of local social activities.[57] It was one of the largest and most affluent villages in Uzunyayla with a considerable amount of arable land. While its population had decreased by half in between 1965 to 1997, Üçyol had been less affected by urban migration that began in the 1970s and during my stay had the largest population of any of the villages of Uzunyayla.

Wealthy *werkhs* from other villages sometimes called Üçyol "Slave Village" (*Khejjer Khuajje*), while telling me that I was unfortunate to have settled in the village, where I would not find anybody who could teach me the "real" history, i.e. History.[58] More than half of the current residents were perceived as descendants

55 Ardener 1975a: 74.

56 Popular Memory Group (1982: 210).

57 I settled in Üçyol on the recommendation of members of the Pınarbaşı branch of *Kaf-Der*, who highlighted its accessibility to both the district town and the remoter villages in Uzunyayla. Üçyol was also the most populous Circassian village in the region. The branch opened in 1997, but became defunct in 2003.

58 *Kejjer* is a Circassian word of Turkish origin (from *kaçmak*: to run away), initially denoting a "runaway" slave.

of former slaves, since most *werkh* families had left the village. Many of its better-off people were of slave origin.[59]

Indeed, I did experience difficulties in making *Üçyollus* relate history. Almost nothing was known about their ancestors' difficult journey. The title of *werkh* could seldom be heard. The past of one's own family was barely re-counted, while the lower origins and past hardships of other families were mentioned with some hesitation.

Üçyollus seemed conscious of the *werkh* History. Still, *Üçyollus* avoided talking about certain themes, such as the opposition between *werkhs* and slaves, and the decline of *werkhs* that proceeded parallel to the ascendance of slaves. They often refused to dwell upon these subjects by saying "Do not get mixed up with history", or, "Do not stir up the past". Here, history was categorised as "bygones" (*geçmiş*), that is, an over-and-done-with time that had passed without retaining its relevance to the present. People considered it "inappropriate" (*émık'u*) or "shameful" (*heynape/ ayıp*) to talk about the past.

The absence of any stress on two of the three events marked in *werkh* History enhanced my impression that History was not articulated in this village. Only the *Seferberlik* was equally stressed. *Üçyollus* believed that their village suffered the greatest loss. This period represented the end of an age. Some prominent *werkh* families, losing all male members, died out. The wealthiest men had lost their property, and an intra-village feud ended. The foundation of the Turkish Republic, associated with the emancipation of slaves, was not highlighted. Neither did the end of the military horse trade carry any importance. This silence was especially significant, given the fact that Üçyol was one of seven villages in Uzunyayla to which stallions were sent from the state-owned depot in Sivas to mate with breeding horses owned by the locals.

Üçyollus did insist on continuities with their ethnic past through *Adıge xabze*. They said that the principle of "Respect for the senior, love for the junior" lay at the foundation of Circassian society. Here, the Circassian code of conduct often centred on the service-care reciprocity between the old and the young. The observance of this etiquette perpetuated the traditional order of their society, which was the principal constituent of *Adıgaghe*, redefined here in ethical terms. Through *Adıgaghe*, people gained access to an idealised past in which age, but not social class or wealth, was the primary criterion of social differentiation.

Nonetheless, *Üçyollus* were telling their own histories. To understand what they said and why they said it, the narrators must be socially identified. To locate the positions from which narrators constructed different histories, three criteria seemed significant: (1) birth; (2) wealth; and (3) place of origin, i.e. *yerli* ("of the place") or *xexes* ("alien settlers" who came from other villages). *Üçyollus* could be classified into three categories of speakers: (1) *yerli* "non-slaves", composed of

[59] I use ownership of a tractor as a criterion for measuring relative wealth.

both *werkhs* and freemen; (2) wealthy *yerlis* of slave origin;[60] and (3) the needy (*fakir fukara*), including *yerlis* of ex-slave families and *xexes*.

I shall examine the "history" of the Land Reform in the 1950s related by *Üçyollu* speakers of the second category. According to "non-slaves", the ancestors of these wealthy families (six households from two separate families) escaped military service during the *Seferberlik* by marrying widowed women or by serving the village as shepherds or watchmen,[61] and made their fortunes while manpower was in short supply. These families were referred to as "*nouveaux riches*" (*yeni zengin olan*) with all the phrase's negative connotations.

Üçyol had benefited greatly from the Land Reform, and *Üçyollus* recognised the land distribution as a watershed in village history. The Land Distribution Commission, founded according to the 1945 Law on the Distribution of Land to Farmers, distributed 3 million hectares of tillable land nation-wide to 400,000 farming families, improving life in the Anatolian hinterlands.[62] The Commission distributed arable land to 3209 adult males in the Pınarbaşı district.[63] The standard amount of land to be distributed varied from village to village.

Among Circassian villages, the commission came first to Üçyol in 1951. The standard land granted here was among the highest (225 *dönüms*).[64] At least eighty-nine men benefited. The black soil here was the most fertile in Uzunyayla, suitable for lucrative wheat production. The total of distributed lands accounted for more than half of all the land currently cultivated by *Üçyollus*.[65]

For *Üçyollus*, the beginning of the present was more significant than the end of the past. The new tractor-based method of agriculture also started in the 1950s. Only twenty out of seventy households possessed tractors during my research, seen as "rich" by the rest of the villagers, who managed to remain in the village by renting out the land that they received mainly from the distribution.[66] This period, in which the foundations of the current social organization were laid,

60 The census of the village, in which the oldest record dates to 1321 H. (1903-04), does not show that any of these families had really been slaves. Their ancestors – if they had ever been owned as slaves – seemed to have encountered freedom at an earlier date. The census records twenty-four *gulams* (male slaves), often accompanied by their families, as well as two *cariyes* (female slaves). Only nine households descending from four of these male slaves remained in the village during my research. Other officially registered slave families had vanished without a trace.

61 Locals said that those who married widowed women were exempted from the draft since these women needed to be protected.

62 Keyder 1983.

63 Köy İşleri Bakanlığı 1968: 78.

64 Locally, 1 *dönüm* was equal to 1,000 square metres.

65 *Üçyollus* quoted twenty-five thousand *dönüms* (including fallow fields). According to the recent work of the Office of Land Registration and Ownership, the total arable land in the village is approximately forty-five thousand *dönüms*.

66 On average, tractor owners were cultivating 500-700 *dönüms* a year per head. Before the mechanization of agriculture, even the wealthiest men farmed at most 100 *dönüms* with five pairs of oxen. Grain cultivation was never a source of wealth then.

was more accentuated in collective memory than the wartime period in which the previous social organization had been destroyed.

However, expressions of appreciation were barely heard. Those who benefited from the Reform seemed to be hesitant to express appreciation for fear that this could be taken as a sign of their own near-slave destitution in the past.

Many people were resentful that they had lost out through the distribution. Disapproval was unhesitatingly expressed about the fact that *xexeses* benefited greatly, receiving land within the village boundaries. Üçyol's abundant land and rich soil had attracted many people from other villages to settle there around the 1950s, working as agricultural labourers or shepherds for wealthier families.[67] Many *Üçyollus* said that the great majority of these *xexeses* were the poverty-stricken of ex-slave origin. They either turned to their maternal relatives or married into the households of widowed women. According to my tentative statistics, thirty of eighty-six beneficiaries were *xexeses* (including nine *werkhs* and three individuals of non-Circassian origin), receiving almost forty percent of the distributed land.

The "*nouveaux riches*" most vociferously grumbled that strangers had become *Üçyollus* by obtaining land within the village boundaries. A man (b. 1942) from one of the wealthy former slave families told me a story of his late father (b. 1916), the village headman who had protested strongly to the commission's delegates about the distribution.[68] He related:

> My father opposed the delegation very strongly. Everybody in the village protested against the distribution. My father even went to Ankara. Some villages gave him some allowance. At the Ministry of Agriculture, my father petitioned officials not to give land to those who had nothing to do with the village. They turned him down. The delegation gave him the worst land in the village as punishment. It is too stony to grow anything. The worst land was given to the best. The best land was given to the worst. Their land is very fertile, close to the village, and each plot is large.

The speaker's family had once been one of the wealthiest in the village, though their power and wealth has diffused since. The speaker's grandfather (b. 1880) escaped military service during the *Seferberlik*. He was blessed with five sons (the eldest being the speaker's father). The family accumulated wealth by working industriously for three generations, mostly engaged in the sheep trade. The speaker was explicit in expressing antipathy toward a highly reputed *werkh xexes* family:[69]

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67 According to the population censuses, Üçyol's population increased during the five-year period between 1950 and 1955 by almost 40 percent (İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü).

68 The headman made two regional record bridewealth payments in the 1960s, first for the wife of his youngest brother and then for the wife of his son (the speaker).

69 This family descended from two brothers who, after their higher education (*Darülfünun*) in Sivas, settled in Pınarbaşı before *Seferberlik*. They served as judge of a criminal court and financial director of the district. They founded a new village on land purchased in the district before. Partly because of the discord that developed between them and other Circassians looking after their farm, they sold off the whole village to a group of Alevi Kurds in

> They sold off all the land they had in a different village, and came to this village. They had relatives working in ministries and the parliament. They heard from these relatives, "The delegation is coming first to Üçyol. Go and settle there." Now they are selling off their land in this village. They cannot settle in one place. They should not.

In recounting the fifty-year-old event, the speaker produced a narrative of "history" within the framework of the *yerli-xexes* opposition. According to him, all the villagers protested against the state policy of giving land to the newcomers. The speaker used the resistance against the infringement of the village boundaries to express the villagers' moral superiority vis-à-vis those outsiders who came later.

Of this *xexes werkh* family, an elderly man (b. 1928) from another affluent, *yerli* former slave family said that they used their connections with Circassian bureaucrats in Ankara to bring the commission first to Üçyol. The speaker also claimed that this *xexes* family tried to sell off the land to Kurds and to bring them to the village, to disperse the Circassian population, as they did in their previous village. This allegation demonstrates how the locals still looked at the *xexeses* with suspicion.

These speakers may have had special motives to underline the Land Reform as a historical turning point. *The werkhs* recognised that these former slave families had accumulated wealth during and after the *Seferberlik*. The second speaker's grandfather (1848-1926) was mentioned in the village as having become wealthy by selling off a girl to the slave market in Istanbul. These well-off speakers did not talk at length about how their ancestors had become wealthy. This silence helped them shift the crucial turning point away from the early years of the century to the mid-century. This operation allowed them also to shift the primary social distinction away from that of *werkhs* and slaves to that between *yerlis* and *xexeses*. By doing this, they concealed the context of their economic and social ascendance within a forgotten past and obscured their own slave origins.

They opened up a narrow narrative space to present themselves as the "wealthiest" (*ağa*), "influential" (*ilerigelen*) or "best" (*en iyi olan*), no matter what their origins. They also claimed to be among the first groups to settle in Üçyol. They stressed that they were firmly "rooted" (*yerli*: "of the place/ ground") in the soil of the village, imposing the sense of "rootlessness" on *xexes* ("aliens"), as if to compensate for the same image with which they were represented in *werkh* History.[70]

They appropriated the dichotomous framework that *werkhs* used in producing their History, while transforming its contents to express their own social and historical awareness. These wealthy speakers did not re-examine its ahistoricity, nor

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the late 1940s. This resulted in a dispersion of all Circassians from the village. They settled in Üçyol in 1949, counting on many *werkh* relatives for support. Six male members received a total of 1,500 *dönüms* in the village.

70 The "genealogical model" (see fn. 30 above) is implicated in both History and "history", expressed in the domains of ancestry and territory respectively.

did they challenge its legitimacy. They delegated history to the unquestioned past, just as *werkhs* produced a timeless past to maintain their symbolic precedence over slave offspring. Producing such "history" has allowed them to acquire a clear voice in relation to those still in need, regardless of whether they were co-villagers or *xexeses*.[71] Certainly, the past served as resource for them.

Just like the social categories of *werkh* and slave, those of *yerli* and *xexes* do not reflect actual economic conditions. The slave descendants voiced their resentment by identifying themselves as *yerli*, a category that they claimed to be the rightful beneficiaries of the Land Reform. The social opposition that they presented played down the real conflict of interest between the landholders and the landless within and beyond the village. The stress on the village boundaries projected a distorted image of social conditions to the advantage of the former. The speakers here kept the scope of their accounts firmly within the village boundaries, and hereby presented "history" as different from, and both shallower and narrower than, *werkh* History.

Before concluding this section, I briefly look at different alternative "histories" that other actors related in order to counteract their mutedness and powerlessness in difficult conditions.[72] A number of *Üçyollus* presented themselves as *werkhs*. Still, they were reluctant to elaborate History. They seemed to lack a positive self-image and the motivation to assert *werkh* status, due to their past poverty. They related history at best as "non-slaves", an indirect identity, but not as *werkhs*. They could not position themselves decisively enough to present a particular version of history as their own.

Actually, these "non-slaves" wavered between two different pasts, History and "history". They seemed to have a good reason for going along with rich slave descendants by complaining that *xexeses* received land within the village boundaries. To be sure, they borrowed the *werkh*-slave dichotomy of *werkh* History to claim their precedence over the "*nouveaux riches*". Many of the speakers were, however, among the impoverished who had greatly benefited from the Land Reform, and were unwilling to talk about it at length. Since they could not persuasively impose the rich-poor dichotomy onto the *werkh*-slave framework, their arguments were compromised.

Finally, *Üçyollus* belonging to the third category of speakers represented the past poverty as shared by all villagers. Those who were still poor and needy, including *yerli* slave offspring and *xexeses*, re-counted memories of a community in which people, though impoverished, helped each other on equal terms. They represented the past as a time when everybody had observed *Adıge xabze*, pre-

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71 Only two in twenty *xexes* households remaining in the village owned tractors during my research.

72 I have given a fuller discussion on the alternative pasts presented by *Üçyollus* in my Ph.D. thesis (Miyazawa 2004: 126-138, 153-167).

senting themselves as principal carriers of traditions. They looked critically at the present in which people no longer helped each other and customs were no longer followed. The impoverished redefined *Adyghaga* in egalitarian terms, relating the communal memories of "our time" to produce empowering images of the past for themselves. However, most people, perhaps, including the speakers themselves, were aware that such an affective community did not exist in the real past of their village.[73]

Conclusion

In this article, I have examined whether and to what extent the descendants of Circassian slaves could use the past as a resource to empower themselves. To answer the question, I have placed historical memories that people in an affluent "Slave Village" re-counted at the point where two articulate discourses of history met. The History of the *werkhs* and the Oral History of the urban intellectuals presumed the same *werkh*-centred view regarding the past social conditions of Circassians, though constructed with opposing ends in mind. They complemented each other with the result of muting the descendants of former slave families. Various "muted" speakers in Üçyol faced obstacles in relating the pasts. Certainly, *werkh* History was hardly articulated in the village.

Nevertheless, they were struggling to produce moments in which they were empowered by relating their pasts in different images. The past served as a resource for the descendants of Circassian slaves, to varying degrees. The capacity of turning the past into a resource was unevenly distributed in line with the material resource that one had at hand. Voices demanding to be heard were reconstituted as the material conditions changed. Different histories that people recounted were not equal.[74]

Social boundaries were repeatedly redrawn, as different pasts were constructed, thus shifting the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. *Werkhs* committed themselves to a shared memory of *werkh* History, forming an imagined community of former slave owners. By contrast, the descendants of former slaves never imagined themselves forming a community that shared the same history. They were divided by material conditions, unable to raise a collective voice. They did not embrace a shared slave identity as a basis of meaningful social actions. The

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73 The poor and needy frequently described the past as a time when they took all the girls in the village to wedding parties. However, wedding parties in the past do not seem to have been a social space shared across status boundaries. According to a man in his late forties from the above-mentioned *xexes werkh* family, now living in Germany, *werkh* families in the village did not participate in the wedding parties of former slave families in his youth. The absence of girls from wealthy *werkh* families in dance parties was still observable in and outside Üçyol even during my research.

74 Appadurai 1981.

set of oral histories examined in this article showed that giving voice to the voiceless was unlikely to happen without the redistribution of material resources.[75]

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The Ideology of Selective Forgetting. How a Political Massacre is Remembered in Turkey: The '33 Bullets Incident'

H. Neşe Özgen

Introduction

When I began my study of the 'Sociology of Border', encompassing Turkey's borders with Iraq, Iran and Syria, I indeed had no intention or even an idea that I would be engaged in the subject discussed in this article. I intended only to trace the evidence of a political massacre (the so-called '33 Bullets Incident') that took place in 1943. But in doing so I began to comprehend how and to what degree our cognitive models of remembering are reshaped, how things had been forgotten and why they were later recalled in retracing the memory of what shapes a nation within the geographic boundaries of a country.[1]

I will use the results of my Sociology of Border study[2] and the 33 Bullets Incident as a case-study to elaborate on the selectiveness of remembering and forgetting and on the ideology that lies beneath this phenomenon. My aim is to discuss both the politics that shape the border and the rhetoric of its positions and to establish how and to what degree people in border regions can mobilize these positions and rhetoric in order to establish relations with the state.[3] I will examine not only their conflicts but also their accommodations with the state.

While investigating the 33 Bullets Incident, the concept of 'remembering' constituted the initial foundation of the research. As the research developed and the multi-layered narrative of the field unfolded, the frame of the narrative brought forth the concept of 'selective forgetting'. In this way a new research topic of social memory developed which included both remembering and forget-

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1 This article was originally presented at the conference 'Generations, Experiences, Testimonies', organized by Tarih Vakfı [History Foundation] in September 2003 in Turkey. For this study, I have conducted research in Van, Turkey, in Özalp and Saray districts, and in the border villages Sırımlı (H(X)arapsorik), Damlacık (Rasik) and Değirmigöl (Milaningiz). See also Özgen 2003.

2 Based on five years of empirical research in the villages and towns situated along Turkey's borders with Iraq, Iran and Syria, this project entitled 'The Sociology of Border (County Towns)' utilized the methods of visual anthropology, the transcriptions of 'recordings and in-depth interviews', historical records, documents and textual analysis. I thank Alp Buğdaycı and my assistant Ferhat Öner who invested much effort in the project and Özlem Biner for her assistance in discussing and developing the study.

3 Stuart Hall insists that in a study on politics and its rhetoric, rhetoric should always be given positions (Hall 1993).

ting. By the term social memory I understand organic forms of collective remembrance, which should be no less challenged than the dominant narrative (governing mythology of memory) and the role and the meaning of memory for national identity. In recent years we have seen an explosion of studies on memory (Bell 2003). Bell points out:

> 'Memory', it appears, has today assumed the role of a meta-theoretical trope and also, perhaps, a sentimental yearning; as the idea of an Archimedean Truth has slowly and painfully withered under the assault of various anti-foundational epistemologies, memory seems to have claimed Truth's valorized position as a site of authenticity, as a point of anchorage – albeit an unsteady one – in a turbulent world stripped of much of its previous meaning. In memory we trust. (Bell 2003: 65)

Bell reveals the very ideological terrain behind the threat of history being replaced in its entirety by memory. This not only paves the way for semantic confusion, it also facilitates the obscuring of a crucial political phenomenon, that is, the role of collective remembering in challenging memory defined as the nation's 'governing mythology' (Bell 2003: 66).

I will follow a similar path throughout this article. The discussions of the ideology of the narrative and the dismantling of this ideology will gradually disappear to be replaced by a belief in the absoluteness of remembering. We do not question the ideology of the narrative anymore; we only doubt the metaphors of memory. While we carry out the discussion of what is being remembered, why and how, along the lines of the meaning of memory, we have tended to neglect its interpretations. Here my primary aim is to examine the forms of the persistence of the 33 Bullets Incident within the political history and national memory alongside both the meanings and the interpretations of the discourse built around the incident. My second aim concerns the role played by the notions of center and periphery in the historical understanding of the event. Rather than perceiving these in terms of a binary opposition, I will emphasize the necessity of considering the interrelations between peripheral factors and their individual relations to the center, the fact that this matrix of relations influences the center, the periphery and those on the periphery, and how these influences are exerted, to what degree and of course within which time frames. In other words, the aim is to grasp the constructed nature of the alliance between various power groups, which hitherto have hardly been felt, have been mostly and forcibly forgotten, masked with lies and denial, and can therefore only be unveiled through a different reading.

On Methodology and the Case Study

The 33 Bullets Incident: "I was shot in a solitary corner of the mountains"[4]

The 33 Bullets Incident, also called the Seyfo River "Massacre" (*Geliye Seyfo*) by local people, refers to the murder of thirty-three Kurdish villagers accused of smuggling in Van-Özalp, Kotor River (*Kutur-Seyfo*) (Aslan 1989: 27), Çilli Mountain Pass (Beşikçi 1992: 85) in 1943. The incident has been brought up in diverse contexts in Turkish political history and interpreted accordingly: as an act of CHP (*Republican People's Party*) violence towards poor villagers in 1948 (Beşikçi 1992: 15), as a way to exercise control over the CHP's ruling power and Prime Minister İnönü at the TBMM (*Turkish Grand National Assembly*) meetings in 1956, as an example of the TSK's (*Turkish Armed Forces*) violence towards the people and the state symbolized by the power of the army in the 1970s (Arif 2001), and finally as a particular form of oppression and violence towards the Kurdish people after the 1980s (Aslan 1989: 31, 43-44; Beşikçi 1992: 45; Göktaş 1991b: 63). The official history of the left knew of this incident from Ahmed Arif's poem 'Thirty-three Bullets' and remained content with this interpretation; at the same time, the incident was developed on the same basis, although with the opposite interpretation in official Turkish history. For example, Kenan Esengin, a comrade-in-arms of General Muğlalı, who gave the order to shoot, said "It was impossible to control the events in the border area according to normal standards…." (Esengin 1974a; 1974b: 21). A most recent discussion of this subject emerged in connection with Abdullah Çatlı's trial. Columnists, ideologues, politicians, popular and sometimes populist political scientists debated the "General Mustafa Muğlalı Affair" again. The latest news on this subject has been that a barracks on the Van-Özalp border in which the villagers had been imprisoned before they were shot had been named after General Muğlalı.[5]

Divorced of all historicist, ideological and statist interpretations, the basic story of the 33 Bullets is as follows:

On the night of July 30, 1943 at landmark No. 356, by the Kotor River (Kutur-Seyfo), Upper Koçkıran Village, Özalp District in the city of Van, 33 villagers[6] were killed without a proper trial. The incident was brought up in the

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4 "In a solitary corner of the mountains, at the hour of Morning Prayer, I lie stretched, long, bloody…" Translated by Murat Nemet-Nejat (1982), Ahmed Arif's famous eulogistic poem about the incident is memorized by many leftists without their being aware of its content (Arif 2001).

5 Newspapers: *Milliyet* (13 May 2004), "Askerin Muğlalı Kışlası Sürprizi"; *Radikal* (16 May 2004), Avni Özgürel "Yarayı Kaşımak: 33 Kursun ve Muğlalı Paşa"; *Posta* (13 May 2004), "Kışla Sürprizi".

6 There are doubts about the number. For instance the number of dead and their names given by Beşikçi based on the 1956 TBMM minutes are inconsistent with the data provided by Aslan.

TBMM in 1948. Despite an official application dated February 7, 1948, [7] by the DP (Democratic Party) Kütahya Deputy Fikri Apaydın and the Eskişehir Deputy İsmail Hakkı Çevik, an examination could only be initiated in 1949. According to the verdict number 950-8 dated February 3, 1950, the General Staff Military Court found General Mustafa Muğlalı, who had been 3rd Army Inspector in Diyarbakır at the time of the incident, guilty and sentenced him to death, although his punishment was later reduced to 20 years imprisonment; he died in Ankara Gülhane Military Hospital in 1951 (Beşikçi 1992: 79; Aslan 1989: 41) and thus his file was closed. After a period of silence between 1951 and 1956, the case was re-opened in the TBMM by the DP as a reprisal of the accusations of the CHP's "discrimination towards minorities" during the events of September 6-7 (Beşikçi 1992: 78). This time, the Assembly demanded that ex-prime minister Ismet İnönü take up a position, accusing him and the entire CHP of complicity. The case, discussed in the TBMM on February 12, 1956 and February 25, 1956, was closed because of 'the limits of action and various amnesty laws', as was concluded within the report of the TBMM Commission of Investigation and the discussions at the National Assembly (Beşikçi 1992: 79).

In the following section I shall consider local knowledge and interpretations of the event. Thus this research[8] is based on oral narratives collected in the course of in-depth interviews using oral history techniques, such as the narrative analysis of various written documents and interviews with key persons. In addition, I have also included other scholarly works and memoirs on family, tribe *(aşiret)* and national history, which I have treated as narratives and scrutinized accordingly. Then I compared the results with historical documents. The differences between various narratives could be solved by using historical documents as arbitrators; conflicts between documents or other uncertainties required a search for further narratives and a re-examination of existing ones.

Initial questions aimed at ascertaining whether the villagers remembered the 33 Bullets Incident at all, if yes, how it was remembered, and the role that mem-

7 A second application was submitted by Van deputy Muzaffer Koçak on November 17, 1948. BYBS TBMM File C1.

8 Within this research, four social structures that have been the subjects and the objects of the 33 Bullets Incident have been scrutinized. These have been influential around the Hoşap-Kutur-Ağrı and Mahmudiye region, famous in various periods, and integrated into the state and the Republic in different ways: (1) Milan Aşireti, an example of nomadism, which builds the networks of social relations on rebellion, (2) the Küresins, as a tribal structure without an agha, (3) the Birukis as a system of agha (Andrews 1989: 112), (4) the Arvasis, who strengthen their social and political ties through sects and religion. The villages affected by the 33 Bullets Incident: Sırımlı (H(X)arapsorik) and Değirmiköy (Milaningiz); Damlacık (Raşik), the village of Küresins; in-depth interviews and visual anthropology techniques are applied in Van in order to gather information on the Arvasis and Birukis, and various texts published by the sects, various historical documents and official documents are examined.

ory played in their attitude to the border. However, as time and the research advanced, the field itself provided the opportunity to discern multi-layered truths. Staying for a while in the villages, turning our interviews into informal talks, sharing at least a part of their daily life, connecting with people and earning the trust of our gatekeepers became integral parts of the research. The stories of the county centers (*kasaba*) and the cities, accusations and judgments, narrative forms used by various social groups were collected using methods of visual anthropology. Hour-long sittings, daily chats and all kinds of everyday interaction were recorded visually and transcribed.

A transcription technique described as 'proceeding via the codes given by life' was applied. In the categorization of the codes, priority was given to the meanings derived from the field. The facts were named according to the periods in which they were used and by whom they were used in social memory (such as "once revenge is uttered, its sound of blood remains"). Metaphors signifying these facts were assigned a twofold meaning: as attempts at metaphor by the people, and second, as construing the discourse. This issue is the focus of the discussion in this article.

Methodologically, a categorical-content perspective is used for narrative analysis.[9] This technique invalidates considerably the dichotomous idea often underlying narrative readings, i.e. that there is a contradiction between categorization and contextual analysis. Because, in this technique, categorization does not only derive from theory, there is indeed no need to be confined to the theory, while at the same time the text itself can create its own categories.

Thereupon the same forms of story-telling were assembled periodically. This was most difficult since the telling of stories of enmity or glorification could be different within the same period for each social group; the chronology of objectives and subjects targeted by those in power did not agree with the chronology of the objectives of the groups from the same *aşiret* with lower status.[10]

Why We Forget Selectively

How absolute is the relationship between ideology and what we remember or forget? More importantly, what do we remember, how and why? Who remem-

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9 In this technique, the main titles of the research area are determined, and the text is divided into these categories, classified and grouped (Lieblich and Tuval-Mashiach 1989: 112-115).

10 The "boldface" terms in the citations below indicate codes; quotation marks '…' indicate the categories of these codes within this text. For example the code "Permitted-Turks" belongs to the category of 'Pro-us – pro-State'. Similarly the code "My grandfather Mehmet Bey was from Hamidiye Regiments" signals the category 'We were also under the rule of the same state. We are citizens too'. The code "Our ancestors fought in Çanakkale" is in the category 'We are one of the founding members of the same Republic too'.

bers what? We also need to focus on the relation between memory and social responsibility. The 33 Bullets Incident is a good example for illustrating not only how Turkish political history, but also how the geography of citizenship has been shaped. It is the 'intrinsic' of historical knowledge of events and of the subjects and objects of these events. Furthermore, it should also be an example of academia's responsibility to change and undo silences, obscurities of interpretation and negligence in the name of 'objectivity'.

Van Dijk's classification of social interfaces explicates the dialectics of the relationship between social memory and ideology (Van Dijk 2003: 19-37). In order to deconstruct ideology, Van Dijk examines the construction of the ideology and hence connects shared fields, fields of perception and attitudes and the field of ideologies and values as the largest *socius*[11] as elements of social memory. Van Dijk's description of what he calls the *socius* resembles Simmel's analysis of the term in three fields: the fields of the reflection of the social on the individual, on the institution(al) and on the moral (Freund 1997: 157-193). Van Dijk also emphasizes the dialectical relation between ideology and its reflection in social practice. This practice is realized in the production, reproduction and application of ideological knowledge, ideological attitudes and cognitive models. However, according to Van Dijk, all these do not necessarily bring inevitable results.

In this respect Van Dijk diverges from Bell significantly, who regards memory as the inevitable manipulation of social formations. Bell defines all narrative forms of past events and the discursive imagination of history as 'memory'. On the other hand, unlike memory,

> the governing myth thus coexists with and is constantly contested by subaltern myths, which are capable of generating their own traditions and stories, stories as likely to be concerned with past oppression and suffering at the hands of the dominant groups as by tales of national glory. (Bell 2003: 80)

This differentiation underscores the manipulations ensuing from the construction of the collective memory as a national imagination and fortifies endeavors to liberate oneself from the enchantment of common nationalist memory.

> The complex interpenetration of myth – in both its governing and multifarious subaltern forms – and organic memory (remembrance) can best be framed in the context of (and in relation to) a 'national mythscape'. Such a mythscape can be conceived of as the discursive realm, constituted by and through temporal and spatial dimensions, in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly. The temporal dimension denotes a historical span, a narrative of the passing of years, and it is a narrative that is most likely to include inter alias a story of the origins of the nation and of subsequent momentous events and heroic figures. (Bell 2003: 81)

A thorough comprehension of this potential is crucial for actors of the critical project. According to Bell, our various thought-worlds and imagination-fields are

11 Van Dijk uses the concept of *socius* following Arendt (1994).

deliberate and ideological, whether they are areas of social memory packed with a nationalist construction or the field of myth as a sub-field. Immediately after being collected, they may and do actually work as interior and exterior fields to each other. Van Dijk's stance on this state of mutual necessity and the mechanisms of influence is more cautious, and he focuses more on the layers of discourse on its way to becoming ideology.

The social sciences have recently begun to dwell on forms of remembering and forgetting of the social. Over the last fifteen years, populist socio-political discourses have begun to rewrite the narrative of the founding of the Turkish Republic on the basis of totalitarianism. There is no need to repeat here that these narratives draw on micro-historical studies. It has become largely evident in this period that history writing always incorporates a certain ideological bias. Benedict Anderson rejects the idea that nations are the creations of sociological conditions such as race or language or that their shape is uniform. Nations are imagined, and nationalism is part of the universal history of the modern world (Anderson 1991).

Thus, the founding narratives of the Turkish Republic need to be read differently from 'liberal statist' discourses or from the 'rational game of the rationally working unequal power conflicts' narrative. This text is a diachronic reading (the simultaneous effects of power balances/ conflicts and worlds of meaning) of the 33 Bullets Incident. Naturally, a diachronic reading of history can be applied to one event. Such a reading can proceed by way of establishing power balances at the national and international levels. However, as in the case of the 33 Bullets Incident, there is a need to discern how powers consequently reproduce the irrationality of life while they are involved in rational power games. This duality (rational and irrational) shapes and transforms Republican ideology through its various transformations within the history of the Turkish Republic.

In this paper the *socius* of the subject and object of the event in the 33 Bullets Incident will be elaborated on as narratives of interpreted and interpreter. Ali İhsan Bey, the tribal chief of the Milan *Aşiret,* which lost most of its members in the Incident, gives voice to a higher class position within the *aşiret* structure. The Küresins, on the other hand, are marked as the enemies of the new age. The Milan is forcibly made the subject of the action, and the Küresins become its objects.

The Ranking of Responsibilities in the Reconstruction of the 'Truth'

The Class-based Composition of the Aşiret*: the Milan* Aşiret*'s Leader Ali Ihsan Bey: My grandfather Mehmet Bey was in a Hamidiye Regiment"*

The names were lost first, the names of places and persons, and were then remembered either in their earlier or modern forms. The 33 Bullets Incident took

place in Özalp district, but according to the villagers, its location was Mahmudiye. The history of Özalp was indeed transformed on August 19, 1930, during the last days of the Ağrı Revolts. The revolt was suppressed as a result of diplomatic cooperation with Iran; the Kutur district was ceded to Iran, and the Mahmudiye district took the name Saray (BYBS TBMM, Record No. 73-84). In 1932, the name of the Saray district changed to Kazımpaşa; but then its name was restored after Kazımpaşa moved to Karahallı village and changed its name to Özalp (BYBS TBMM No. 13422).

A similar confusion exists in the official records. For example, in the Assembly reports, Özalp sometimes is called Kazımpaşa, and the Kotor (Kutur) River becomes the Kokut River. There is even confusion within the narratives: The name of the military surgeon, who hesitated to sign the death report, is Raşit Ersezer in Beşikçi's account and Raşit Tezer in Aslan's. More importantly, the numbers and the names of the dead given by Beşikçi as based on the death report (which is based again on the records of detention in the Assembly minutes) contradict those Aslan collected from the villagers. While Beşikçi refers to 32 men and a woman, and states that the woman was released since she was Mehmedi Misto's daughter, who was employed with the Turkish National Intelligence Organization, Aslan gives the names of 33 men without mentioning a woman (Beşikçi 1992: 141; Aslan 1989: 21).

Interviews conducted in two villages and Özalp revealed that there are differences between these memoirs, accounts of the villagers and Ali İhsan Bey, the leader of the Milans. The common statement is that, before, the state allowed some smuggling, but then retaliated to take revenge for the 1500-2000 sheep stolen from Mehmedi Misto (Beşikçi 1992: 27, 141), the agha of the smuggler village (Belasor); 80 horsemen surrounded the town's (Saray's) cattle; consequently some people in Saray became traitors; the dead belonged to the Milan Aşiret and were executed without a proper hearing; and they were innocent.

Ali İhsan Bey, leader of the Milan *Aşiret*, who organized his official contacts with the state carefully, stressed that 'plundering was first allowed by the soldiers and this paved the way for the emergence of the new tradition of denouncement':

> We [Osman Agha, the father of the leader of the Milan Aşiret, Ali İhsan Bey] were in Iran. In Urmiye district [formerly Rizaiye].Turkish smugglers went [to Urmiye district]; maybe they got permission from the state. There was the village Belasor, the agha Muhammedi Misdo, our relative, from Milan, was there. He was a just man… But they went together, took it as a matter of honor. A decision to retaliate was made. Together with 80 horsemen, there were other *aşirets*. Saray was a town then. They said, "We will take the cattle of the town in place of the sheep". They looked around for a while, but the cattle had gone towards the border zone. So they drove the cattle to Iran. In compensation for the sheep. Mehmedi Misdo was a relative of Ingiz [the village called Milaningiz - Değirmigöl]. The locals, who did not like Muhammedi Misdo, denounced him. Apparently, two villages were denounced. H(X)arapsorik [Sırımlı] and İngiz

> [Değirmigöl]. Two persons from Çaybağı [Rune(x)ksar], 16 persons from H(X)arapsorik [Sırımlı], 15 persons from Milaningiz [Değirmigöl][12] …The denouncement was made by those who did not like us, who were not from among us, whose cattle had been stolen, whose homesteads had been ruined. Then they summoned 33 persons by name. They were taken to Van. The court of justice asks in Van 'what do they have?' They had nothing. They arrested three persons. They detained someone called Abdülbaki from Sırımlı village and three other persons separately. Later they were acquitted. All of them were respected persons. Even a sergeant came on leave, sergeant Süca. He was one of them.

When we asked Ali İhsan Bey whether there was a woman among them; he says "I don't know, we didn't hear".

> They even separated the Kurdish soldiers from among those who were going to shoot, so that only soldiers from the western part of the country doing their military service here would be involved. The soldiers from the west went. The men's hands were tied, they were lined up close to each other. İbrahim survived with a wound. He escaped across the Iranian border. He pretended to be dead, stood up only after they had gone. After 3-5 years, he died too. (From the interview with Ali İhsan Bey on October 28, 2002).

When we sought to confirm the incident mentioned also in Beşikçi's work when Muhemmedi Misdo called for İbrahim Özay, who had escaped wounded and was living in Iran as a fugitive, in order to make him kiss the hand of a Turkish army officer:

> "There was no hand kissing, no!" he says.
>
> We were in Iran at that time, Osman Agha passed away in 1938. At the time of the incident my elder brother Rıza Bey was the Milan agha. There is 15 years between us. There was a private amnesty. We were of use to the state [Turkey] in Iran. (From the interview with Ali İhsan Bey on October 28, 2002)

Especially three expressions in Ali İhsan Bey's narrative are conceptualized, and there are three remarks that need further investigation: "We and the Turks-Westerners", "One of them was a soldier" and "respected persons".

The expression "We and the Turks-Westerners" discloses the traces of a Turkish-Kurdish conflict of a new era: 'We' signifies being situated on the periphery, 'the Turks-Westerners' means to be at the center. This cautious wording further underlines that even the executioners were chosen from among the Turks; thus the hands that pulled the trigger were Turkish. **Us** here represents Osman Agha, Ali İhsan Bey and the leadership of the *aşiret* in the first place, but in an extended sense it also encompasses the whole *aşiret*, all victims and the oppressed, and all Kurds. The words in the first lines referring to the "Turks who had re-

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12 The confusion regarding the number persists. For instance while Aslan states the number of deaths as 33, unlike Ali İhsan Bey, he mentions 25 persons captured from Sırımlıköy; he provides the names of 25 persons from Sırımlı, 2 from Değirmigöl, one from Çaybağı and 5 from Xretel (Kapıköy) (Aslan, 1989).

ceived permission" were used throughout this research as 'those who were prostatists and thus could not be counted as Kurds'. The villagers' and the Milan leader's formulations "One of them was a soldier" and "respected persons" reinforced their innocence and confirmed their leaders' statements. A careful examination of these conceptualizations reveals a revolt against the state's execution of even those who were considered worthy of being conscripted to the national army without an appropriate hearing. Furthermore, it was also a reaction to the arrest of the *aşiret*'s most honored and respected leaders by name.

Ali İhsan Bey's choice to use the name *Urmiye* is worthy of attention. His preference to use Urmiye instead of Rızaiye, can be a reference to Iran's political processes and the Arian connection. The example represents a case of changing names and the search for an answer to the questions, which of these names have been preserved by social memory and for what reason, provides an interesting clue. Changing the name of the lake during the Khomeini regime from Rızaiye, which stressed its association with Shah Rıza, to Urmiye, referring to an older period, and the preference for this name both in Iran and Turkey, prove Ali İhsan Bey's awareness of the 'patriotic' constructions of the ethnic nationalism of the new era.

Ali İhsan Bey defines Milan as follows:

> My grandfather Mehmet Bey is from the Hamidiye Regiments, Osman Agha is his son. The Milan consists of four branches, and more than 100,000 families live around Urfa and Suruç. 30-32 villages belong to us. We were in Iran in the winter and in Özalp in the spring and summer. Once when the borders were open, we were spending the summer in Özalp, but they remained there when the border was drawn. He sent two messengers to the agha of Şemsikans, Bashan, and said "Give him our greetings; if possible, we shall stay in the villages of Özalp this winter". But Bashan said "I will give none of the houses". So the Şemsikans and the Milans fought each other for three months… The Şemsikans were entrapped in Gazlıgöl village castle… [according to the story of this conflict]. Afterwards they leave the castle and settle in the villages of Karahisar-Keçikayası-Kapıköy-Çakmak-Kepir-Kekikdüzü-Koçbaşı. The Milan's villages are Örenburç, Çaybağı, Baltepe, Zırava, Çardak, Zincirkıran, Dolutaş, Değirmigöl, Bayaslan-Şerefhane, Sırımlı, Korucan, Yamanyurt, Gazlıgöl, Yeşilalış-Pagan. This happened in 1915. In Mehmet Agha's time. My grandfather went to Iran. The army advanced towards us with 2000 soldiers, in the 1920s. An important politician [he stated that he cannot give his name] responded to my father. Then Osman Agha said "Soldiers are coming against us". They had lots of money, 2-3 flocks of sheep, silver, gold. They could not take anything, neither valuables nor food, just nothing. Only a blanket was put on each horse, for the women to ride, that was it… [The story of the escape and arrival to Iran] They passed Koçbaşı … [Staying in Iran and the myth of all the sons' gathering there] We stayed in Iran till 1949. We stayed for 20 years. In 1930, we applied for amnesty, a special amnesty was granted. Then we migrated from Iran to Iraq… [The story of this migration] My mother's brother was a member of the first Assembly, a member of the Legislative Assembly. He, too, escaped. [The story of this escape]. On the second night of my father's escape to Iran, some soldiers came to the village, and asked "Who is the relative of Osman Agha, who is his imam, who is his clerk?" They killed two persons… [The story of the killings; the deaths were mystified using re-

> ligious motifs.] The killings took place near Gözlemez village, the corpses were thrown into the well. No court hearing was held for these two persons. No one could denounce them out of fear. We were still in Iran… [He justifies why he failed to prevent the deaths as an aşiret leader.] In 1949, our villages were recorded in the ownership registers. I swear to God we could not take them back. When the cadastre came to the village, they asked for witnesses concerning our property rights, and the judges acknowledged us to be right, they said "These are theirs. You usurped (their property) when they went to Iran". But they won the appeal, we could not get anything. We lost most of them. Recently, they handed over [the property] on their own accord. They [the Küresins] came later on, took half of the land, we could not do this [for Sırımlı village]. (From the interview with Ali İhsan Bey on October 28, 2002)

In his comparative analysis of the 'Hamidiye Regiments' and 'Village Guard System' for the commonalities of the state's colonization, Aytar relates Ibrahim Pasha's above-mentioned escape as follows:

> In the period when the Kemalist movement tried to get the *aşiret* leaders and religious leaders in Kurdistan on its side with various promises and to squash those revolting, the Milli Aşiret revolted on June 8, 1920. This revolt was suppressed on June 18. Moved to Syria after the suppression of the revolt, 2-3 thousand members of the Milli Aşiret crossed the border either on horseback and camel, or on foot, and, settling in Etşan village in Viranşehir. They started another revolt, and cut the telegraph lines. In response to the Ottoman officers' summons to surrender, the leaders of the Milan Aşiret demanded amnesty and compensation for their losses by the next evening. When their requirements were not met, the Milli Aşiret's forces invaded Viranşehir on August 26th. However, after consecutive attacks by Turkish soldiers they were forced to migrate to Syria again on September 7. (Aytar 1992: 257)

The information in the above paragraph was not mentioned by Ali İhsan Bey. According to him, Milan never revolted but was merely forced to cross the border. There are some important clues in his account: "being from the Hamidiye Regiments and a member of the first Assembly", a sign hinting that the Milan had not fought either against the Republic nor the Ottomans, and indeed they were more on the side of the state overall, rather than at war with it. We notice a similar discourse concerning the first years of the Republic: (TBMM Secret Session Records: 1338) Siverek Deputy Lütfi Bey on July 22, says

> … Gentlemen, Kurdish soldiers, who are regarded as revolting defeated the French Army in Urfa, it was done by the Kurdish *aşirets* who are considered revolting. Not by Nihad Pasha's soldiers!

and he continues

> Nihad Pasha, confusing origin with history perceived the Milli *aşiret* movement a revolt. I beg your pardon, he is the father of the Milan *aşirets*, even Abdülhamid once called him his son. He revolted one or two years before Independence… The current revolts are his 'sons'. Let us not give it a revolt spirit on account of the rivalry between the aşirets. (TBMM Secret Session Records 3, Volume 566)

Similarly, in his research to expose the usefulness and mainly the leadership of the Haydaran tribe at the Ağrı Revolt, Süphandağ refers to the popular historian

Cemal Kutay's television speech in order to prove the leader of the Maku *aşirets* and Ağrı revolters, Kör Hüseyin Pasha's role:

> In a television speech, the famous historian Cemal Kutay was saying "Not Kazım Karabekir Pasha, but indeed Kör Hüseyin Pasha saved East Anatolia from the Russians and the Armenians." (Süphandağ 2001: 246)

Mentioning Urfa and Suruç as the origins of the *aşiret* in Ali İhsan Bey's narrative proves the *aşiret*'s Kurdish identity. With these statements Ali İhsan Bey simultaneously manifests the Kurdish origin of his *aşiret* and its pro-statist stance. The most important signifier of the Kurdish nationalism of the new era has its origin in Bohtan and Suruç. It remains controversial whether the Kurdish origin lies in Ağrı or Bohtan. However, in the new era, it was decided to bring forth Bohtan and Suruç as the origins for the creation of the Kurdish nation. Ali İhsan Bey recognizes and employs this code.

"The war with the Şemsikans" is told to signify the *aşiret*'s migration experience in the past and 'the courage attributed to a good soldier in migrant culture'. The sentence mentioning "a great politician" is significant here as well, the implication being that this great politician could be one of the greatest since he cannot be mentioned by name (such as Atatürk or İsmet İnönü); what is emphasized here is that the Milan can address a great politician because of its own grandeur or because it was normal for it to draw the attention of a great politician. Henceforth, the story relates the *aşiret*'s arrival to Turkey in 1949 after 20 years exile in Iran-Maku-Iraq following a special amnesty, and its subsequent failure to get its usurped lands back (as a result of the court of appeal's persistent rejection of the local court's decision). In brief, it is a story of an exile caused by a conflict with the Republic, which, in spite of the return after 20 years following the special amnesty, remains a story of landlessness. By saying that

> 'We were of use to the state' and [at the discretion of the Iranian Shah *(evrak-ı halise)*] we were offered possessions, oxen and seedbeds… [the opportunities offered by the Iranian Shah and a story of wealth] … We rejected that aid as well, and we told ourselves, let us return to our own country, in any case amnesty will be issued. (From the interview with Ali İhsan Bey on October 28, 2002).

Ali İhsan Bey provides clues for the earlier conflicts of the migrant Kurdish *aşiret*s with the Republic and then their rapprochement with the DP government.

Nevertheless it is interesting that the Milan do become landowners later on. Categorized as "them", the Küresins are a non-agha *aşiret* settled around the Van region in the wake of the Simko Agha revolt. Even today there are deeply-rooted conflicts between this *aşiret* structure and the Milan. In many villages such as Sırımlı, Değirmigöl, etc. there are dual structures. Ali İhsan Bey simultaneously 'others' the Küresins and reveals how they themselves handed over their lands to the Milan (in the last twenty years).

From the first years of the Republic onwards, the Milan *aşiret* is stigmatized by the state as follows:

> They joined the revolt. One cannot trust their devotedness to our country. The Agha system prevails in the *aşiret.* They are semi-nomads. (*Aşiret*s Report 1998: 349)

Kazım Karabekir Pasha describes the *aşiret*s around Van-Bitlis-Ağrı and Muş as 'mutineers, ill-tempered, plunderers, … calm' in his reports; entitled 'Three *Aşiret*s in the Fırka District', the K8 report classifies the Milan in the same sub-tribe system with Celâl, Şivili, Takavi, etc. *Aşiret*s. In his analysis of the Dersim revolts, Karabekir Pasha others these Kurds as such:

> The relationships between the *aşirets* are not auspicious. How can they be, generally among the Kurds family sentiments come after their interests. A brother shoots his brother to replace him in the leadership… In Muş women are exchanged for goods. (Karabekir 1995: 76)

The Milan *aşiret*'s main trouble with the Republic started with the Ağrı Revolt. It is the same revolt which is mentioned in the book published by Kaynak Publishing House and claimed to belong to the General Staff. In 1925, because some of the feudal aghas and *aşiret* leaders wanted to be exiled together with the Milan, the *aşiret*s revolted against the Republic (Kalman 1996: 77); this period ended with a general revolt and their eventual banishment by the Republic. Even though somewhat later a special amnesty was issued for some groups, the Milan remained in exile till 1949.

How can we analyze this narrative that conflates the meta-discourse of being 'a devout subject of the state' and the sub-discourse of being 'Kurdish and against'? The Milan describe themselves first as 'rebellious, traditional (fighting with other *aşiret*s) in the past but pro-statist in fact', and later as 'a disillusioned society which came about as a result of unfulfilled promises'. Zizek defines this as 'a new situation built upon collective guilt' (Zizek 1989). However, including Zizek, those who produce politics based on the collective construction discourse do so as a way to explicate the predominance of the meta-power spaces on the sub-spaces. In other words, this way is only a one-way construction of the subaltern; it is called power oppression to which the subaltern is subjected. However, in addition to the *socius*'s constant reconstruction of itself and its story, the reactions of all micro-units as well as that of the state should be taken into consideration. Hence it can be assumed that the Milan attempted to create a story on 'double guiltiness': Even though they declared their loyalty to the Republic (first guilt: betrayal of the Kurds), they were sent into exile and thus revolted (second guilt: betrayal of the Republic); utilizing the bargaining mechanisms (third guilt: betrayal of the Iranian Shah); returning to the country (fourth guilt: bargaining to take the lands back using the ones executed) and the revolt triggered by their inability to regain their lands. In response to the question: 'Why did the Milan not revolt after the 33 Bullets Incident? If it was that big, rooted and strong, why

did it not deal with this issue within the traditional structures?' Ali İhsan Bey answers 'We were in Iran, the state was very strong, and a hundred people more would have died'. However, in another interview he stated "The Milan has left the call to account for a later date". For the new period, that is for the early PKK period, the Küresins explain that "The issue of calling to account did not turn into bloodshed, but the problem increased. An atmosphere of 'you are not from us' was emerging. Having heard this, the Küresins were drawing near the soldiers."
This statement clarifies 'the handover of the Milan's lands voluntarily, in the recent period'.

Zizek interprets the sharp shock caused by the confrontation of the collective feeling of guilt with reality as 'a point of reality, at the heart of the subject, non-symbolized, produced as a waste, as a leftover of every kind of processes of giving meaning' (Zizek 1989: 195). Naming this point the '*point de capiton*' (nodal point[13]), Zizek states 'The signifier does not correspond entirely to the set of signified, the signifier always free-floats'.

> In other words, what is crucial in any analysis of ideology is to detect, behind the apparently transcendental meaning of the element holding it together, this tautological, performative, fundamentally self-referential operation, in which it is not so much some pre-existing meaning that things refer to as an empty signifier that is retrospectively seen as what is being referred to. This ideological *point de capiton* or master-signifier is not some underlying unity but only the difference between elements, only what its various mentions have in common: the signifier itself as pure difference. (Zizek 1989: 249)

Ali İhsan Bey's discourse defines the Milan's present situation anew for the new situation within the framework of past patterns (feelings of guilt, interpreting the encounter with the researcher as a meeting with a more social dimension of the state, the excuses for the betrayal, the rebellion against injustices and against being betrayed). At this *point de capiton* the past is reconstructed, the legacy of the past (the tradition to fight; the invasion of the lands of the Şemsikan, the revolt against the Republic; the escape to Iran at the outset of the Ağrı Revolt; the exile and the bargaining) is reformulated in terms of betrayal, guilt and excuses which come to form the basis of the ideological discourse of the Milan's role in recent history.

Simmel says 'There are two kinds of lie': It is the most superficial and dissociate lie, which directs the words away from the thoughts: This lie looks as if it did not belong to the person; it merely arises on the boundary between him and the outside world. The real lie is the one in which the words are compatible with the thoughts, but the thought contradicts the reality situated deeper inside us; when our soul is dichotomous in itself (Simmel 2000: 34). Due to its characteristic which is said to the outside world but which we know is also directed to our-

13 Literally an "upholstery button," though it has also been translated as "anchoring point".

selves, it is this kind of lie which directs *socius* to defy its entire life and to reconstruct it; thus, the Milan and the Turkish Republic reconstruct themselves and each other: hence the discourse of constructive guiltiness in the Milan is constructed upon collective guilt.

The Legitimization of the Denouncement Tradition: "The Küresins have betrayed us"

One of the most evident results of the study was "the approval of the denouncement tradition". Even the villagers asked immediately, "Find the denouncer for us. You must know his name, you are the scholar, give us his name". As the forms of legitimization, complaints and results of the 'denouncement tradition' gradually emerged in the course of the research, a new core question started to take shape: "Why and how was the denunciation process operated and who won in the end?"

The 33 Bullets Incident is entirely based on an invisible denouncement process and sub-models of discontent analysis. İsmail Beşikçi conveys the incident as in Dr. Captain Raşit Ersezer's statement that was supported by the TBMM Session Reports and Minutes Journals. According to these documents, the real causes of the incident originated from a disagreement over livestock smuggling between the Milan and the Memikan tribes, and as a result of denunciation reached this point. The chieftain of the Milan tribe Muhemmedi Misdo 'betrayed' his fellow- villagers; in fact he is a spy of the Turks, a traitor (Beşikçi 1992: 27, 40, 31; Göktaş 1991b: 63-67). According to Aslan, the ones who started the incident, tolerated, encouraged and were personally involved in border smuggling were the battalions and the soldiers at the border. Aslan infers this remark from the trial records:

> All of the property smuggling incidents to Iran and similar practices and behavior were realized under the initiative of the 226 Regiment and the 2nd Border Battalion". (Aslan 1989: 20)

The common point in the two writers' statements is significant: the 33 Bullets Incident can be read in different ways according to each period and situation; hence the 'fiction of the real' can be re-constructed.

In fact, it is possible to modify the social readings politically without the entirety of reality; in the nomadic past there were periodic disagreements between the Milan and the Memikan *Aşirets*. Ali İhsan Bey himself confirms the presence of the denouncers within the Milan: "There were denouncers among us and among the others, there were the faithless". Even the response to the question 'Who is the friend and who is the foe of the Milan?' can be "It depends on the period". However when asked about the dates one by one, the Şemsikan, Takuri, Pinyanişi, Mikuri, Memikan and the Küresin *aşirets* were designated as the social

groups the Milan had disputes with from time to time, both in the past and in the present. The disputes with the Şemsikan date back to the nomadic past; those with the Takuri, Pinyanişi and Mikuri to the time of the Ağrı Revolts; the disputes with the Memikan go back to the 1940s in Republican times; and those with the Küresins to both the former historical periods and to the more recent ones, 1950 and after. Here it is significant who in each period was used by the villagers in constructing their 'other' and how they reconstruct their fiction of the state. Important are the traces this fiction leaves in villagers' minds. Two of the most important political strategies of the Ottoman leadership and state tradition which aimed at co-opting various groups included 'sowing the seeds of discord' and 'the perpetuation of denouncement mechanisms'. The research has revealed that taking sides is a central political strategy, and as a consequence the idea that 'the denouncer is approved and wins in every period' has left its mark in the minds and *socius* of the villagers.

The targets set by the villagers and by the Milan leader in the past and the present can be differentiated in spite of this reconstruction. This reconstruction is articulated in sentences like "We do not let the refugees pass, the Şemsikans do" or "The drug trade is the most humiliating way of earning money for us, but for them [people in Yüksekova/ Başkale] it is an accepted way to earn a living" or "We earn our money from oil, not hashish or gun". These in turn shape the social 'othering' and their choice of those elements, which they wish to foreground in this process. Subsequently, the sub-discourse of the real unease unfolds as follows:

> Wherever there is a dishonest person, he makes denunciations. There are some also in our village, they are engaged in both smuggling and denouncement", "… took from … village. [The accused of this incident was a village belonging to the Küresin tribe.] He said 'we are taking it to Van'. He got 27,000 dollars. As soon as he took the money, he made accusations against a group of the PKK. They searched for the men with a helicopter. Nine people died. Afterwards a woman takes off her scarf and waves it. They look down and see that these are women, children, not terrorists" "Our people did it again; they denounced others." "They slandered each other"; "Here! Smugglers. All were rich, respected names… They took them by name… Certainly there are not many honest people around.
>
> (From interviews in Sırımlı and Değirmigöl conducted in September 2002.)

These passages suggest the belief concerning the presence and operation of the denouncement tradition. The expressions "There was no enmity; the problem was the cattle… Look, the district governor was an Armenian..." and "The denouncers acted faithlessly as infidels" stress the words 'Armenian' and 'infidel.'

Despite the differences in the villagers' statements about who made the denouncements, these statements clearly pinpoint the period which the accusations refer to: For instance, whereas the elderly who rarely leave the village name the enemy of the olden days as the denouncer ("There is the Şemsikan Aşiret, see, they are filthy"); those who have more authority within the *aşiret* and are familiar

with the political dynamism of the new era and are therefore closer to the claims of central power (leaders) identify the 'other' of the new era as the denouncers: "The Küresins denounced us!"

Who are the Küresins? The Küresins are described by the Kurds as a Turkish-Sunni tribe without an agha comprising 50-60 villages in Iran and the same number of settlements on the Turkish side. According to some articles published by the Kaynak Publishing House, which are said to have been authored by the General Staff, the Küresins are a tribe with a population of 4700, and they speak Kurdish (Kurmanci) and Turkish:

> Denomination: Shafi'i, Chieftains: 1) Yemen (Emin) the son of Maksut, Erçek Subdistrict, Arıtoprak village; 2) Hüseyin İsa, Ermişler village, … Opinions: They did not participate in the revolt. They are loyal to our country. They recognize Erdoğan Agha from Iran as their chieftain. (Tribes Report 1998: 347-8)

During his commandership at the 7th Tribe Cavalry Division in Ağrı between 1921 and 1926, Süleyman Sabri Pasha wrote in his 'Van History':

> Nowadays the Şikaks call the Haremians (called by European historians the Horzum Turks during the Crusades) Küresins as Korasmen… The Küresins say that they originate from the Samsun region. They live within the Iranian border region. (Süleyman Sabri Pasha 1982: 45),

and elsewhere, "There is a Turkish tribe which started to change five-six year ago". By saying that

> They inhabit the vicinity of the city of Dilman in Azerbaijan; they joined the Şikak Tribe because they had been threatened by them; they put aside their papak and büzmeli and started wearing the külah and felt waistcoat (Thus they adjusted their clothes to their new identity, status and nationality) and they assumed the name 'Küresin tribe'. Naturally, they do not know Kurdish. (Süleyman Sabri Pasha 1982: 69),

the author of this quote, in fact, tries to prove that the Küresin and many other tribes in the region are indeed Turkish.

The Küresins define themselves as follows:

> We have relatives in Çaldıran and Başkale. The Küresin Sunnis live in Turkey, the Kuresin Shiis in Iran. We also have relatives from the Urmiye region, but they are too far away in the south of the border. Damlacık [Raşik-Akspi], Aşağı Tulgalı [Ahrok Jer], Yukarı Tulgalı [Ahrok Jor], Aşağı Sağmallı [Noşar], Koçkıran, Oymaklı, Bakışık [Azverk], the half of Roşar, Sırımlı, Velican, Başkale, Teyseren, 10-15 villages around Çaldıran. They are all ours. There is no tribal system. About 40-50 years ago, Hüseyin Bey from Aşağı Tulgalı was the agha. We have relatives in Yukarı Tulgalı. Previously this village was in Çaldıran. In Yukarı Sağmallı. My grandfather took this village, they settled here. It was given to them by the state. His father was village headman, then he handed over his position to my uncle, after his death it received this name. (From interviews in Damlacık (Raşik-Reşko-Akspi) village, September 2002)

> It was a hamlet of Yukarı Tulgalı in 1952. They moved there [to this village] in 1959… Simko Agha oppressed those [the Kuresins] immensely, so they sided with Iran. Some of them escaped to this side… Kur-hessinen, means Hessinnin-from Kuresin, son of

> Hasan…We are Sunni, Kurdish, but Sunni. Not Shafii… We arrived here in the 1920s. They came to the Dileman [Şapur] Kotur region. They moved and settled down here after Iran had instigated war between them and the Persians. Previously this village had been empty. The state made them settle here. A part of the Küresins remained within the Milan. We are from the Küresin Kurds. The Persian Kurds are in Şapur. (From an interview with the Küresin in Damlacık village, September 2002.)

However, these stories of escape and return are not verified by the Kurds outside the Milan Aşiret.

> Some of them are a random assemblage; the others are Acem [Azerbaijanis from Iran]. Our nation does not like the Acem [Azerbeijani] at all… They were forced to pay homage to Simko Agha, and then when Simko Agha was defeated, the state gathered them and granted them a few houses… They always support the stronger side. Those from Özalp, especially by the people from Başkale, are known as the spies of the entire Van area. (From the interviews with Kurds in Özalp district, September 2002.)

In the narratives of the Küresins, siding with the state and being rewarded for this appear as the main themes: A special emphasis on being Sunni is a manifestation of the aforementioned ambition 'to be Muslim'. An even more striking statement is: "We are Sunnis, Kurdish but still Sunnis. We are not Shafiis".

Shafiism is a sub-branch of Sunnism, and the Küresins' statement may be seen as a lack of information or misinformation. In fact, the statement implies something else: being 'Kurmanci speakers, Shafii and coming from Bohtan have become the main signifiers of Kurdish nationalism in the recent period. Hence, by emphasizing their non-Shafii identity, the Küresins state their Kurdishness and simultaneously distance themselves from Kurdish nationalists.

These codes demand attention as forms of 'othering', "This village was empty when we arrived", "The state settled us here" or "Some of the Küresins remained within the Milan". The Milan tell the story the other way round: "The Küresins occupied the villages which they found empty." As far as the question "whether they had cooperated with Simko Agha or not" is concerned, the answers reveal the real reason behind the Küresins' real or alleged loyalty to the state: "The Persians have always been much closer to the state" [Interview in Sırımlı village].

Ali İhsan Bey says,

> The Küresins were h(x)ulam [i.e. farmhands or slaves]. But the Küresin nationality is devoted to their denomination, regardless of the language they speak, their imams are also Sunni. (Interview with Ali İhsan Bey.)

Göktaş's narratives on the Iranian Azerbaijani-Kurd conflict represent an important part of recent Kurdish nationalist constructions. Göktaş constructs the Persians as 'the other' within the story of the establishment of the Mehabad Kurdish Republic.

> The Azeris never wanted to recognize the Kurds' will to draw the borders of their own country. Therefore, Azeris started to occupy one by one the regions and the cities which

> are also claimed by Kurds. Hence they seized the cities Hoy, Rizaiye and Meyanduwab. The Kurds had been claiming their right to sovereignty over certain parts of these three cities, if not all of them. (Göktaş 1991b: 38.)

As for Türkdoğan, he calls the Küresins the Kasımoğlu community. According to him the Küresins are a Sunni Azeri group and

> Kür in Persian means 'much, many'. Indeed, they had migrated here from Iran en masse. This separation was mostly a reaction to Iran's desire to convert this Sunni group to Shiism. The Kasımoğlu Küresins are a group around the Van region with strong national sentiments who are proud of being Turkish. According to their statements, there is not one single person among the Küresins who has joined the PKK and the terror. Şamil Efendi declares this with pride: 'We are Turks and proud of being Turkish. We are against the PKK and Kurdish tendencies down to the end.' (Türkdoğan 1998: 43.)

This statement of the Küresins given to Türkdoğan in 1994 can be taken as an indication of their way of dealing with being 'othered' at that period.

The current narrative of the Küresin leaders is as follows:

> Many Küresins have migrated. They have left. They can be called statists. Upon their arrival, the Kurds continue to settle in Saray. This migration still goes on. Every month 3-4 families [of the Küresins] leave Saray. And Van as well… They had arrived in Iran from Azerbaijan. They settled in Hoy and its surroundings. From there, they had to come here because of the conflicts between the Kurds and the Persians. My uncle was a soldier of Simko Agha. In the years 1928-9. They arrived here in 1932. Escaping from Simko… The Armenians were here when they came. But they escaped. While escaping, a family moved in with my parents – they stayed for 5-6 months. All the fountains belong to the Armenians; the name Saray derives from Serav, which means 'a place with abundant water, *subaşı*' [fountain]. There are around 40 *kehriz* [cistern and channels]. All of them belong to the Armenians. The Küresins were used by the state. That is to say, when the Küresins arrived, the state was in opposition to the aghas… Thus they do not like the Küresins… Their relations with Kurds can only be explained with their knowledge of Kurdish. The group with my father arrived in the village of Hındıgan… There are Küresin-only villages. The ones inhabited by the Şahmeyer have also remained pure. There are people among them who do not speak Kurdish at all. The Küresins' residence is situated in the interior. There is no need for protection. In the past the aghas could not exert much influence here. Nothing could be done to Sahveret Aslan. He died a natural death. (From interviews with the Küresin leaders in Özalp district, September 2002.)

This statement first and foremost demonstrates to what degree the 'othered' tries to project itself closer to the center. *"Küresins against the aghas"* and *"taking sides with the state"* are underlined frequently. A similar statement can be found in Türkdoğan's quotations, such as "being Turk or/ and Azeri" and "opposing the PKK".

"Arrival after escaping from Simko" is underlined especially. Therefore does being disobedient to Simko Agha mean being *reyet* (the plural of reaya)? (Bruinessen 1998: 131; 152). Nikitin mentions the letter the subjects and the nomads of the Nahcevan Khanate presented to Kerim Han Zend in 1768, in which they re-

quested 'to be protected from xolam [golâm, i.e. household slave] enslavement'. "The golâm either inherited this status from his father or was bought for money or came from among the foreigners. But the Nahcevan villagers are reyet, and nomads should not be made golâm". Hence the Küresins are reyet. Minorsky agrees that the aghas are conquerors and the reyets are another race. It is impossible for these two groups to mix (Nikitin 1991: 224). Remembered as those 'disobedient to Simko Agha', the Küresins carry the hardly visible traces of the *reaya* period. Once we project this to earlier historical periods, we realize that the Küresins intend to remind us of an earlier past when they had played a useful role: "In order to attain sovereignty, the Ottoman used Kurdish tribes, including even Idris Bitlisi, against the Anatolian Turkmens in 1514" (İnalcık 1999: 68).

The interviews show that what the two groups share is the anxiety, which may be called the "traditionalization of denouncement":

The Milan state that: "Pastoral nomadism is difficult, the border is a prohibited zone, and there is no permission. But now, if we decide to go with you, even if we were to go to Iran with 20 people, the gendarme would not know about it. But again there will be denouncers among us."

The Küresins complain about the same problem: "Our real problem is denouncement, we can do anything but for the traitors among us; if only there were no denouncements! The border villages do not let us go in [in order to smuggle fuel]."

The Milans have the tendency to impute the guilt to the denouncer:

> "You denounce, and he is a soldier! The bullet does not know whether the person coming is clean or a smuggler."

Who *is speaking?*

Who is speaking? Once we become conscious of being the wretched of the earth, that is, of opposing colonialism with an oppressed mind, we comprehend that this injured consciousness (Shayegan 1997) cannot ever be transformed into a collective outburst of awareness. Spivak herself gave a negative answer to the question "Can the subaltern really speak?" (Spivak 2000). Many writers have shown that the oppressed mind could only speak through a scream, which may be understood only after long sessions of listening. However we need to ask: *Who* is speaking? The answers to this question traveled from Laclau to Spivak, from Connerton to Hall, and then to Adorno. Today forms of settling accounts with the past are evaluated from various directions, ranging from classical liberalism to right-wing laicism, from the liberal left and from the new Ottomans to the new left.

Who is speaking when the Milan speaks? Those families in Sırımlı and Degirmigöl which have suffered losses? The pain of these losses and the narratives of the survivors and the narratives of the *Aşiret*'s leader are of a very different na-

ture. The *Aşiret*'s members' attempts to survive and lead a quiet life only cannot be evaluated on the same level as the survival attempts of the chieftains who have enjoyed the support of various right-wing parties. Stuart Hall underscores the necessity to observe the narrators' life worlds and class-based power dynamics. In the Milan's aspiration to investigate its memories and to avoid being the 'other', it is possible to discover the wish to revitalize an older memory as well. All the previous references of the Milan's chieftain such as 'Not being one of the rebels, Hamidiye Regiments, loyalty towards Abdülhamit and the Republic, degrading the Türkmen-Azeris' tend to construct *a point de capiton* along with an earlier past. On the other hand the chieftain pinpoints another *point de capiton*: Statements concerning "Kurdish nationalism nourished by masculine elements" and "the rooted-ness of the Milan lineage" imply the immediate possibility of reconstructing new balances and the awareness that these balances will be based upon power and authority as has hitherto been the case.[14]

Who is speaking when the Küresins speak? The *reyet*, who have an understanding of the past and the present and who in the past were always left outside of the *aşiret* or *agha* structures, are partly conscious of the fact that their ties with the Republic have brought them no power. The reason behind the overemphasis of the Simko Agha period and their later activities against the PKK initiative lie precisely in their attempts for rapprochement and reminding. To put it more correctly, they call attention to the impossibility of the existence of the lower forms of landlessness within the Republic, even though they were outside the tribe and agha system, and to the unchanging lower status of the *reyet* throughout the Republic. Recently, the *reyet* intends to re-construct its old *capiton*s using traditional methods.

If the analysis so far reads like a spy story or has confirmed the view that "what needs to happen, will happen", we need to take a breath and re-think social responsibility: the relations of power and self-interest surrounding the social structure cannot be adequately examined within the framework of "rational calculations". One can observe their rational consequences, influences on identity constructions and traces left in social memory. Therefore neither the micro/ chronological explanations nor the macro/ achronic ones can show us the unity of the social structure. These two grounds need to be considered in a relational and diachronic manner; and it should be examined how the rational (power and self-interest calculations) and the irrational (identity and memory) mutually modify each other.

14 Zizek points out the "back to the future of consciousness" (Zizek 2002).

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Living in the 1920s – A Tatar Diary from Äji, Kasimov and Samarqand

Michael Friederich

Introduction

Khäsän Sadiq ughly Urmanov was born in 1904 in the Tatar village Äji[1] (in Russian "Azeevo") in Ryazan province, about 300 kilometres southeast of Moscow. He received his higher education in Kasimov, and after having finished school there, he left for Uzbekistan in 1927. He worked there as an employee in public administration. He died in Samarqand in 1986.

In the summer of 1922 he started to write a diary, which he continued until the end of May 1928. A brief supplement is concerned with the years 1936 and 1937. In the end we find a genealogy, which dates back to the 1720s on both, the father's, and the mother's side. The notes are handwritten in Arabic script; the language is Tatar. They contain about 40 pages of approximately A4 size. The notes are not a diary in the strict sense, but rather a "monthly", sometimes several months are summarized under one entry.

Judging by the uniform shape of the handwriting, the original notes were copied at some later time. Khäsän's daughter Mudrikä confirmed that her father used the Arabic script for private notes in Tatar until his death.

I received a copy of the diary from Mudrikä Khäsänovna when I met her the first time in Samarqand in November 2002 during my research on the history and present state of the Volga Tatar diaspora.[2] Mudrikä was born in Samarqand in August 1930; she retired in 2000, having served as long-time director of the archaeological museum in this city. During the Soviet period she visited the native place of her parents, Äji, several times. In 2002 she was the only member of her family still residing in Uzbekistan; her parents and her elder brother had

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1 Information on the history of Äji and the socio-economic situation of this very particular Tatar village until the mid-1920s can be found in Ibrahim Räxmätullah uγli Urmanof: *Äği tarixinä materijallar*, [Äği], January 1923 (unpublished manuscript in Arabic script, Library of Kazan State University, Manuscript-Collection, Call no.: 2487 T); Allajar Beläšof: *Äği avγly xaqynda*, Kazan 1924; "Mustafa": "Tambof gubirnasindä musulman avyllary", *Vaqit* no. 1384 = 8.1.1914. *Cf.* also Michael Friederich: "Büfettiers und Bucharisten – Von Tataren, die auszogen, das Glück in der Fremde zu suchen" (forthcoming).

2 This research project was funded for three years (March 2002 to February 2005) by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and headed by Professor Klaus Kreiser, Turkic Studies, Bamberg University, Germany. It attempts to depict the origin and the development of Volga Tatar diaspora communities in general, and focuses on Turkestan/ Uzbekistan.

died and her children all moved to Russia (before or after the collapse of the Soviet Union) in order to ensure a better living. Mudrikä herself is sad about the emigration of Tatars from Samarqand and Tashkent, where she used to have many friends, claiming that nowadays in Uzbekistan there no longer exists Tatar intellectual life but only reanimated Tatar folklore.

What are Khäsän Sadiq ughly's notes about? Can they be regarded as a source of collective or personal memory, and if so, what kind of past do they represent? Khäsän's notes deal with a past of more than 70 years ago. During these seven decades his notes could not have been a resource. This became possible only after the intervention of the researcher, a fact, which also sheds light on the interdependency between researcher and the subject of research. Khäsän's notes could not be a resource simply because they were written in the Arabic script, which, due to the repeated script changes initiated by the Soviet authorities during the early decades of the Soviet Union, none of his children and grandchildren are able to read.[3] His notes became a resource for private memory as soon as I converted them into Cyrillic script, thereby rendering them intelligible for his offspring. For this – in the literal sense – deciphering of the past I was rewarded not only with words of thanks but also with a prayer and supplications at the grave of the deceased – which were meant to be a resource for my future.

A diary – for the sake of simplicity I will call it that – apparently is a text written merely for private use. Khäsän wrote and kept his diary only for his children and his family. He never intended to have it published. The literary style of the notes could hardly be simpler: apart from some dialect expressions there is no "difficult vocabulary"; sentences with complex structure are lacking, and metaphors and flowery style are very rarely used.

The content of the diary corresponds to its linguistic and stylistic approach. For me, this correspondence came as a surprise. It was a surprise because I had expected that a diary written for private use only, would give insight into the personal perception of the time. There is no doubt that the era covered in the diary – the 1920s – was a turbulent time in the history of the Soviet Union: civil war, famine, repeated restructuring of the economic and societal life, "nationalism", national delimitation and indigenization, mass migrations – to name only the most important and crucial issues,[4] which, of course, also had repercussions for

[3] For script changes among the Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union in general and the Volga Tatars in particular see Ingeborg Baldauf: *Schriftreform und Schriftwechsel bei den muslimischen Russland- und Sowjettürken (1850-1937)*. Budapest 1993.

[4] Scientific literature on these issues is abundant. Among the most important are Orlando Figes: *Die Tragödie eines Volkes. Die Epoche der Russischen Revolution 1891 bis 1924*. Berlin 1998; Geoffrey Hosking: A History of the Soviet Union (revised edition). London 1990; *Russia in the Era of NEP*, ed. by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinovitch and Richard Stites. Bloomington 1991; Robert Conquest: *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. New York 1986; Richard Lorenz: *Sozialgeschichte der Sowjetunion 1,*

the Tatar region and within the Tatar community. But radical changes took place not only in the "big, objective history" of this time, but also in the "small, subjective history" of the diary's author: he left his native land in order to build a new life in a foreign environment, in Uzbekistan. What if not such kind of event is worth being reflected in a diary?

In this paper I shall consider Khäsän's diary in terms of its relationship to the past. My considerations might challenge some of the accepted wisdom of scholarship on Soviet history – namely the argument that in the early Soviet period all aspects of life were thoroughly "ideologized", from "above" as well as from "below".

The Diary

My expectations regarding the diary were based on the widespread opinion that in the Soviet Union all aspects of life were thoroughly influenced by politics and ideology. This opinion was not only continuously claimed by official Soviet propaganda and expressed in Soviet newspapers, journals and belles-lettres, it was also enthusiastically embraced by the western scholarly literature on the Soviet Union, in the writings of critics of the Soviet system (in internal as well as in external emigration), and in a large number of memoirs, diaries and autobiographies published after the collapse of the USSR.[5]

The diary of Khäsän Sadiq ughly Urmanov does not verify this attitude. It depicts the picture of a modest and somehow self-constrained life. This life, at least as far as it is described in the diary, showed hardly any interest in big societal issues; it rather tried to keep politics at a distance, seeking instead personal happiness.

It is difficult to trace the impact of "big history". What the author of the diary wrote about his juvenile attempts to write poetry applies to his diary, too:

> March 1925, Kasimov. […] I began to compose poems about the past. For the most part I write about Rabighä [his future wife], about nature and about my own life. If sometime somebody will read what I wrote he might laugh – but well, I like this pastime very much.[6]

Major political, economic and social events and their implications for private life are hardly mentioned in the diary. And when they are, then only briefly and incidentally. To give just one example: the summer of 1922, when crop failure in

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1917-1945. Frankfurt/ Main 1981; Terry Martin: *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalities in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca 2001.

5 For literature on this *cf.* the publications mentioned in footnote 30 and 31.

6 *1925enči jyl, mart, Qasim. [...] ütkänlärni ğyr iteb jaza bašladym. Kübräk Rabiyä turysynda, tabiyät turysynda, üzemneŋ tormyšym xaqynda jazyalyjmyn. Ber vaqitni kešilär šul jazularni uqyb možit bit kölälär – nu miŋa šul eš bik jaxši kürenä.*

the Volga region led to a hitherto unknown famine and caused the death of an estimated five million people,[7] is rendered by the following words only:

> It was the years of famine. We harvested the grain ourselves, together with Khösäyin. We had become real peasants. We began to understand how one has to work.[8]

Elsewhere it is only implied that "big politics" also touched upon the "small family" and had some impact on it:

> We left Kasimov on December 29 [1923] and arrived in Äji in the evening of the same day. Our arrival was sad. And it was even sadder because we did not know what had happened to [my] older brother Ghabdirrakhman. Instead of being received with joy we were received with tears. Above all [my] mother and Aunt Mahiyä were crying all the time. […] Because of these events we had a lot of difficulties. I don't note them but keep them in my memory. […] It would not have been a surprise, if the things which had happened to [my] older brother Ghabdirrakhman, had forced us to quit school.[9]

In the summer of 1925 it is again his older brother Ghabdirrakhman who causes trouble for the Urmanov family. In September 1925 Khäsän goes to Moscow to see Ghabdirrakhman, who lived there most of the time. Ghabdirrakhman is not there. Khäsän searches for him, also visiting different prisons in Moscow – apparently it seemed reasonable to assume that he was arrested – but is not able to find him. So Khäsän immediately leaves Moscow for the village where Ghabdirrakhman's wife, Aunt Mahiyä, is visiting her parents:

> Aunt Mahiyä did not know that something had happened. I told her about the situation. Without considering it for long we decided to send Aunt Mahiyä off to Tashkent.[10]

In November of the same year the Urmanov family in Äji receives good news from Tashkent:

> We celebrated the anniversary of the October Revolution joyfully. In these days I also received a letter from [my] older brother Ghabdirrakhman. He is absolutely safe now.

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7 *Cf.*, e.g., Orlando Figes: *Die Tragödie eines Volkes. Die Epoche der Russischen Revolution 1891 bis 1924*. Berlin 1998. 818-820. The first newspaper article in the Central Asian Turkic press to deal with the famine in the Volga region appeared in July 1921 (Abu Turγud [= Käbir Bäker]: "Idel bujynda ačliq vä aŋa jardäm", *Qizil Bajraq* no. 78 = 15 July 1921). According to the figures given in *Qizil Bajraq* in April 1922, between October 1921 and March 1922 790,561 Russians and 160,324 Tatars fled the famine-struck regions along the Volga for Turkestan (no. 163 = 13 April 1922).

8 *Ačlyq jillari idi. Xösäjin belän igänni üzebez ešli idek. Čyn kristijanlar buldyq. Ešneŋ tärtibenä dä töšünä bašladyq.*

9 *29ynda Qasimdan čyγyb šul kön kič belän Äğigä kildek. Kilülärebez küŋelsez buldi. Γäbdirraxman abzyjnyŋ berdän čyγyb qalγan vaqiγäsi bezgä mäγlum bulmaγanγä bigräk dä avyr buldi. Bezni šadlanyb qarši alu urnina ğylaular belän qarši aldylar. Xosusän äni belän Mahijä däüğiŋi ğylab qynä toralar idi. [...] Bu ešlär belän küb kenä qyjynčylyqlar kürergä tuγri kildi. Alarni jazyb utyrmyjmyn, isemdä genä totarmyn. [...] Γäbdirraxman abzyjnyŋ vaqiγäsi bezneŋ uquni tuqtatsa da γäğäb tügel idi.*

10 *Mahijä däüğiŋineŋ ešdän hič xäbäri juq idi. Min aŋari xälni süjläb birdem. Küb ujlamyjčä Mahijä däüğiŋi Taškändgä ozatyryä buldyq.*

> His case is not frightening any more. Fayzullah Khojayev [himself] has dealt with his case and issued the following order: 'This case is not dangerous, get it done fast, and set Urmanov free'.[11]

The diary does not provide any information on what Ghabdirrakhman was doing in Moscow, what had happened to him there, why he went to Uzbekistan, and how he managed his life there. If it is true that Fayzullah Khojayev himself took care of Ghabdirrakhman's case, it is unlikely that it was only a minor problem: at that time Khojayev was chairman of the Council of the People's Commissars in Uzbekistan.

Only incidentally and as if it were the most natural thing, the diary tells us that Aunt Mahiyä left for Tashkent, apparently to escape possible difficulties in her home town. But she is neither the first nor the only friend of the author to leave Äji for Central Asia:

> On August 1, [1924], we set Äminä on her way to Bukhara. […] As she left, she was crying heavily. It was very hard for us. As if she would never come back. The hard life [here] has forced her to leave.[12]

When talking about his own departure to Uzbekistan in January 1927, Khäsän Sadiq ughly does not show even the little sympathy with which he depicted Äminä's farewell. As if he had no personal feelings about it, he states in plain words:

> Since I did not have to go to the army, I considered going to Bukhara where Ghabdirrakhman was living. We received a letter from him in which he invited [us] to come. So mother and I decided to go to Bukhara. We celebrated the New Year [1927] in Äji, stayed there on New Year's Day and left for Bukhara on January 3. […] Mother and I arrived in Bukhara in January. Ghabdirrakhman greeted us with great effusion.[13]

Incidentally one learns that Tatar families from Äji, the Urmanovs being one of them, maintained "networks" – to use a modern phrase – in what was to become Uzbekistan following the national delimitation of Central Asia:[14]

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11 *Oktabr bäjrämlären šadlab ütkärdek, šul könlärdä Ғäbdirraxman abzyjdan xat aldym. Ul indi tämam tynyčlanγan. Eši quršynyčli tügel ikän. Fäjzulla Xuğajef anyŋ eši belän tanyšyb – bu eš apasni tügel, tizräk qarayyz da Urmanefni bušatayz digän.*

12 *Berenči ayγustda Äminäni Buxarayä ozatdyq. [...]Kitkändä bik ğyladi. Bezgä bik avyr buldi. Göjä ul indi qajtyb kilmäs. Avyr tormyš ani kitergä mäğbur itdi.*

13 *Armijaγa barmyj toryan bulyač Buxarayä Ғäbdirraxman abzyj janina kitärgä ujladym. Anγardan xat aldyq ul čaqyryb jazγan. Šulaj iteb bez äni belän Buxarayä kitä toryan buldyq. Janγa jylni Äğidä qarši alyb, bäjrämni ütkäreb janvarnyŋ 3enči könendä uq äni belän Buxarayä kitdek. [...] Janvarda äni belän Buxarayä kildek. Ғäbdirraxman abzyj bezni bik dä qarši aldi.*

14 In the pre-1917 Tatar press there are many pieces of news on Tatars from Äji residing in Central Asia and the Kazakh steppe. One interesting aspect of this news is that the articles stress the attachment and commitment of these people to their native village, expressed, for example, by donations they made for schools and mosques back home (e.g. an article in *Vaqit* no. 1485 = 14 May 1914 with the significant heading "Tuγan ilen onytmaučylar" (Those who do not forget their native place)). This sense of belonging is hardly found in

> August 1924: [Äminä] left to stay with her elder brother Fatikh [in Bukhara].[15]
>
> April 1925, Kasimov. […] The last days of April already belonged to spring; everywhere is beautiful and green. Lovely fragrances are emanating from the gardens full of flowers. […] During those happy days I received a sad message from home. Uncle Ghabdulla, our relative who was living in Bukhara, has passed away.[16]

The last quotation shows one characteristic subject of Khäsän Sadiq ughly's diary. He talks, or rather writes, a lot about nature. Descriptions of nature, notes on the weather, the vegetation and seasonal occupations can be found in nearly every entry of his diary. It is mainly in this context that he intersperses information on cultural and societal issues:

> April 1924, Kasimov. Already in the beginning of April the days got warmer and the snow started to melt quickly. Water is rushing along the streets. The days are bright and warm. […] Today, April 6, the ice on the Oka broke and began to drift away. When the ice is breaking, it makes a sound like a cannon being fired. After one or two days the ice drift became stronger. It is very beautiful to watch. The ice was drifting for one week. Then all the ice on the Oka was gone. The water rose rapidly. Around [April] 15 the water had risen so high that it caused a flood. The Oka breached its banks and flooded its surroundings. Ships started traveling the Oka again. On [April] 17 the first ship left Kasimov for Ryazan. I went there and watched. On [April] 18 and 19 it became really warm. The temperature reached 25 degrees. People took advantage of the beauties of nature and went out into the streets to go for a walk. Alas, the people of Kasimov are city people; going out in the streets, strolling around is their old-time habit they won't give up. Young and old people are walking around in pairs.[17]
>
> July 1924, [in] Äji again. This year the grain harvest is not very good. People are moaning. Besides, there are frequent quarrels between neighbouring Russian villages and the [Tatar] people from Äji about meadows and pastures. On July 15 a big quarrel took place between the villages of Bulanqä and Äji. The people from Äji drove the Russians away from the meadows and pastures and killed one of them. A commission to investigate this event came from Ryazan. A lot of people were taken to court, sentenced and imprisoned. I hold the dignitaries from Äji responsible for this event. If people had

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news concerning Tatars of other places of origin, e.g. Kasimov Tatars, living in Central Asia.

15 *1924enči yyl, awyust. [Äminä Buxarayä]brati Fatix abzyj janina kitdi.*

16 *1925enči yyl, april, Qasim: [...] Aprilnyŋ aqtyq könläri bötünläj jazyä oxšyj här jirdä maturlyq, jäšellek, čäčäklär belän tulyan baqčalardan xuš islär kilä, [...] Šundyj šadlyqli könlärdä üjdän qajŋyli xäbär aldym. Buxarada beznen ölkän abzyjbyz – Ґäbdulla abzyj vafat bulyan.*

17 *1924enči yyl, april, Qasim. Aprilneŋ bašlarinda uq könlär ğyly bulyb kitdi qar bik tiz eri bašladi. Uramlarda šaltyrab su aγa. Kön jaqti, ğyly. […] Bügün 6nči aprilda Oqada buz vatylyb aγa bašladi. Buz vatylyanda pušqädan atqan šikelli tavyš bula ikän. Ber iki kön ütkäč buz aγwi köčäjdi. Bu küreneš bik matur bula ikän. Ber atna buz aγyb tordi. Soŋ Oqanyŋ östi buzdan arčyldi. Su bik tiz kütärelä bašladi. 15lärendä su bik kütäreleb tašqyn buldi. Oqa biriklarindan čyŋyb tirä jaqni su basdi. Oqada paraxodlar göri bašladilar. 17enčisendä Qasimdan Räzängä berenči paraxod kitdi. Min baryb qarab tordym. 19-18laryndä könlär bik ğyly bulyb kitdi. Ğyly 25 yradusqä ğitdi kešilär tabiγätneŋ maturlyŋyndan fajdalanyb uramlarγä jörergä čyŋa bašladilar. Qasim xalqi bit – šähär xalqi. Alar iski γadät buŋynčä uramγä čyŋyb yulät itmäsälär bulmi. Jäšlär qartlar – par-par bulyb yulät iteb görilär.*

stuck to what the government said, this event would not have happened. But the people were not informed about this. In Äji there are persons who incite the people. Out of those who have been thrown into prison I know Uncle Asuq Salikh and Mäliqä Äkhmäd. The Mälis had urged me too to beat up the Russians. Luckily, I did not go there. Otherwise I would have got into trouble too. […] Towards the end of July the weather became very nice. People started to work hard; they began harvesting rye and wheat and making hay. Those were happy times.[18]

October, November, December 1927, Samarqand. In October it suddenly became cold. It is raining a lot. Towards the end of the month it started to snow. In this region normally there is no snow at all, and if it does snow, there is only a little snow. But now it was snowing heavily. For the Uzbeks, especially the people in the villages, who are not accustomed to this, the situation became more and more difficult. They were complaining about us, saying 'You brought the cold here from Russia'. Since there is no wood to make a fire, the houses stay cold. The temperature dropped to 20 degrees below zero.[19]

Personal assessments, ideas and feelings can be found throughout the diary. Mostly they are kept short and are difficult to evaluate in the written context only. Sometimes they are expressed in a solemn and mature tone, which does not seem to be in line with the author's youth.

January 1925, Äji. Now we have entered the year [19]25. I have passed the twentieth year of my life; life is becoming shorter.[20]

October 1925, Kasimov. […] The days are warm. I make use of them strolling along the banks of the Oka. The forests near the Oka make me think of Äji. I watch the forest [here] and remember my childhood in Äji – playing, laughing, and running around. And I see [myself] sitting on my parents' shoulders, spending the days without worries. Ah, that was a precious time![21]

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18 *1924enči yl, ijul. Jänä Äji. Bu yl ašlyqlar bik jaxši tügel. Xaliq šuŋa zarlana anyŋ östinä kürši urys avyllari belän Äği xalqi arasynda čalu östendän ğeš qynä talašular bula. 15enči ijuldä Bulanqä avyli belän Äği tarafynda zur talaš buldi. Äği xalqi uryslarni čaludan qudilar berär kešilären üterdilär dä, bu ešlärni küreš üčün Räzändän sod kildi. Küp kešilärni sodni iteb türmägä alyb kitdilär. Bu ešlärdä min Äği törälären yäjiblimen. Ägär xaliq xökümätneŋ äjtkänini qilsa idi bu ešlär bulmas idi. Xaliqyä šuni tösendermilär. Äğidä šundyj kešilär bar alar xaliqni qotrytyb görilär. Sod min belgänlärdän Asuq Salix abzyjni, Maliqä Äxmädni türmägä utyrtdilar. Malilar mini dä čaqyryan idilär, uryslarni qyjnaryä, jaxši barmadym, min šul bälägä eläger idem. [...] Ijulneŋ axirynda hava bik jaxši buldi. Xaliq ašyyyb ešli, aryš, buydaj uru, pečän čabu ešläri bašlandi. Küŋelli idi šul vaqytlar.*

19 *1927nči yl, oktabr, nojabr, dikäbr, Sämärqänd. Ujlanmayan ğirdän oktabrdä hava suvyq bula bašladi. Jaŋyyrlar da javyb ala. Aj axyrina qar javdi. Bu jaqda qar javuy bič bulmyj, bulsa da bik az yynä java, ä xazyr qar küb javdi. Buŋa üjränmägän üzbik xalqi, xosusän qyšlaq xalqi qyjnala bašladilar. Suvyqni Rasijädän alyb kildegez dib bezni urušalar. Jayaryä utyn bulmayanyä üjlär suvyq, salqyn 20 yradusqä ğitdi.*

20 *1925enči yl, janvar, Äği. Munä 25enči yl da kildi. Min indi 20 jašdän ütdem, yomür qysqara bara.*

21 *1925enči yl, oktabr, Qasim. [...] Könlär ğyli, jaxši vaqytdan fajdalanyb Oqa buŋa jörergä baramyn. Oqanyŋ tiräsendägi urmanlar Äğini iskä tösterä. Šularyä qarab balalyymda Äğidä toryanymni, ujnab köleb jörgänemni iskä alamyn qaŋi belmi ata-ana ğilkäsendä raxätläneb kön kičerülär küz aldymda tora. Ux qäderli idi šul vaqytlar!*

> December 1925, Kasimov. […] So now the year [19]25 has also passed. That is, a quarter of the twentieth century has passed. Be blessed, year [19]25![22]

The diary seems to be authentic. This can also be seen by the fact that apparently contradictory statements on the same topic have not been altered afterwards but remain in the text. Here is only one example, "learning and working":

> One has to finish school, roll up one's sleeves and start to work. It is not good to study forever.[23] (September 1925)

But, about one month later: "The most important thing is to study!"[24]

Such contradictions are simply the result of the changing attitudes of one and the same individual over time, and are part and parcel of the human condition.

From July 1924 one single subject dominates the diary: the relationship between the author and his future wife Rabighä. The depiction of their friendship and love takes up much more space in the diary than any other subject. Their story begins in 1924. Khäsän is 20 years old at that time; Rabighä is five years older than he. They have known each other from early childhood on. During the summer holidays of that year they meet in Äji.

> July 1924, written in Äji. […] My life was filled with sorrow in those days. Loneliness was hard to bear, and so I tried to find a girlfriend. There were many who told me 'Let me be your girlfriend; let's go out together', but I grasped very well that they were only joking. Until now I had not found a real girlfriend. At that time I met Rabighä. Without thinking about it too much, I solved my problem. I was freed from painful thoughts. Rabighä knew me well; she understood what was going on with me. It was a pleasure for me to be together with her. Although it was still early to [think of] marriage, I was ready to tie my future to Rabighä's. In the beginning I was shy and felt ashamed in front of her. I am not sure, maybe because she was a little older [than me] I used to call her 'Aunt' […]. But as soon as I noticed that it was true friendship on her side, I regarded us as equal, and our relationship became like one between adults. I made it my holy duty to visit Rabighä every day in the evening after work was over, talk with her and make plans for the future together. What especially pleased me was that Rabighä did not reject my proposals. It became harder and harder for me to separate from her. Those were precious days.[25]

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22 *1925enči yl, dikäbr, Qasim. [...] Muna indi 25enči yl da üteb kitdi. Dimäk 20enči yäserneŋ čirigi ütdi. 25enči ilyä sälavät!*

23 *[…] mäktäbni betergäč ğiŋ syzyanyb eškä kerešergä kiräk mängilek uquči bulyb toryryä jarami.*

24 *Uquryä yynä kiräk.*

25 *1924enči yl, ijul. Äğidä jazyldi.[…] Bu könlärdä mini qajyyly tormyš ezi idi. Jalyyzlyq bik avyr, šunyŋ üčün üzimä dost keši qarab jörä idim. Dost bulamyn dib jör digänlär küb, lakin min alarnyŋ köli kenä äjtkänlären tüšünä idim. Čyn dost taba alyanym juq. Šul arada aldyma Rabiyä kileb basdy. Min küb ujlamasdan bu avyr mäsäläni ğisib [?] jubardym. Avyr xijallärdän qotuldym. Rabiyä mini jaxši belä idi, minem fikremni aŋlyj idi, anyŋ belän bergä bulu miŋa šaqlyq kiterä idi. Äli tormyš tözergä irtäräk bulsa da, min kiläčägemni Rabiyä belän bäjlärgä razi idem. Baštaraq min anardan ojalyb jöri idem. Belmädem jäši mindän az zurraq bulyanyä, […] min anari 'tätäj' dib äjtä idem. Anarda čyn dostlyq barlyyy sizgäč, üzimä tiŋ küreb zurlarčä munasäbätdä buldym.*

From now on the two of them meet every day, and soon they reveal their love for each other. They spend a happy time together. Repeatedly they meet secretly in the evening to separate only at dawn.

> It started to become dark. We were sitting side-by-side talking. Our friendship knew no limits. We did not commit any impropriety; we only did what is written about the doings of lovers in books. The taste of love was within our reach. […] There were a lot of nights like this one. I won't write about all of them. I conceal them from my reader and keep them in my heart.[26]

Their shared happiness is soon interrupted. Already in September of the same year Rabighä leaves her native village of Äji and goes to Bukhara. Surprisingly – since they had promised each other marriage – Khäsän neither writes anything about the reasons why Rabighä left nor about her departure. He does not even mention the day of her departure. For more than two years, until January 1927 when Khäsän himself leaves for Uzbekistan, they do not see each other, but they stay in contact through letters to each other. At the end of February 1927 they get married in Samarqand. Rabighä is working there at the Central Executive Committee and Khäsän, too, has found himself a job as well as an apartment for both of them. Looking back, Khäsän writes:

> March 1927, Samarqand. […] These events look like a dream to me. Four, five years ago I had fallen in love with Rabighä. Although we lived several years separated from each other, we did not change our plan. And finally it happened the way we had hoped it would. After we started living together, we began to care for the necessities of life. We learned the rules of living together.[27]

At the end of January 1928, Rabighä returns to her mother in Äji to give birth to her first child. On March 3 her first son, Muyässär, is born. At the end of May 1928 mother and son are back in Samarqand again. Khäsän is happy.

> I can't take my eyes off our son Muyässär. I am looking at him all the time. He is the greatest delight of my life. […] In those days I couldn't think about anything else. Rabighä and Muyässär filled out all my existence. They were the only ones I was thinking about. After Rabighä's return we reorganized our life. Now we are a real family; we are one person more. Now there is no time left for grief and suffering. […] After

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Här kön, eš betkäč, kič belän Rabiyä janina barı minem izgi borğym idi, anıŋ belän süjläšeb, kiläčäkdägi planlarni tözä idek. Min zur quvanyčym šul idiki – Rabiyä min äjtkängä qarši kilmi idi. Aŋardan ajrylyb kitü miŋa bik avyr bula idi. Qäderli idi šul könlär.

26 *Qaranyi bula bašladi. Bez janaša utyryb süjläšäbez. Dostlyqnıŋ igi-čigi juq idi. Ädäb da'iräsendän čyqmiča ynä bez dä kitablarda jazylyan yašiq-mäyšuqälarnıŋ fiyellären qylmyj qalmyj idek. Muhäbbätneŋ tämi beznеŋ qulda idi. [...] Šundyj kičälär bik küb buldi. Barysynda jazyb tormyjmyn, oqučimdan jäšereb jörägemdä saqlarmyn.*

27 *1927nči jyl, mart, Sämärqänd. [...] Bu ešlär töš kebek kürenä bundan 5-4 jyl elek min Rabiyäni süjä bašladym. Küb jyllar ajrylyb torsaq da ujlayan nijätebezni tašlamadyq. Axyri nijätebez bez ujlayančä čyqdi. Bergä bulyač tormyš üčün kiräk närsälärni ğyja bašladyq. Tormyš qayidälärini üjrenä idek.*

> Rabighä started working again, we hired a nice girl called Claudia to take care of Muyässär. That was a time when I was satisfied with my life a thousand-fold.[28]

With these words the diary ends.

Conclusion

> In a diary, *everything* has meaning: the weather, the prosaic details of life, the political event, memory, the sequence of time itself. We believe that the essence of a diary is the space of tension between different – often heterogeneous – times, between the personal, the intimate, sometimes the bodily, and the social.[29]

This view is put forward by the editors of an anthology titled *Intimacy and Terror*, published in 1995, containing Russian autobiographical writings from the 1930s. If this view is correct, what then is the meaning of Khäsän Sadiq ughly Urmanov's notes? Or, to put it more simply, what do these notes tell us? What is or might be their value?

Concerning the last question, one can offer a very simple, but on no account trivial answer: his notes do have value and meaning for those members of his family who are still alive, namely his daughter and his grandchildren. The diary gives them the opportunity to remember their father or grandfather and enables them to learn about his youth. Since at least the older ones among his offspring can remember stories told by him or about him, they might understand those parts of the diary, which remain vague or unintelligible to outsiders but fill in many gaps for them. For the members of his family the diary therefore is not only of emotional value but also a source of information. That is, for them it is without doubt a resource for understanding their own past.

The question whether this diary is of value for outsiders is more problematic. It is even more so because comparable texts are lacking. At least I myself am not aware of any Tatar diaries written for the personal use of private individuals during the 1920s.[30]

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[28] *1928nči jyl, maj, Sämärqänd. [...] Minem xäjatemdä zur quvanyč bulγan uγlyγyz Mujässärdän küzemni almyj qarab toramyn. [...] Šul vaqytda min bašqa närsä xaqynda uĭlamyj idem. Fäqät Rabiyä, Mujässär minem voğudymni totyrγan idi. Alarni γynä uĭlyj idem. Rabiyä qajtqač tormyšγlyγzni rätlädek. Bez indi čyn simja buldyq, ber ğanγä artdyq. Indi xazyr moŋlanyb, qajγyryb ğörergä vaqyt juq. [...] Rabiyä eškä kergäč Mujässärni qarar üčün jaxši γynä Qlaudija digän ber qyzni xezmätkä aldyq. Tormyšlarymä meŋlärčä razi bulyb toryan čaqlarym idi šul vaqytlar.*

[29] *Intimacy and Terror*, edited by Véronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen. New York 1995. xiv (Editors' Introduction).

[30] An exception to this is the diary of a certain Ґabdulla Ґali uly Räxmätullin (1896-1938) kept in 1928 when he was living in a village called Nalasa, Arča region, Tatarstan. A short excerpt from this dairy was published in the journal *Ґasyrlar avazy/ Ėxo vekov* (1/2.2003. 259-262) under the title "Arča rajonynyŋ Nalasa avyly 1928 jylda". This diary resembles Urmanovs' in some aspects: short sentences, succinct formulation, lack of metaphors, a lot of talk about weather and nature.

But I would argue that the diary does have considerable value. At first glance there are some small but important pieces of information that are difficult to find in other sources: on Tatar cultural life in Kasimov, on the school system there, on relations between nationalities, on daily life in the Tatar village Äji and its contacts with the outside world (especially with Moscow and Bukhara), on the life and work of Tatars in Uzbekistan – to name only the most important points. A researcher interested in Tatar cultural and social history might regret that information on these subjects is only sparse. However, I don't think it is appropriate to expect this kind of information from a diary written for private use within the family.

Since the late 1980s a huge number of memoirs, diaries and similar personal writings have been published in Russia.[31] Soon after, scholarly research on these publications also began. This research focuses mainly on the 1930s, in part also on the 1920s; the main subjects of its contents are matters of subjectivity; this approach has its roots mainly in literary and textual studies. The most prominent representatives of this research are Jochen Hellbeck and Igor Halfin. Both have published various articles and monographs on this topic, e.g. "'Wo finde ich mein Spiegelbild?' – Soziale Identität im sowjetischen Stalinismus der dreißiger Jahre" (Hellbeck), "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931-1939)" (Hellbeck), "Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia" (Hellbeck), "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts" (Hellbeck), "The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response" (Hellbeck), "From Darkness to Light: Student Communist Autobiography During NĖP" (Halfin), *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Halfin), *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Halfin).[32]

The "self", the "soul" of the authors, their attitudes towards the Soviet political and ideological system – often presented as a simple dichotomy 'affirmation versus dissent' –, and the personal development of the authors are the main points Hellbeck, Halfin and other researchers were looking for and dealing with in their research. Apparently the texts they were studying can be analyzed and

31 For a general overview consult Irina Paperno: "Personal Accounts of the Soviet Experience." *Kritika* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Fall 2002). 577-610; *id.*: "What Can Be Done with Diaries?" *The Russian Review* Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2004). 561-573; Catriona Kelly: "Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Chronicles of the Quotidian in Russia and the Soviet Union." *Kritika* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Fall 2002). 631-651.

32 Published in this order in: *bios* Vol. 7, No. 2 (1994). 149-164; *Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas* Vol. 44, No. 3 (1996). 344-373; *Kritika* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 2000). 71-97; *The Russian Review* Vol. 60, No. 3 (July 2001). 340-359; *The Russian Review* Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2004). 621-629; *Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas* Vol. 45, No. 2 (1997). 210-236; Pittsburgh 2000; Cambridge 2003.

interpreted in this respect. But doing so means treating these texts as "letters claiming personal responsibility".[33]

This kind of approach and interpretation does not seem appropriate for the diary of Khäsän Sadiq ughly Urmanov. In contrast to the texts Hellbeck and Halfin have been working with, in Khäsän Sadiq ughly's notes it is difficult to figure out a "subjective self" that is positioning itself towards an environment imbued and determined by politics and ideology. Apart from one or two exceptions, Khäsän Sadiy ughly does not make a connection between the main framework of the state or the major political events and himself, but only mentions them. "Are we not reading totalitarianism the way totalitarianism, itself, would 'want' to be read?" – this suggestion, put forward by Eric Naiman with regard to the research of Halfin and Hellbeck,[34] is not valid for the notes of Khäsän Sadiq ughly.

And it is precisely this apparent "absence of politics" which gives value to his notes. Could it not be that this diary gives evidence of a life, which, although in many ways influenced by historical events, was not fundamentally imbued by politics and ideology – the life of the renowned "masses", that is the ordinary people, who happened to be Soviet citizens too?

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33 A critical appreciation and assessment of this approach can be found in Eric Naiman: "On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them." *The Russian Review* Vol. 60, No. 2 (July 2001). 307-315.

34 Naiman 2001: 311.

35 Pen names are put in quotation marks.

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Acrobats Remember Their Lives

Olaf Günther

Introduction

This paper is based on fieldwork I conducted between 2004 and 2005 among acrobats (*dorboz*) in the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan. My main aim was to collect oral history within this specialized group. I first wanted to draw attention to the ambiguity of being marginalized and needed for a kind of entertainment service, but I gave up this idea soon because, contrary to my expectations, the acrobats turned out to be anything but marginalized. By the end I had fourteen interviews, of which only four can be classified as 'classical oral history documents.'

According to oral history theory an oral history text becomes 'an oral history document' if 45 minutes of speech have been collected (Niethammer 1985). This was only the case for these four documents. Although I spent several days with each acrobat, when it came to interviewing him or her, the result was quite meagre. The bulk of my material consists of fragmentary recollections by a number of acrobats about their life histories. In this paper I shall consider those fragments emerging from these life stories, which focus on the sense of belonging to a group of professionals. They are represented in the oral reminiscences as a well-defined group which have numerous ways to legitimise their occupation, and which also take pride in their way of life. I shall try to show that the *dorboz* construct their collective identity by combining projections of the distant past of their group as related in stories by the master with individual reminiscences.

For centuries acrobats have entertained the onlookers in the bazaars and streets of Central Asia; they have also performed at public festivals and in well-to-do households at joyful life cycle rituals. They have generally been referred to as *dorboz*, which literally means tightrope walker. In fact *dorboz* is a collective term used to denote various types of public entertainers, including the magician (*fokusnik*), the strongman (*polvon*), the tightrope walker (*dorboz*), and the 'boneless' or double-jointed acrobat (*besuyak*). Ideally, the profession of the *dorboz* is handed down from father to son, but in practice we also come across cases of newcomers with no artistic family background joining the *dorboz* and being accepted as apprentices.

Acrobats form working groups that travel through various regions of Central Asia. Economically prosperous regions, such as Tashkent or Samarkand, particularly attract these groups, but so do other densely populated regions such as the Ferghana Valley with its cities Namangon, Andijon or Farghona. Each group is led by a master who is responsible for both the artistic and financial management of his group. When I was hanging around with the jugglers and wanted to

interview them, the members of the group always sent me to their leader, who was responsible for telling the story.

Most people in Europe are brought up with a particular conception of history, which may prevent us from understanding other ways of conceptualizing time. We are so fundamentally convinced that everybody should be aware of, and be able to narrate their chronological history, that this may lead us to the conclusion that having a history in our sense constitutes one of the basic human characteristics, a universal phenomenon. For example, research on the Gypsies of Europe has led some historians to the assumption that the Gypsies are a people without a history (Blasco 2001, Marushiakova and Veselin 2005). The evolutionist approach to the Gypsies, which viewed them as a people belonging to a 'primitive race', a term which was first used in order to differentiate these peoples from the 'civilized ones', was supposed to prove that there are people with and people without culture and history (Burenhult 2002). We need to remember that our European historical consciousness is also rooted in heterogeneous mythological and Christian ways of storytelling. Modern European historical consciousness was fundamentally shaped by the intellectual currents of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and by the emerging historical scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Schlatter 1989; Lévi-Strauss 1980: 27–36; 47–56).

The Craftsman

Historical consciousness and its reproduction in a story by a non-professional were described by Lévi-Strauss with the concept of "*bricolage*". By this, Lévi-Strauss refers to a person's ability to link various historical events, which under certain circumstances could be connected. The narrator, metaphorically speaking, has some raw material at his disposal, such as his own recollections, stories, which he has heard, so-called facts and various things he has read, and he combines all these with the help of his 'toolbox'. The story thus created is influenced by his personal taste as well as by the expectations of the community for whom the piece is created. In contrast to the craftsman, the scholar is not dazzled by the masterpiece. His task begins where that of the craftsman stops - he questions the 'facts', and subjects the material to scholarly scrutiny. It is my contention that the acrobats as storytellers may be assigned to the category of the craftsmen.

One could say, the scholar and the "*bricoleur*" expect a message. But for the "*bricoleur*" the message is something already written or spoken or thoughts already thought by someone else; he collects these like a type of commercial code, which allow him to be ready for all new challenges as they contain the whole professional experience of one group in a condensed form (but under the condition to belong to the same class like the former). (Lévi-Strauss 1968).

The Narrative Dimension

According to Bernhard Streck, 'When culture reaches the level of consciousness, it becomes an instrument of communication' (Streck 2004: 3). A culture of memory and historical memory, in the European sense of the word, only then become part of communication when one acquires a certain awareness of their existence. The kind of consciousness that one has a history which goes beyond key-events like one's birth, time in the army and wedding, I only found in a few instances when talking to the *dorboz*. In the case of Ahmad, a *dorboz* from Ghova (near Namangon), his life-story was discussed, created and presented by members of his whole group, and in this respect it was a communal product.

This leads me to a second important issue: How did I, as a participant observer and interviewer, manage to elicit the life-stories? The narrative dimension was probably the most important barrier to gaining an insight into the historical consciousness of the *dorboz*. Not for nothing are only the masters of narration in a position to provide the *dorboz* with a historical dimension in the course of the interviews. Tursunali from Vuadil (south of the Ferghana Valley), who is a trained cultural scientist, regarded the oratory art as one of the most important elements in his shows and a key for success. Ahad, "the leader of 'The Minaret of Kokand'" *(Quqon minori)* from Kokand (western part of the valley) had won many prizes for his rhetorical skills at acrobats' competitions, and Pulot Toshkenboev had studied history at the university and was thus well versed in narrating history.

Storytelling is a craft, an art, which not everybody is able to perform. Pulot, a member of a long line of acrobats and director of a little circus, was the exact opposite of the above- mentioned Ahmad, who had no idea about his life story and created it with the whole group before my eyes. Pulot not only was a qualified historian but also held a PhD. He had acquired his knowledge from books, from stories, which were part of the family tradition, and he had conducted his own research on the history of acrobatics and the circus. It can be concluded that the narrative performance of history has a multiplicity of potential sources, such as formal education, the skilful manipulation of 'memory pegs', stories and so-called facts transmitted orally as well as written materials.

Lutz Rzehak observed in Afghanistan how the narration of a life story was often delegated to someone who had more rhetorical skills rather than entrusted to the person whose life story it was (Pahwal and Rzehak 2004: 5). In our own society we also experience situations in which storytelling is taken over by one of the partners (in a couple) or by one person in a group of youngsters. In the case of the acrobats it was the master of the respective group of *dorboz* who undertook the task of storytelling.

Strictly speaking, I have only heard three of these masters relate a narrative that went beyond the story of their own lives because photographs, newspaper

articles, medals and tales from the past can also serve as 'memory pegs'. As far as the skill of storytelling is concerned, the ability to combine all the details to a unified whole is far more important. However, not every *dorboz* possessed this skill. But does the fact that someone was reluctant or had difficulties telling me his story mean that he did not think about it? Can I therefore assume that many *dorboz* performed their daily duties without ever reflecting on their lives and activities? Was it for them less important to consult former masters, history books or other sources? It should not be forgotten that in order to reflect about oneself, one's own history or the history of one's community, one not only needs time to distance himself from daily pressures, but also an understanding that it is important to have a history and that one should care about it. For some of the *dorboz* other things were simply more important.

Ikram from Kosonsoy (north of the Ferghana valley, near Namangon) belonged to those *dorboz* for whom their profession was important. In his personal archive his life was fully documented with photos, videos, articles and decorations. Thus it depends on someone's self-confidence, his organizing skills and also his personal circumstances how well he is willing and able to document his life. But this private archive did not go beyond the documentation of his person. Any reflections on the history of the *dorboz* in general were scarce.

For Ahad *aka*, on the other hand, remembering the past had a completely different dimension. He was able to present a very rich history of the *dorboz*, and the sources of his stories were exclusively what he had heard; thus his knowledge was a result of orally handed down traditions rather than books. Neither did he rely on visual and other aides to prop his memory.

Whenever people possessed any photographs of *dorboz,* they were mostly keen to show them to me. It was a matter of pride to have a photo of oneself. Therefore, when I took a picture of my interviewees, they always asked me for a copy. In most situations the photos were carefully staged; hardly anyone saw the value in being photographed while working. They preferred to stand at attention when their photos were taken. The collection of photos is like the preservation of moments, the capturing of time. Other documents, which go beyond that, such as newspaper clippings, correspondence with official institutions, as well as certificates, were exclusively possessed by group leaders. It is also remarkable that, even though a few of my interviewees owned such private 'archives', it was only Ikram who used his collection as a memory aid to tell his story. For the purpose of this article, I will, from all the available elements, construct the typical life story of a *dorboz* and then analyse it in detail.

Elements of an Acrobat's Life Story

In the life stories the following recurring elements can be discerned:

- family background
- the chronology and lineage of one's masters
- events in the life cycle and the profession (education, army, marriage, organizing a group of acrobats, medals, travelling routes, the births of children, role of the wife, retirement)
- legends of one's own profession
- future prospects

In which order these different elements are connected and how they are elaborated on always depends on the individual narrator's creativity.

Family Background

There are ideal conceptions of an acrobat's life, and these are represented by certain values. Ideally, one wishes, for example, to be part of a long professional lineage. Thus the term *otakasb* (father's profession) was one of the most common expressions I heard while interviewing acrobats who descended from families practising the same profession. It was interesting that in these life stories a key experience that would have explained why they had become *dorboz* was missing. They had been born into a group of acrobats and that was all that really mattered. The same value attached to the professional lineage is also represented by the frequently used term *ustoz-zoda* (born into a master's family). This name refers to the symbolic power ascribed to the genealogical line.

Descent

If an acrobat has no such professional family background, he often stresses that he himself is the founder of a new 'dynasty' or that it was because of him that the whole family had become a *dorboz* family. To have an ancestor in the profession or to be born into a family of acrobats is of significant value. In both cases continuity and the long-term transmission of skills and knowledge between generations of performers related to each other through kinship are of central importance.

Masters

The succession of the masters who have taught an acrobat is like an emblem of his artistic abilities. However, some acrobats are unable to present a long line of masters because their training was not varied enough. Instead, these *dorboz* point

to legendary ancestors with whom they cannot have had any geographical or personal connection. It seems that the master is responsible for establishing a young acrobat in the profession and for preparing him for an independent professional life as an acrobats' leader. In the absence of real ancestry of masters, the legendary ones come into play.

Biographical Stages

The biographical chronology often resembles an encyclopaedia entry. It typically consists of a simple compilation of facts without any additional narrative elements. Only a few of the *dorboz* made an effort to embellish their stories. Especially their time in military service was presented as a narrative of adventures because several of the acrobats used to perform in their battalions and thus were often freed from their daily duties as soldiers. In addition, they were also permitted to perform in other places. This freedom was especially emphasised in the biographies, and often it was the only time that included adventures, although generally every acrobat seems to be keen to present his life as being full of changes and excitement.

The constituent values of change and excitement are represented by the following elements: The *dorboz* often move because of the shows, visit different cities, take part in various competitions and get prizes for their work. Often a simple invitation to other republics is seen as a reward, but to be invited to Moscow is one of the most important rewards, which can even be topped by a special certificate, issued in the Russian capital. Even invitations to England or elsewhere are not considered to be of equal significance.

Only when the children have grown up and have taken over their father's profession, can a *dorboz*'s life be regarded as successful. Then he can start to think about retirement, as the responsibilities and duties of the leader are slowly taken over by a younger *dorboz*. If this process is successfully completed, the old master retires. But if he did not manage to educate his children in the *dorboz* tradition, or if they have fallen prey to alcoholism (as is often the case with the father himself), then life is considered a failure and the life story ends in the past without reaching the present.

Fictional Elements

Apart from the life stories being told like encyclopaedic entries or adventures, there are additional fictional elements inscribed into memory as well: These are legends and prayers. Legends appropriate history. By using real or fictional events to tell a story, they can invest a thing or an activity in contemporary time with a sense of purpose. Legends internalise and reflect human actions, and, in this particular case, the activities of the acrobats.

In legends, three basic elements can be discerned:

1. a miraculous incident
2. the power of a process to establish a pattern
3. the explanation of the relevance of the process for the audience (Ecker 1993).

Nevertheless, the fictional parts, such as the legend of Hazrat Ali, of Hazrat Bilol, the legend of the tightrope walker from Quva, the legend of the Gypsies, the legend of the mountains or the legend of the Day of Judgement, do not necessarily contain each of the three elements simultaneously.

Legends of Origin

Legends of origin constitute a popular means for communities to appropriate history. They often function as a means of self-assurance and contribute to providing communities with a sense of rooted-ness in both space and time. Events described are chosen as circumstances require. Sometimes different origin legends compete with each other, as in the case of the *dorboz*, who may simultaneously subscribe to religious and secular legends.

Religious Legends

The most common legend, that of Hazrat Ali, was related to me in various versions. Presumably it had been orally transmitted before it was first committed to writing in the course of the early twentieth century.

> The *dorboz* in their time also had a certain statute - a "*risola*", in which certain prayers and poems that were to be read during performances were written down and which recounted the origin of tightrope walking, with the blessing of the Prophet (*sic*) Ali. The *dorboz* narrate a story in which the Prophet Ali had a never-ending fight with the infidels, with the *dev*, the *lyax* (mythical beings, fairy-tale pelicans) in the province of Xaybar. Nobody was able to take their barbarous fortress, the Shahri Xaybar. The fortress was surrounded by rocks and water, and the Prophet, who had brought with him an army, could not find a way in. But then he fashioned a rope, fixed it and let his army march on it over the water. Thus they destroyed the infidels and conquered Xaybar. As a consequence of this event he blessed tightrope walking and the equipment necessary to perform it. (Borovkov 1928: 16)

In this story the rope and walking on it are sanctified by a holy man; he invents the activity of tightrope walking and at the same time blesses it; in this way the importance of tightrope walking for the process of the Islamisation of the area is demonstrated: we are told that tightrope walking made the victory of Muslims over the infidels possible.

In another version narrated to me by Tursunali it was a tightrope walker who "passed by Hazrat Ali and his troops who had besieged the fortress of Xaybar" and then helped him to win a victory by using the rope. In this version the exis-

tence of tightrope walkers is (consciously or subconsciously) attributed to pre-Islamic times, but they then contributed to the process of Islamisation. This legend demonstrates the high degree of self-esteem of the tightrope walkers: they were the ones who helped Ali.

Other stories are subordinated to or incorporated into more famous origin legends and explain certain aspects of the acrobats' art. There is, for instance, the story of Hazrat Bilol, an African slave who was one of the first converts to Islam, and who was subjected to unspeakable tortures by his master. He was covered, so one *dorboz* told me, with a huge stone, which made it almost impossible for him to breathe. Only his will to survive and his physical strength enabled him to endure these sufferings. The *polvon* or circus strongmen re-enact this event when they load themselves with giant stones, which have to be carried by up to ten people.

Tursunali made another pre-Islamic reference to the work of circus strongmen by pointing to Rustam *polvon*, a legendary hero of the "*Sholnoma*", one of the first Modern Persian books, written by Firdousi. Rustam *polvon*, an outstanding hero and king of the ancient Persians was said to possess such an extraordinary strength that he could easily be held up as an example for all circus strongmen.

According to the legend narrated by Ahad *aka*, tightrope walking was brought from Kashgar to the Ferghana Valley, and the people from Kashgar had learned it from the Arabs. The main element here is the proximity of tightrope walking to the central lands and guardians of Islam. Not only his references to Hazrat Ali but also the mentioning of the Arabs as both the ancestors and masters of the *dorboz* serve the purpose of connecting the profession to Islam. At the same time, Ahad *aka*'s story also included references to mountain shepherds who cannot have been Arabs. Thus Ahad *aka* places the origins of the *dorboz* in mythical times, and that is probably where they belong.

Secular Legends

Another attempt to explain the origins of tightrope walking is undertaken in a myth about the mountains. Tursunali's opening words are characteristic: according to him, it is impossible that Hazrat Ali ever came to Central Asia and brought with him tightrope walking as he never left the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, the activity of tightrope walking must have been invented in the mountains. There, the inhabitants probably fixed a rope between two mountains in order to cross the gorges and used long sticks to maintain their balance while doing so. These words take the following facts as starting-points: Tightrope walking was not introduced from the outside; instead, it is a genuine Central Asian invention. The legend underlines this assumption by maintaining that tightrope walking came from the mountains, i.e. from a place very near the plains of the Ferghana Valley. Tightrope walking thus is considered to be older than Islam. It

was probably practised by the first people who lived in the mountains and spread from there throughout Central Asia. Similar legends can be found in Dagestan, where it is not a rope but tree trunks laid over rivers which cause people to develop the necessary skills for tightrope walking (Winkler 1988: 186-87).

This legend, similar to the legend of Hazrat Ali, elaborates on the religious dimensions of the sense and purpose of tightrope walking and thus demonstrates a higher degree of self-confidence among the practitioners of the profession. The *dorboz* do not link the origins of tightrope walking to the life of a holy man but instead connect it to the early stages of the history of mankind. The legend of the mountains does not sanctify the object of the rope but presents it as an indispensable tool for moving around in the mountains.

All the legends incorporate certain ideals of the acrobats. One legend, however, was explicitly told by Ahad *aka* from Kokand in order to demonstrate these ideals and the purpose of tightrope walking in more recent times: Once the *dorboz* were invited to a celebration of the Shah, where they performed their art. Suddenly the Shah asked them for a heretical trick, which involved walking on the rope in the direction opposite to Mecca, something very difficult, as this route was very steep. The risk was high, but the *dorboz* agreed and as their reward they demanded from the Shah the release of nine prisoners. The elements of this story - granting freedom and being generous and charitable - once again are indications of the moral values to which the *dorboz* subscribe. They need prosperous societies with peace and stability so that they and their art may thrive. Besides, their challenging of the Shah demonstrated their defiant attitude towards all forms of authority.

The motif of freeing prisoners can also be found in the legends of Mahmud *polvon*. These stories are very famous in Xorezm; they narrate the journey of Mahmud, the circus strongman, and his return from India. The Indian ruler has taken many of Mahmud's countrymen as prisoners of war and Mahmud follows them. On the way he experiences many adventures, and he also gets married. Later he fights in the army of the Indian Raj, and for this service he is offered many presents; instead of accepting them he asks for the release of his compatriots (Ibn Hussayn Devon 2001). Mahmud, the athlete, was so famous in Xorezm that a whole architectural complex devoted to him was built there, consisting of a mausoleum, a sepulchre, a mosque and a fountain. Today this compound is a popular holy site, especially visited by young married couples. The place is supposed to give the man the strength he needs in order to found a big family. The many legends, which were told about Pahlavon Mahmud already during his lifetime and soon after his death, aptly demonstrate his enormous popularity.

Quva

Not only stories include legendary elements concerning acrobats. Geographical places can also be considered legendary. In Uzbekistan the legendary city of all

dorboz is Quva. But none of the *dorboz* I talked to could explain why. Only Tursunali suggested that it may have had something to do with Quva being one of the oldest places in the valley, and that in the sixth and seventh centuries it used to be the biggest urban centre in the south of the Ferghana Valley.

Family Legends

In contrast to legends of origin, which refer to the remote past, Pulot Toshkenboev explains the beginning of tightrope walking in his family with an ancestral legend.

It consists of the following elements:

- the art of tightrope walking was learned by one of the storyteller's ancestors during the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*)
- during the journey he was initiated into the profession while sleeping [dream]
- this talent was innate; otherwise it would not have been so easy for him to acquire the profession, but the dream was necessary to activate it
- he returns home from Mecca to show his people what he learned on his journey to the holy sites

The legend ends with the founding of a *dorboz* dynasty and the death of Hajji *dorboz* and continues as a biography.

Although, as Casimir has shown, legends can also preserve tragedies of a peripatetic existence (Casimir 1987), it is remarkable to what extent such elements are absent from the stories of these Central Asian acrobats. All these legends display a basically positive attitude of the acrobats to the emergence of their profession as well as a sense of belonging to the group.

Excursus: Legends About the dorboz *by Outsiders*

Only once did Tursunali mention to me that it could have been outsiders, possibly Gypsies (*luli*) from India, who later settled in Quva, who were responsible for spreading the art of tightrope walking throughout Central Asia. But he refused to repeat this comment in a more formal interview, and no other acrobat ever mentioned India in connection with the origin of their profession.

The theory, however, that India is the homeland of acrobats has for centuries been repeated over and over again in Central Asian literature. This is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that the *dorboz* themselves make every effort to connect the origins of their profession to the origins of Islam; in contrast, representatives of the *literati* seem to distance it as far as possible from Islam and locate it in India. Abdumansur Salabi Nishapuri (961-1038), for example, wrote in his book "*Ghurar al ahbori fi muluk al fars*" about Bahrom Ghur (420-438) and the

Indian influence on the arts. Bahrom Ghur was a Sassanian king known for settling many Indian artists in the Persian provinces. Their estimated numbers vary from 400 to 12,000 (Nurdzhanov 2002: 35; Sundermann 1980: 134). Besides, it is certain that there were Indian artists in Central Asia even before Bahrom Ghur had invited them. But does that prove that the acrobats also came from India? Maybe many acrobats went to India during the times of Bahrom Ghur, and yet no one wrote about it - the Indians in Persia, that was the real sensation, which was worth writing about. They were exotic, as they provided a new and exciting form of entertainment at the court of Bahrom. But one cannot exclude the possibility that by this time there were many indigenous acrobats working in the streets. However, they would have been part of daily life and, as such, not worth writing about.

Since the 10th century 'India' has been in the Islamic world something like a metaphor for the ideal motherland of all acrobats and quacksalvers. Not only Biruni makes comments about this; it has been a popular assumption since the 10th century (Schimmel 1995: 60). But for Islamic scholars 'India' is also a metaphor for something far away and therefore exotic. How this metaphor can lead to apparent ambiguities can be seen in some of Nizami's poems. He talks about the beginning of the winter, in a metaphorical style:

> The sweet song of the nightingale had faded away,
> and only the croaking cries of the crows sounded, the birds of the Hindu-
> race, this useless brood of thieves,
> and nothing had remained from the time of the roses than grey thorns.
> (Nisomi 1980: 15)

A few lines further down, the hero of the story rests his head on the bosom of an Indian princess (Nisomi 1980: 20ff). This ambiguity makes it clear that India and the Hindu were only a metaphor, an attractive stereotype, which had nothing to do with the realities of life.

A recurring term to denote acrobats was the word "*Kabuli*". In the times when this name was current (from the 9th until the 11th century) the regions of modern Afghanistan, like India, were not part of the Islamic world: they thus constituted 'ideal' places with which the origins of acrobats could be conveniently associated. Bosworth conducted some research on the application of the word "*Kabuli*". (Bosworth 1976: Vol. 1. 93; Bosworth 1976: Vol. 2. 127, 208). He suggests that is was a synonym for "someone from India". This shows that acrobats were regarded as outsiders, as people who did not quite fit the mould of the Islamic world even though, according to al-Biruni, as early as the 10th century they were ubiquitous all over it. This is further attested by numerous Arabic sources (Jacob 1910; Bosworth 1976).

Apart from the word "*Kabuli*", the term "Hindu" is also often used, which clearly carries a negative connotation. To be a Hindu, however, as demonstrated by Sigrid Kleinmichel, did not necessarily mean to have come from India. In-

stead, it referred to people who habitually painted their faces black – something, which used to be commonly done by artists performing on the market-square. It served them as a mask to mark the difference between the actor and the audience (Kleinmichel 1994: 207).

The idea that scholars had of India during the Islamic Middle Ages is characterised by the fate of the Sufi martyr al-Hallaj. He had gone to India to work there as a missionary. His critics and enemies later suggested that he had learned black magic there and especially the Indian trick of rope dancing. This, of course, was not the main reason for sentencing him to death but the fact that the accusation was made at all says a lot about the reputation of acrobatics among the Islamic elite. One of al-Hallaj's hardest critics, the Shiite mystic Shalmaghani, even said that the punishment for al-Hallaj signified the eternal damnation of acrobatics (Schimmel 1995: 105; Mason 1995: 33).

The Prayer

In Islamic societies prayers have a high value in everyday life. That does not just concern the five obligatory daily prayers, but also the prayer of blessing (*fotixa*), which is frequently recited: for example, upon entering a house, upon taking leave, at the beginning of a journey, in other words, always when people are in need of divine assistance or intervention.

The *dorboz* often pray for a better future for their whole country and for the group of acrobats; they ask for the general wellbeing of the people and for many festivities, which provide the *dorboz* with work. They also ask for prosperous bazaars and political and social stability, sensible politicians and peace in the world.

Apart from the general efficacy ascribed to all prayers, the *dorboz* are said to have special powers in this respect. At the beginning of a festivity they bless the whole house to ensure that the party will be a big success. But the special powers of their prayers mostly relate to children. Ikram, smiling whimsically, told me that he had lost count of the children named after him and after his eldest daughter Nodira. According to him it happens frequently that when a baby boy is born to a couple who was longing for children, he is named after the tightrope walker himself, if the baby is a girl, then she is called after the tightrope walker's wife or daughter. Even during Soviet times, when it was forbidden to pray in public, people implored the *dorboz* to pray for them at all costs.

According to my interviewees only God knows what it is that makes a prayer powerful. But to the *dorboz* it is important that their prayers sound convincing. Ahad of Quqon minori, for example, pointed out that even at the height of the worst political repressions in Soviet times, when prayers were prohibited, they were still recited in public during the *dorboz* performances. However, certain words had to be disguised and were substituted by other words. Thus in the following prayer,

Maning pirim Ali Sherim hudoduuur. Ikki dono di Muhamadi mustafaduuur!
A kimki pirishiga dast tursa uning taqdiri Allah
("My protector Ali, thou art like God, oh Muhammad, thou Holiness! Who serves his protector, is protected by God!"),

the names of holy persons and religious words were exchanged by terms like peasant, Lenin, kolkhoz worker, etc. (Borovkov 1928). The words themselves are of secondary importance, while the real emphasis is on the melody of the prayer and on the idea that Ali as protector is addressed. Religious motifs could also be disguised in a similar fashion. Ikram thus explained to the authorities that his prayers were not really prayers but ancient poems.

Ahad ended our interview with the following prayer:

May Allah illuminate all our ways.
May he take away what is written in his book about us.
So that the lives of the people who look at us with reverence and who believe in us,
So that everything they work for, everything that they have in their lives, may be blessed so that they can host many festivities.
When someone wants a son, may he be given a strong and healthy one.
When God is asked to give someone grandchildren, they should be beautiful and prudential.
May there be many festivities, so that we can serve them then. (*bizmat*)

Conclusion

One should not forget that the biographies of the *dorboz* display a great deal of diversity. In order to understand them, however, it is useful to analyse the common features of their lives. These inform their position in society as well the reasons for their self-confidence, which can differ from master to master, depending on whether someone has had a happy and fulfilled life or not. In contrast to Casimir, who presented the lives of peripatetic people in terms of tragic events, acrobats claim a high status in Islam through their stories and their practices of remembering. Tragic stories concerning either acrobats or Gypsies in Central Asia are (in my experience) always told by outsiders who empathise with others.

In accordance with their self-awareness as belonging to the 'cultural assets' of the region and due to the dominant status of Islam in Central Asia, acrobats try to locate their origins either at the sites near their actual localities or in Islamic lands. They would never emphasise a story, which places their origins in strange societies, like India. Instead, this is done by outsiders, typically those who disapprove of public entertainment on religious grounds. The acrobats are aware of the cultural heritage of the region they inhabit. It is in this cultural landscape, in literature and in oral traditions, that they find the sources of their corporate identity. They are not willing to represent themselves as "professional strangers"; instead, they claim to be an integral part of mainstream Central Asian culture.

I was unable to discover any trace of marginality in the self-representations of acrobats. Instead, like most other professional groups in Central Asia, they also display a high level of group consciousness, which guarantees the internal cohesion of the group, characterized by the ideal of endogamy (Slezkine 2004: 21, 33). Basing their economy on descent gives the whole professional group the possibility to intermarry their daughters with families of comparable economic and social standing. Thus, some of them stay within their own professional groups. However, that does not marginalize them; it simply locates them in a niche, which, like many other such niches, also has its boundaries. One problem they have to face is their violation of the taboo of performing in public, a taboo, which mostly concerns girls. Girls never used to perform publicly before World War II. The incorporation of girls into the shows was probably made possible by the emancipation of women in Soviet times. The newly acquired consciousness of Islamic values puts the problem into a new light and can be seen as a relic of Soviet times. Acrobats are part of the everyday culture of Central Asia. Through their stories they symbolically locate themselves in its very centre without shame or the sense of being marginalised.

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State Symbols and National Identity Construction in Kazakhstan

Ayşegül Aydıngün

Although separate concepts, nation, national identity and nationalism are closely related; it is not possible to discuss one without considering the others. However, the intention in this article is not to discuss at length the theories of nationalism but rather to discuss the construction of the Kazakh nation and Kazakh national identity via the construction of national/state symbols.[1] I believe that the study of state symbols is underdeveloped within the wider field of nations and nationalisms. The main aim of this article is to analyze the utilization of the past in the construction of the present. It is argued that the past is instrumentalized or reconstructed in such a way as to respond to the requirements of the present, and it is also argued that an attentive interpretation of state symbols may give clues about the type of nationalism adopted in the nation-building project. In other words, an analysis of state symbols allows us to gain insight into the debates, tensions and consensuses of any society. It is through the state symbols that one can understand which past is being selected as a resource in the construction of a nation and its national identity. Anthony Smith proposes a broad definition of national (state) symbols, which include not only flags, anthems or capital cities but also popular heroes, fairy tales, legal procedures, educational practices, etc. (Smith 1991: 77). The analysis of each of these elements exceeds the limits of this article, which will cover only the official state symbols and the language policy as it is argued that history and language form the basis of modern national identity in Kazakhstan. Thus, the interpretation of history in state symbols (the flag, the emblem and the anthem) will be studied in conjunction with the state language policies.[2]

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1 The differentiation between national symbols and state symbols is necessary for a proper understanding of post-Soviet societies. This is due to different perceptions of the terms *national* and *nationality* in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts because the term national has an ethnic connotation and does not refer to a relationship with the state as is the case in western societies (for further information see Shanin 1986). The term *state symbol* will be used here to refer to official symbols. Although different nationalities may have different symbols, state symbols need to be accepted by the people for the success of the state and nation building project. As argued by Michael Geisler, national (state) symbols perform an important function as catalysts for the formation and maintenance of national identity. But they also play a crucial role in fusing the nation with the state (Geisler 2005: XV).

2 This article is based on field research carried out in Kazakhstan in August 2002, and June and October 2004. During the fieldwork, 90 in-depth interviews were carried out with Kazakhs, Russians and people from other nationalities of Kazakhstan in Almaty, Astana, Atirau and nearby villages. Ten expert interviews were conducted in Almaty and Astana.

The Significance of State Symbols

There is no society or state without symbols, which are necessary for the establishment of social cohesion. However, symbols are not fixed. As important forces for social solidarity and transformation, they change over time. As Emile Durkheim mentions, there has been a fundamental change in the nature of social solidarity with modernization. However, the need for social solidarity and collective consciousness continues. It would not be wrong to argue that today's national symbols are modernized versions of the totems. In other words, flags, national anthems and other symbols perform the same function in modern societies as the totems performed in the past (Durkheim 1965; Smith W. 2001: 521-522).

Considering the continuing need for a collective consciousness, it is clear that every new state or every new political regime of an existing state needs symbols. Especially when a state becomes independent, new state symbols replace the old ones. But one should consider that the process of creating a new system of symbols for a nation is neither simple nor static. A national consensus over national symbols is essential for the stability of every nation state. These new symbols are important tools in the process of defining and creating a new nation, its national identity and values (Smith W. 2001:527-528). At the time of power change old symbols are typically ritually destroyed and new ones take their place. This is what happened in the post-Soviet republics following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The new symbols were most of the time selected from the past, aiming to fulfill the needs of the present. The destruction of the statues of Lenin in post-Soviet societies constitutes a perfect example. In the center of Almaty, the former capital city of Kazakhstan, the statue of Lenin was replaced by the Golden Man, an archeological find which traces Kazakh history on those lands back to the IV-III centuries BCE. Similarly, Lenin was replaced by Genghis Khan in Mongolia and by Tamerlane in Uzbekistan (Leoussi 2002: 221). Another example may be the renaming of the streets: Lenin became Dostuk; Karl Marx became Kunaev; Kirov became Bogenbai Batyr; Kommunistischesky became Ablai Khan in Almaty.

Post-Soviet republics are multi-ethnic states like most other nation-states. These republics were consciously made multi-ethnic as a result of the Soviet ethnic engineering policies, although the degree of multi-ethnicity differs from one republic to another. It is possible to argue that to be successful, the newly created state symbols should be based on a past or on references that are capable of integrating the majority of the population (Sham 1999: 649). In other words, the minorities of the society should not feel excluded and discriminated against. Being in line with the view that a/any nation is under continuous construction, and that nation building is a dynamic and interactive process, the willingness of the potential members of the nation to internalize state symbols will determine the longevity of the symbols and the survival of both the state and the nation.

In other words, state symbols should represent all members of the society. Their ability to mobilize all members of the nation and to create a collective consciousness and memory will determine the future of the nation and the state (Mayer 2005: 4-5). State symbols usually serve the cause of nationalism, but in order to create such symbols, the nation should be defined. In fact, the creation of symbols and the definition of nation is an interactive and never-ending process.

The Construction of a Nation

During his speech at the Sorbonne in 1882, Ernest Renan pointed out that the biggest error ever made was the confusion of race with nation (Renan 1882). From this date onward, this same confusion seems to have continued, and people are still mostly categorized according to their cultural and linguistic characteristics as if these were objective and unchanging givens, which contradicts the dominance of a subjective approach in theories of nationalism, ethnicity and identity. For the advocates of this subjective approach such as Renan, a nation is possible if the members possess the willingness (*la volonté*) for being members of that nation. It is the existence of such a willingness which makes the nation possible rather than the unity of race, language, religion, interest, geography or military needs. According to Renan, a nation is a large-scale solidarity constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices made in the past and those that one is ready to make in the future. A nation presupposes a past but it also expresses the desire to live together in the future. That is why Renan defines it as a *daily plebiscite*.

This way of defining the nation as a subjective construction is shared by Benedict Anderson and Anthony D. Smith. Anderson defines the nation as an *imagined political community* because its members do not know and will never know most of its other members. According to him, all communities are imagined, even maybe the most primordial villages of face-to-face contact (Anderson 1991: 6). According to Smith, a nation is possible if there exists/is a belief in certain elements such as an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a common mass culture, common legal rights and duties for all members and a common economy (Smith 1991: 14). Smith gives special attention to the study of national/state symbols since they give concrete meanings and visibility to nationalism, an abstract construction in itself (Smith 1991:77).

The reconstruction of the past is essential, because without the potential to integrate the majority, the desire to live together will be weakened or it may even disappear. If we accept that the nation is a *daily plebiscite*, this means that it is never stable. Thus, the desire to live together will continue to exist depending to a certain extent on the performance of state symbols in constructing the national identity and perpetuating it successfully. The process of constructing a national identity can be defined as a dynamic process, a kind of bargain between the state

and its citizens. Thus, the mechanisms used by the state in constructing national identity will influence the willingness of its potential members. Conversely, the willingness or its lack will also influence state policies. All these definitions and arguments indicate that the boundaries of a nation are flexible, since membership in it is a subjective choice on the part of its potential members, who may belong to different ethnicities.

Independent Kazakhstan: the Construction of Kazakh National Identity and State Symbols

Every group of people needs a national character as pointed out by J.J. Rousseau. When this is lacking, they have to begin by developing one (1915). The dissolution of the Soviet Union had a significant impact on the national character of its member republics. Upon becoming an independent state, Kazakhstan, like the other former Soviet republics, needed to rethink its history, culture and identity in order to define its national character. As a result, Kazakhstan needed another history, different from the one written by Soviet historians. In other words, Kazakhs have started to reclaim their history from the Russians while building an independent Kazakhstan and creating a new Kazakh national identity. The process of constructing a Kazakh national identity entailed the need for the search for ethnic origins as in the case of other nationalisms. Following independence in 1991, Kazakhstan began to create the necessary symbols for the construction of a nation, and the reinterpretation of history played an important role in this process. But since a nation is inevitably always an *imagined community*, the reconstructed community and symbols have to be incorporated in the imagination of the people. In other words, the people of Kazakhstan had to internalize and accept the newly constructed national identity and the state symbols to ensure the success of the state-building process.

It is important to note that the ability of state symbols to represent various ethnic groups other than the titular group will shed light on the nature of the national identity construction project, which can be based on either ethnic or civic principles. However, the validity of the classical civic-ethnic dichotomy is questioned in this article, and it is argued that all nationalisms, including Kazakh nationalism, simultaneously contain both civic and ethnic elements.

For a better understanding of the process of national identity construction in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to pay attention to the legacy of the Soviet period. One important legacy, which has taken deep roots and still shapes the nature of post-Soviet politics is the ethnic social organization accompanied by an ethnic hierarchy. It would not be wrong to argue that currently ethnicity is still the most important political identity in the post-Soviet space and that this legacy continues to determine the structure of post-Soviet societies. In addition, the pre-existing Kazakh identity emerged as the basis for the core of the national

identity under construction as in the case of most other states. However, the pre-existing ethnic hierarchy which put the Russians at the very top was challenged following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, leading to the loss of status of Russians and the development of anti-Soviet and anti-Russian attitudes among Kazakhs.

The emblems and institutions of Soviet Kazakhstan were shaped - as in the case of other republics - in such a way as to underline the subordination of the republic to the Union. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these were replaced with a different set of symbols and institutions that clearly proclaimed the emergence of independent Kazakhstan; this included a national flag, an anthem, a constitution, the setting up of a central bank, defense forces, currency, passports and other formal attributes of statehood. The cultural references were not always drawn from Kazakh traditions, contrary to Akiner's argument (Akiner 1995: 60). They were sometimes inclusive and sometimes exclusive, but in both cases historical elements were selectively used. What is important to stress is that the replacement process was the result of negotiations over various alternatives among the state-building elite.

The Kazakh state symbols can be said to have an ethno-national character at first sight because some Kazakh folkloric materials are used. However, it is also necessary to pay equal attention to what is not selected as a symbol in addition to analyzing the selected ones. Furthermore, one should also point out that there are various types of cleavages in any given society and even members of the same ethnic group may have very different perceptions of the same symbols.[3] In that sense, the construction of symbols is a very complicated and difficult task requiring solid sociological data about the society in general and about the demands of the different layers of that society. It is clear that the flexibility of symbols and their openness to different interpretations will increase their strength.

The national flag, the national anthem and the national emblem are the three important symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty (Firth 1973: 341). They reflect the state discourse. Kazakhstan also has three official state symbols, which are under the protection of the Constitution. These are the flag, the emblem and the anthem.

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[3] The Menorah in Israel constitutes a very good example in the sense that while it was perceived as the symbol of power, bravery and the Jewish struggle for freedom by the ultranationalists, for Labour Zionists it was a link between past and present and represented the land. Although perceived differently, the Menorah was largely accepted as a symbol by the Jewish community. However, the religious content of the Menorah, which may be the oldest Jewish symbol representing the candelabrum that stood in the old temple in Jerusalem, excludes in a way the Arab minority and indicates that the Jewish state is primarily a state for Jews and not for all its citizens (Mayer 2005: 10-13).

The Flag

The use of flags existed well before the emergence of nation-states. However, its modern form and usage dates back to the 18th century, and its durability is impressive especially considering the decreasing significance of other symbols over time, such as certain ceremonies or religious symbols (W. Smith 2001: 522).

The flag is a social symbol, which represents the unity of a people. It reflects the history and the culture of a nation, and it is also the symbol of the independence of a newly created political unit. As the symbol of solidarity, national virtues and state power, the flag also characterizes nationalism (Firth, 1973: 328-367). It objectifies a nation's identity and concretizes the abstract notion of the nation by giving information about its history and its future (Motyl 2001: 164). The national flags of modern states are officially defined state symbols. The flag is also the symbol of the country at the international level. That is why the burning of the flag is considered as an attack on the country itself (Geisler 2005: 22). Thus, any desecration of that symbol is a crime and becomes a legal issue. The flag as a symbol representing a unified society should express consensus and thus, the respect towards this symbol will depend on the degree of its acceptance by the citizens of the state it represents. The abstract value of any flag in the eyes of the people is very significant for its internalization.

Following its independence in 1991, during the process of creating a communal memory, Kazakhstan adopted a new flag. In some publications this new flag is defined as the symbol of statehood drawn from Kazakh history and culture (Ol-

cott 2002: 59). The new flag of Kazakhstan features a sky blue background including a vertical band of Kazakh ornamental motif in gold on the left. A golden eagle is in the centre together with a gold sun whose rays are framed by two wings of the eagle.

The blue of the flag is said to represent the cloudless sky and unity, peace and prosperity, and the gold sun represents serenity and wealth (Otarbaeva 1998: 431). It is possible to see the utilization of the same blue as the background in the flag of the Kazakh Khanate between 1456 and 1822 and in the horizontal bar in the lower part of the Soviet flag of 1953. Gold in Soviet flags was exclusively used for the hammer and sickle. The colors blue and gold, representing the sky and the sun, have in fact universal significance, but also a symbolic link with the ancient Kazakh/Turkic cult of the sky god (Cooper 1978: 39-41; Akiner 1995: 61). But gold and blue may also represent the colors of the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven because gold stands for heaven and blue for the Virgin Mary. The eagle is also a universal symbol representing all sky gods. It was not used in any of the Kazakh flags before; however, a double-headed eagle – the Romanov Eagle- was used as the symbol of Imperial Russia for more than 300 years.[4] Although not used in previous Kazakh flags, the golden eagle known as *Berkut*, is in a way a national symbol of the Kazakhs, referring to nomadic culture and to the Kazakh tradition of hunting.

It is possible to argue that the flag of Kazakhstan is designed in such a way as to possess the potential of being perceived differently by the different nationalities of Kazakhstan. The utilization of universal symbols gives us an important clue about the nature of the state-building project. The comments of a leading Kazakh orientalist Alishir Akishev[5] regarding the creation of the Kazakh national flag, justifies the above-mentioned view. Akishev says,

> I know the people who designed the flag of Kazakhstan. According to Turks and Kazakhs, the *Berkut* is the golden eagle, which brings happiness. It is the symbol of power, freedom and independence. This symbolizes the power of the people. While there were discussions about the design of the flag, one variant proposed included three circles representing the three Kazakh *juzes* [hordes]. This variant was not accepted because of the argument that Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic state and the hordes only stand for Kazakhs. The present variant was accepted because the *Berkut* and the sun are simultaneously both Kazakh symbols and universal symbols having similar meanings for all other nationalities. Russians perceive the sun, the eagle and the blue similarly to the way Kazakhs do.

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4 Despite its name, the so-called Romanov Eagle had been adopted by the Russians long before the dynasty was founded in 1613. It is said that the origins of the tsarist double-headed eagle go back to Byzantium and that it represents the division of the late Roman Empire into its Western and Eastern components (Stites 2005: 101-102)

5 Interview with Professor Alisher Akishev from the Institute of Oriental Studies in Almaty, October 2004.

The views of a significant number of interviewees from non-Kazakh minorities of Kazakhstan also view the national flag as an inclusive state symbol. A young Russian student said,

> Blue is the symbol of freedom and peace. The rays of the sun symbolize the different nationalities of Kazakhstan. It shows that they live in peace. The color blue also represents the sky. This is a common perception. When I look at the flag, I can say that it includes me and I can say that it is our flag.

A young Uzbek university student said,

> The flag includes every Kazakh citizen. The sun, the eagle and the color blue are universal symbols. The flag belongs to everybody who lives in Kazakhstan. It is our flag.

These quotations indicate that as a state symbol the flag of Kazakhstan has the potential to be perceived differently by people from different nationalities living in Kazakhstan. My fieldwork data have revealed a certain willingness on the part of non-Kazakh citizens to perceive the flag as a set of symbols that incorporates them into the abstract notion of the Kazakh nation. It is also important to note that most interviewees stressed that the most important symbol is the flag, and they mostly declared that the flag is the most inclusive state symbol.

The Emblem

The national emblem of the Republic of Kazakhstan is a picture of a *shanyrak* (the upper opening of a *yurt* / *kiyiz üy*) against a blue background, from which *üyks* (rays) are being radiated like sun rays which frame the wings of mythical horses in gold. At the bottom of the emblem is the inscription *Kazakhstan,* also in gold.

The *shanyrak* is the functional keystone that holds the yurt (*kiyiz üy*) together.[6] It is considered sacred in Kazakh culture. It simultaneously symbolizes the hearth of the home and the wheel of the sun. It is said that the opening provides the possibility to read the stars and tell the time. Spiritually, it is conceptualized as an opening to the sky and the sky god (Kunanbay 2001: 91-93). The *shanyrak* also symbolizes the homeland of all Kazakh people (Otarbaeva 1998: 431).

The winged horses are borrowed from Kazakh mythology. More specifically, they are borrowed from the headdress of the Golden Man found in the *Issyk* mound. The Golden Man, an archeological find belonging to the *Saka* period,

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6 It is also important to stress that the *yurt* became an important symbol of Kazakh cultural identity starting in the 1970s. Although the *yurt* became obsolete during the Soviet period as a result of the forced sedentarization of the nomads by the Soviet regime, it symbolically reappeared (Akiner 1995: 53-54). Especially since independence it has been widely used in official ceremonies, in the private and public spheres and also for tourism purposes (i.e. shops). It is even possible to come across luxurious houses in the rich neighbourhoods of Almaty with a *yurt* in the garden.

became an important Kazakh national symbol as well as a tool for tracing Kazakh presence on those lands back to the 3rd-4th centuries B.C.[7] Alisher Akishev mentioned during our interview that different projects had been taken into consideration while designing the emblem, as was also the case with the flag; symbols referring to specifically Kazakh culture (e.g. symbols representing *Juzes,* the utilization of the star and crescent representing Islam) were eliminated in favor of more inclusive symbols.

At this point it is necessary to pay attention to the link between archaeology and nationalism because archaeological data are sometimes manipulated for nationalist purposes. This link is of course very much related to the political instrumentalization of archaeology during the process of national identity construction. In fact, the dissolution of the Soviet Union entailed not only the

7 In 1970 the *Issyk* mound in *Zhetisu* was excavated by a team of archaeologists headed by Kemal Akishev. As a result of these excavations, the remains of a *Saka* king were found with gold, silver, bronze, clay and wooden articles (Otarbaeva 1998: 421). According to estimates the person buried there was about 17-18 years old. He was clad in a rich embroidered uniform. On his head he wore a long headdress decorated with gold plates. Among these decorations there were two winged horses with goat horns.

emergence of new states but also the emergence of new territorial conflicts and claims. Consequently, archaeological data became a source for claiming territory or for legitimizing existing national boundaries (Kohl 2001: 25-28). In the case of Kazakhstan, archaeological finds are used to prove that Kazakhstan is the historical land of the Kazakh people. In a way, archaeological finds are mobilized to set and solidify the political borders of Kazakhstan. In an interview, a young Kazakh said about the national emblem:

> When you look at the emblem you feel as if you were gazing at the sky in the summer from inside a yurt (*kiyiz üy*). In my opinion this emblem transmits the message that it is a Kazakh home and that you are living in it.

An Uzbek expressed his opinion about the emblem as follows,

> The horse is an important animal for all Central Asian peoples and not only for Kazakhs. The settled Uzbeks also like horses, and they use them quite frequently as a symbol. However, the s*hanyrak* is specific to Kazakhs.

Some Kyrgyz interviewed considered the *shanyrak* as part of their culture, too. However, for some Russians the s*hanyrak* was a specifically Kazakh symbol. The interviews have indicated that although the emblem is a state symbol which makes a more pronounced reference to Kazakh culture than the other two state symbols, it is perceived differently by different nationalities living in Kazakhstan. While it is considered as a Kazakh home by the Kazakhs and some members of other nationalities, many others believe it refers to Kazakh lands.

One can argue that the *shanyrak* is a reference to Kazakh lands, especially considering the significance of this land for Kazakhs. The Kazakhs had to struggle with Russian and Ukrainian settlers over centuries for their pastures, which represented an essential resource for their nomadic society. The Russian land policy deprived Kazakhs of their lands (Karpat 2003: 131-139). Thus, the utilization of the symbol of the *yurt* can be said to be about setting the political boundaries of Kazakhstan rather than representing the nationalities living within those boundaries.

The Anthem

Every modern nation adopts a national anthem. The anthem is in a way the musical equivalent of the nation's flag. It is the official and symbolic song of the nation. The national anthem is a mechanism through which nations distinguish themselves from other nations and set the boundaries of their national identity. Respect shown to a national anthem depends on both the legitimacy of political power and its recognition at the international level. The power of the national anthem in capturing the largest number of people depends on its ability to include the symbols of all the members forming the nation as in the case of other state symbols. The national anthem is a symbol that contributes to the construc-

tion of a collective consciousness at each performance, and it symbolizes the nation in the eyes of other nations (Motyl 2001: 359-360).

National anthems create a sentiment of attachment, which activates communal identity and a feeling of solidarity; hearing the anthem can make people cry. As argued by Anderson,

> Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance... How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sound (Anderson 1996: 145).

However, this sense of attachment to the state symbols does not happen immediately. The internalization of these symbols is possible through the willingness of the individuals to internalize them and through their constant repetition in schools, in the mass media, in public ceremonies. In other words, nations and states under construction have to transmit the new symbols to the young via the state school system and the state run media. The organization of this process of transmission should be planned by the state-building elite (Leoussi 2001: 209).

In Kazakhstan a new national anthem was adopted in 1992. New lyrics were written for the old music of the previous anthem. The anthem stresses on the one hand the need to preserve the mother tongue and the significance of the Kazakh land, and on the other hand, it underlines the importance of unity for the strength of the nation. The composition of the new lyrics indicates two things which are in fact interrelated: language revival, because the lyrics are in Kazakh, and the concretization of the new nation through the new lyrics. Akishev argued during the interview,

> At the beginning there was the idea of changing both the music and the lyrics. New music was composed, but it was not accepted by the people from the conservatory because it was perceived as a Kyrgyz piece. Finally, new words were written to the old melody as in the case of the Russian Federation.

The way the national anthem is perceived by other nationalities of Kazakhstan is also revealing. For example a young Russian said,

> It is very difficult to understand the words and memorize them. If you do not repeat the text, you may easily forget it.

An Uzbek said,

> I know the words of the anthem. These words are addressed to all nationalities. It includes all the nationalities of Kazakhstan and invites them to unity.

It can be said that non-Kazakh Turkic speaking nationalities, which are more familiar with the Kazakh language, perceive the national anthem differently than, for example, Russians and other Slavs who face language difficulties. It is possi-

ble to say that Russians identify themselves more easily with the emblem and the flag, which are visual symbols, compared to the anthem because they do not understand the lyrics. This takes us to the problem of language, an important symbol of national identity.

The Language Issue in Kazakhstan

It is well known that language is a powerful force that also shapes nationalism, and a factor that contributes to the development or strengthening of the national sentiment (Kohn 1945). Like in most nation-building projects, language in Kazakhstan is used as a tool in the creation of a national identity.[8] The gradual penetration of the Kazakh language into the public sphere in Kazakhstan after a long period of suppression during the Soviet era has a symbolic meaning. However, given the changing demographic structure of the country, the analysis of the language issue becomes very complicated and requires a differentiation between its symbolic dimension and its practical dimension.

To understand the issue of language in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, a brief analysis of Soviet language policies is essential. As part of the Soviet nationality policy, the development of non-Russian languages, and especially those of titular nationalities, was encouraged to create a stable multi-national state during the 1920s. However, in the 1930s, languages suffered from repressive Stalinist policies, and Russian as a second language became compulsory in all Soviet schools (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001: 54).

The *de facto* promotion of Russian that started at the end of the 1930s should be evaluated carefully. The *de jure* equality of languages contradicted social reality since there was a practical need for a language of inter-ethnic communication on the one hand, and Russian was promoted in education and public life on the other. Thus, lack of knowledge of Russian entailed low social status and exclusion from high status jobs.[9] As a result of the Soviet language policies and the requirements of social practice, Russian was acquired as a first language by a significant number of non-Russian Soviet citizens, particularly in Kazakhstan. Therefore, Russians did not feel the need to learn Kazakh or any other titular language.[10] As correctly pointed out by Tishkov, the level of Russianization was much higher than reflected in census results due to the symbolic meaning non-

8 For a detailed analysis see Dave 1996.

9 For a recent study of the history of Soviet language policy see Smith 1998.

10 Language policy was not the only vehicle of the Russification of Kazakhstan. The preponderance of Russian was also facilitated by dramatic changes in the demographic composition. The mass immigration, both voluntary and involuntary, of mostly Slav speaking European settlers was paralleled by the dramatic decline of the Kazakh population, the consequence of multiple causes, such as collectivisation and the forced sedentarization of the nomads, persecution, famine and epidemics. On the demographic changes see e.g. Kolstoe 1995.

Russians accorded their mother tongue, since the majority of non-Russian Soviet citizens used to declare their mother tongue as their native language, even though the everyday spoken language was Russian (Tishkov 1997: 87).[11]

Following independence, the Kazakh language was ranked above Russian, and became one of the most important state symbols as well as one of the strongest instruments of Kazakhization (Karin and Cheboratev 2002: 100). Despite the strong symbolic importance accorded to the Kazakh language by the Kazakhs and state policies promoting Kazakh[12] (such as language laws, use of Kazakh language in education), there has been little progress in the revival of the national language. Russian still dominates the life of people in Kazakhstan, especially in the public sphere. This is of course mainly due to the ethno-demographic structure of Kazakhstan as pointed out above, but also to the success of the Soviet regime in Russianization. It has been noted that the language instrumentalized for mobilizing large numbers of people around a national ideal can be in fact any language, including the language of the people against whom people are mobilized. Trans-linguistic nationalism, which is observed in certain cases such as India or Ireland, has similarities with the post-Soviet countries in general and with the case of Kazakhstan in particular (Safran 1999: 83). In line with this, it is possible to argue that Kazakhs are mobilized using Russian as a vehicle.

Due to practical necessities and in order to prevent non-Russians from feeling discriminated against by the government's language policy, the official attitude is to introduce the Kazakh language through education over a long period of time rather than excluding people from public life and discriminating against the non-Kazakhs (Olcott 2002: 177-183).

During fieldwork, more than half of my Kazakh interview partners preferred to speak Russian despite the possibility to choose between the two languages (the interviewers were fluent in both languages). The symbolic significance that the interviewees accorded their mother tongue was quite strong. Only a few of them said that they speak solely Kazakh at home. An important number of them mentioned that both Russian and Kazakh are spoken at home. However, almost all stressed that Kazakh should be the only state language in Kazakhstan and that everyone who lives in Kazakhstan should learn Kazakh. A 40-year-old female Kazakh teacher from Atirau said,

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11 For a recent analysis of the first post-Soviet census in Kazakhstan see Dave 2004b.

12 Kazakhstan declared Kazakh the 'state language' in 1989. The 1993 Constitution confirmed this law, but it also declared Russian the 'language for international communication'. The 1995 Constitution attempted to equalize the status of Kazakh and Russian in Article 7, according to which:

The state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan shall be the Kazakh language.

In state institutions and local administrative bodies the Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazakh language.

The state shall promote conditions for the study and development of the languages of the people of Kazakhstan. (For a survey of language laws in Kazakhstan see Fierman 1998.)

> There must be one state language in Kazakhstan and this language should be Kazakh. If two languages gain official status, other nationalities will not need to learn Kazakh. This land is the land of Kazakhs, and I personally think that those who live here should speak Kazakh.

Another 21-year-old male Kazakh student said,

> To my mind, there must be one state language in Kazakhstan. However, at this point, this is impossible because conflicts may emerge among nationalities. It is impossible at the moment because we should not spread the feeling of discrimination and exclusion among non-Kazakh nationalities. But I clearly believe that our state has to have one state language and this should be Kazakh.

Another interviewee, a 53-year-old female Kazakh history teacher from Atirau, argued,

> I think that Kazakhstan is the state of Kazakhs and its language should be Kazakh. However, the independence of our Kazakhstan is new. Although we have a very large territory, only around 15 million people are living here and only 8 million out of the 15 are Kazakhs. The rest is composed of various nationalities. Therefore, for now, it is very difficult to change the state language into Kazakh overnight. Russian has taken root and that is why it is still the second language of our republic.

I argue that these quotations indicate a certain reaction by Kazakhs to the 1995 Constitution, which equated the status of Russian and Kazakh as opposed to the 1993 Constitution, and reflect the symbolic value the interviewees accord to the Kazakh language. However, a more realistic interpretation is offered by those Kazakh intellectuals who argue that the development process of Kazakh as a language and its dissemination will take time. The fieldwork has also shown the cleavage between Kazakhs from urban centres and rural areas. Urban Kazakhs were sometimes very negatively perceived by the newly urbanized Kazakh migrants as well as by rural Kazakhs, who believe in the necessity of the Kazakhification of the Russified urban Kazakhs. This explains in a way, the ambiguity of the official practices (Holm-Hansen 1999: 178-179).

Many issues related to language revival in Kazakhstan appear to be paradoxical at first sight. However by differentiating the symbolic function of the language from its communicative function, it is possible to eliminate the paradox. Government policy promoting the revival of the Kazakh language and the desire expressed by the interviewees concerning the future of Kazakh national identity, which is equated with the survival of the national language, refer to the symbolic function of language. The dominance of Russian in everyday life is interpreted as inevitable by almost all the interviewees because of the ethnic composition of the country and the successful integration of Russian into Kazakh society during the Soviet period.[13] This relates to the communicative function of the language.

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[13] Although Kazakh interviewees tend to emphasize only the impact of the Soviet period, this integration process in fact goes back to the 18th century, during which Kazakh tribes accepted the protectorate of the Russian Empire. (Olcott 2002: 12; Olcott 1995: 31-53)

Following independence, the Kazakh state elite upgraded the Kazakh language and used it as a *boundary setter* in nation and state building to mobilize people around a national ideal and to strengthen the national identity, which had already been developed at least 'in form' during the Soviet regime. The fact that the Kazakh language is used as a boundary setter, which refers in fact to symbolic function, is not necessarily in contradiction with the utilization of Russian for daily interaction, which refers to communicative function; this is especially the case in an environment where the elite were educated in Russian schools and continue to perceive Russian as the symbol of enlightenment and of higher social prestige (Nauruzbayeva 2002: 2-3). Apparently one Kazakh intellectual argues that the Kazakh language is a phenomenon of the past, which is being used as a tool for the nation-building project. According to him, a Kazakh-speaking Kazakhstan will be isolated from the world (Holm-Hansen 1999: 183). Although his position does not dominate intellectual circles, the terminological problems and the need for Russian as well as English, in order to integrate in a globalised world, were expressed by most Kazakh intellectuals during the interviews.

Communities may experience a language shift in their history, and their native tongue may totally or partially lose its communicative function. This does not, however, necessitate loss of its symbolic meaning since the members of the group may continue to feel a strong attachment to their mother tongue (Edwards 1985: 110). Within that context, the fact that the mother tongue is not spoken in daily life does not constitute an obstacle for its utilization as a boundary setter in the reconstruction of national identity, and the utilization of both languages may continue while present policies of the dissemination of Kazakh are perpetuated.

My Russian interviewees have also expressed their views concerning the promotion of the Kazakh language in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. All the Russian informants interviewed were educated in Russian schools, and the large majority stressed that their schools offered Kazakh language classes. However, most of them said that, although they could understand some Kazakh, they could not speak it. Of the Russians interviewed only a very few said that they could speak Kazakh, and one of them was married to a Kazakh. According to fieldwork data, while the elderly said that it was too late for them to learn a new language, the middle-aged and young people expressed two different opinions regarding the increasing importance of the Kazakh language. Some of them, mostly young people, were planning to learn Kazakh because they thought that it was necessary for their future and their career, while others were clearly against the idea of learning Kazakh. Here are some of the views professed by Russian interviewees:

A 74 year-old Russian mechanical engineer from Almaty said,

> On the one hand it is said that Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic society and on the other hand it is argued that the Kazakh language should be the sole language of Kazakhstan. I do not agree with this view because there are millions of Russians who live here.

A 65 year-old Russian male said,

> My grandchildren are learning Kazakh at school. In my opinion it is good for them. If the promotion of the Kazakh language continues this way, you will be obliged to learn Kazakh in order to be successful in your career. That is correct. But if you don't want to learn, it is your choice, you can go somewhere else. We are in Kazakhstan and it is normal that the language be Kazakh.

A 23-year-old Russian male from Astana said,

> I do not want to learn Kazakh. I don't think that it will be necessary in the future. I know many Kazakhs who do not know their own language. I do not think that the Kazakh language has a future.

Another Russian, a 28-year-old male from Almaty argued,

> I can understand Kazakh, but I cannot speak it fluently. However, I am planning to learn it because it will be quite important when looking for a job and for my future career.

An evaluation of the post-independence period reveals that, despite practical difficulties and the slow pace of its dissemination, the Kazakh language has become relatively more widespread, thanks to the promotion of its strong symbolic significance. Its increasing role in education can be considered as a further factor that will increase its dissemination in the future. Dave Bhavna has recently convincingly demonstrated that the present linguistic situation in modern Kazakhstan cannot simply be considered the result of language policies alone; rather, it has been shaped by the complex interaction between state and society. She argues further, that the present situation reflects the tacit non-interference of the state in the implementation of these policies, and that the Kazakh state has successfully depoliticised the language issue (Dave 2004a).

Conclusion

National identity and state-building projects can only be successful if they are based on strong historical elements capable of integrating the majority of the population. Selecting the proper elements from the past is the task of the ruling elite. The way the past is used in the construction of national identity and of state symbols will determine the degree of acceptance of the new state by the people. The ability of the ruling elite to create a consensus over the symbols and values of the new state, and their talent in reaching a national compromise regarding the definition of the nation and the construction of national identity are very important factors for the success, legitimacy and durability of the new nation-state (Sahm 1999: 649-50).

In Kazakhstan, while the official speeches, the constitution and some symbols are based on the idea of constructing a multi-cultural society, some symbols and certain policies give the message that Kazakhstan is the homeland of the Ka-

zakhs. This indicates that the Kazakh nation-building process contains both ethnic and civic elements. In other words, as correctly pointed out by Akiner (1995: 80), two trends are observed in Kazakh society: one is nationalist and the other is internationalist. However, this process of Kazakh national identity construction and state building is at a very early stage, and the inclusive "Kazakhstani identity" promoted by the president is becoming stronger.[14] To put it differently, the question of whether Kazakhstan is the homeland of Kazakhs or whether it belongs equally to all the nationalities of Kazakhstan is not answered yet. However, the increasing Kazakhization that started soon after the declaration of independence has lost its impetus. This immediate attempt at Kazakhization can be interpreted as a search for the public recognition of Kazakh identity, which had been subordinated to the Russian one for quite a long time.

It is also important to recognize that the Soviet legacy constitutes an advantage for the strengthening of the Kazakhstani identity, which started to take root in post-Soviet Kazakhstan a few years after the independence. This can clearly be seen in the evolution of the Constitution of Kazakhstan. For example, as opposed to the 1993 Constitution, the Constitution of 1995, no longer defines Kazakhstan as the state of the Kazakh nation. The preamble of the second Constitution begins as follows: "We, the people of Kazakhstan, united by a common historic fate, creating a state on the native Kazakh land." If this legacy is successfully combined with the historical significance of territory for Kazakh people, a new hybrid identity may emerge out of an inclusive ethnic nationalism and civic territorial nationalism. The existing state symbols and the pragmatic implementation of the language policy seem to support this hybrid model.

The field research has shown that the nature of identification with Kazakhstan and the perception of the national symbols by different nationalities vary. While some people may perceive Kazakhstan as their state, some others perceive it as their homeland. Furthermore, an important number of people perceive the state symbols as inclusive, but for different reasons. While some see the universal dimension of the state symbols, others evaluate them as bearers of the Kazakh culture. The inherent capacity of state symbols to be interpreted differently will increase their degree of inclusiveness, and it is no accident that the Kazakhstani state elite was careful about the construction of those symbols. However, since those state symbols are quite new, it is still early to evaluate their emotional impact and power. Their power will be related to the continuation of the people of

[14] As an example of the promotion of Kazakhstani identity, we can mention the palace constructed in Kazakhstan's capital city of Astana by the world-famous architect Lord Norman Foster. This is a "Palace of Peace," a glass pyramid. The building is completed recently and it is designed to serve as a symbol of inter-ethnic harmony in Kazakhstan. Nazarbayev hopes that this project raises Astana's international profile. It is designed to become a testimonial to Kazakhstani diversity, including a centre for all the ethnic groups and geographic regions of Kazakhstan, a Museum of Culture, the Astana University of Civilization, and a 1,500-seat opera house.

Kazakhstan's willingness to live together in the future. However, the perpetuation of this willingness does not only depend on the inclusiveness of state symbols. An important battle is also taking place in the informal practices of daily life. Thus, the degree of ethnic discrimination in daily life will also have an impact on the continuation of the desire to have a common future and to form a nation.

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Desired Identity and Mistaken Orthography Among the Khakas of Siberia

Claus Schönig

The Khakas belong to one of the less known Turkic speaking groups. They live in the Khakas Autonomous Republic, situated within the Russian Federation, by the middle flow of the Yenisey River. Their capital is Abakan. Their language belongs to the South Siberian areal group of Turkic languages. Together with Shor it forms the Modern Yenisey Turkic branch of South Siberian Turkic; South Siberian Turkic also includes Altay Turkic, Chulym Turkic, and Sayan Turkic. Khakas comprises six groups the dialects of which partially show marked differences. The standard language is based on the Kacha dialect spoken in the districts of Ust′-Abakan, Altay, and Shira. The second most important dialect is the Sagay dialect (spoken in the Askis district and in the northern part of the Tashtyp district), which has also made its influence felt on the literary language. The Beltir (in the Tashtyp district) and the Koybal (on the right bank of the Abakan river, along the banks of the Kandyrla river, and in the district of Beya), who in the early 19th century still spoke a Southern Samoyed language, have become assimilated to the Sagay and the Kacha. The origins of the Kyzyl may be traced back to the Chulym Turks and the Eastern Siberian Tatars. Driven by famine, some groups of the Shor (see above) left their homeland in the neighbouring region of Mountain Shoria (Gornaya Shoriya) in the 18th century and assimilated to the Khakas tribes (Schönig 1999 and 2001).

Unlike the Turkic speaking populations of Central Asia, the Near East and Eastern Europe, the Khakas do not profess Islam. Similarly to other South Siberian Turkic groups, they were also targeted by the missionary zeal of the Russian Orthodox Church, and were converted, albeit superficially, to Christianity in the course of the 19th century. In spite of their conversion, they have preserved many notions and practices from their pre-Christian past, which have been influenced by traditions often subsumed (even by some scholars) under the label 'Shamanism' (although Shamanism is not a religion but a set of techniques).

According to Chinese sources, already in the early Middle Ages the territory of modern Khakasia was controlled by the so-called Ancient Kirghiz or Yenisey Kirghiz. The relationship of these groups to the modern (Tien-shan) Kirghiz still awaits clarification, and it is quite possible that continuities were limited to the adoption of an earlier ethnonym. Originally, the Yenisey Kirghiz were not Turkic speakers either; According to Róna-Tas (1974) they probably spoke a kind of Palaeosiberian language. Like some other groups in history, they assimilated to some Turkic speaking groups (perhaps the precursors of the modern Kipchak

Turks) in the course of time, undergoing language change in the process. Their decentralised aristocratic socio-political system was united under a Kaghan in the late 7th century A.D., only to be subjugated by the Kök-Türks of the so-called Orkhon Turkic Kaghanate in the early 8th century. Following the decline of Kök-Türk power, and the emergence of another Turkic tribal confederation, that of the Old Uighurs, the Kirghiz continued a subordinate existence until the 840s, when they overthrew the Old Uighur steppe empire and assumed power. However, they did not follow in the footsteps of their predecessors in the steppe, instead, they retreated behind the mountains of their tribal territories, where they ruled over non-Turkic groups, possibly including speakers of Obi-Ugrian, Samoyed and Yeniseyic languages, the so called Kyshtym. They were famous for their metal production (as were, e.g., the Yeniseyic Kets in later centuries), and held trading relations not only with China but also with the Islamic world.

The numerous epitaphs found all over south Siberia most likely date from this period of Kirghiz history. They were written in the so-called Turkic Runic script, a syllabary, which by and large follows the orthography of the Uighur Runic inscriptions rather than that of the Orkhon Turkic inscriptions, which comprise the first texts written in a Turkic language. I shall return to this topic later below.

In the 13th century the Kirghiz, together with some other tribes of the so-called "forest peoples" (Mongolian *hoy-in irgen*) submitted to the conquering Mongols of Chinggis Khan, but towards the end of the same century they were already rebelling against their new overlords (ca. 1254–70). In the course of a devastating war many were deported and the Yenisey Kirghiz experienced a dramatic decline, as a result of which they eventually disappeared from historiography. They are mentioned again in the 17th century, at the time of the Russian encroachment into the Yenisey region. At this point the Yenisey Kirghiz were organised in four principalities: Altyr, Alty(n)sary, Yyzyr, and Tuba. Initially they paid tribute to the Oirat-Mongols' later they were conquered by Russia (Pritsak 1959).

The Kirghiz principalities were torn between the Russians and the Oirat, until in the early 18th century a great majority of the Yenisey Kirghiz were deported by the Oirat with the aim of hindering Russian encroachment through the politics of creating an empty space. It is still a matter of discussion, whether Kirghiz immigration to the Tien-shan Mountains was directly connected with these deportations (Pritsak 1959: 600). The remaining Yenisey Kirghiz mixed with their former subject population, the Kyshtym. It was from this mixing that most of the modern south Siberian Turkic speaking groups emerged.

Under Russian rule the Turkic speaking groups were able to preserve their traditional organisational structures. The peoples of special interest to us were at that time labelled 'Abakan Tatars', 'Minussinsk Tatars' or 'Tatars of the Yüs-Steppe'. They themselves seem to have called their own lands Qoŋ(g)oray even before this time, which toponym later became Xooray. During Russian rule this

name was largely forgotten, and it is only now, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, under new conditions of relative autonomy, that some circles have attempted to revive it. I shall return to this topic below. During the Tsarist period of Russian rule the designation 'Khakas' was not yet in use for this people. This was first applied by indigenous intellectuals in the early Soviet period, and it was based on a misreading of the Chinese rendition of the ethnonym applied to the (Yenisey) Kirghiz during the Tang dynasty (7th-10th centuries), a view which goes back arguably to Klaproth (1823) and Radloff (1907). Incidentally, the name itself contradicts the sound law of the Khakas written language, which only knows x but not q (velar k) in back vocalic words. After several stages of organisational modifications in the political structure (such as the Autonomous Region of the Krasnoyarsk Country founded in 1930) the Khakas Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic was established. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union it was transformed into the Khakas Autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation. The capital of these political formations was and has remained Abakan.

One of the earliest efforts to write down the Khakas language was connected to the activities of the Altaic Spiritual Mission in the period between 1893 and 1899 and took the form of the Cyrillic script. This 'missionary alphabet' formed the basis of the so-called 'national alphabet' in the Latin script, which was developed in the early Soviet period and remained officially in use until 1939, when the Cyrillic script was re-introduced. This alphabet has remained in use up to the present day.

Similarly to many other groups within the Russian Federation, since the collapse of the Soviet Union the Khakas have also made efforts to assert their sovereignty through mobilising their recently acquired political rights in many areas of life. Among these efforts an important role is played by the re-construction and construction of a history, which is both heroic and respectable. One of the most important exponents of this new historiography is the Khakas scholar Viktor Yakovlevich Butanaev. His remarkable work points to a direction, which had its antecedents in the Soviet period. Thus in articles like Ungvitskaya (1971) connections between the Old Turkic Yenisey inscriptions and modern Khakas folklore are described. Of course such connections may exist, and Ungvitskaya may be right with her analysis. But if we take into consideration the colourful history of Southern Siberia, it is very unlikely that such connections are limited to the Khakas. This is one of the principles carried over by the new nationalists all over the former Soviet Union from the preceding Soviet "nation building programmes": the inhabitants of single Soviet administrative regions became the direct heirs of preceding cultures in the area concerned, especially, but not only, if no original "cultural heroes" of the nations in question were readily available. Thus the poet Nizami-yi Ganjavi, writing in Persian, became one of the most prominent "Old Azerbayjanian" writers – despite the fact that he never wrote

one single line in Azeri, only because he lived in what is today Azerbayjanian territory. The famous poet Navai has thus become the "father" of Uzbek literature, even though he wrote in Chaghatay Turkic and lived at the Timurid court during the last days of Timurid rule in Central Asia, which was eventually defeated and destroyed by the invading Uzbeks. In the case of the Khakas another "proof" of direct relatedness with the Yenisey Kirghiz is the fact that beneath names of Khakas *söök* ('bones' = families) a name like Qïrġïs can be found. But the Khakas nationalists forget to mention that such family names also appear among other Turkic peoples (and not only in Southern Siberia).

One important activity of the new Khakas nationalists is to treat Khakas as an old ethnic and linguistic unit; scholars like, e.g., W. Radloff, L.P. Potapov, and S.A. Tokarev considered them only as an administrative unit created by the Oirat-Mongols and later on by the Russian administration. Furthermore the view of the new Khakas nationalists considers the Khakas the descendants and cultural heirs of the Yenisey Kirghiz, who are credited with the authorship of the so-called Yenisey inscriptions written in the Runic alphabet.[1] As a result Butanaev and other Khakas nationalists have started decorating various printed matter with these Runes, and in doing so they often violate the Runic orthography and use individual Runes in the wrong way. Another area, which exemplifies the modern use of these Runes is souvenirs of all kind.

The Turkic 'Runic alphabet' comprises more than thirty-five signs, which show some variation according to inscription group (see table below);[2] the Khakas, as self-appointed heirs of the Yenisey Kirghiz use the variant characteristic of the Yenisey inscriptions (which also includes the inscriptions of Tannu-Tuva (today the homeland of the Sayan Turkic Tuvans and another autonomous region of the Russian Federation).

The script is written from right to left: words as well as groups of words which are semantically more closely connected are separated by the sign : In addition to four vowels with a dual phonetic value (A = a/ä, I = i/ï, U = o/u, Ü = ö/ü) and one vowel with a single phonetic value (closed e), characteristic of Yenisey Kirghiz, the script also includes four groups of consonant signs. One of these can be used in words with both palatal and velar vowel sequences, (m, ñ (palatalized ŋ), p, z). The second group consists of signs, which can only be used either with velar/back vowels (b^1, d^1, g^1, k^1, l^1, n^1, r^1, s^1, t^1, y^1) or with palatal/front vowel sequences (b^2, d^2, g^2, k^2, l^2, n^2, r^2, s^2, t^2, y^2). At the same time the Yenisey group also features the pairs $ŋ^1$ and $ŋ^2$ as well as $š^1$ and $š^2$, which in the Orkhon Inscriptions are represented by the neutral ŋ and š respectively. A third group of

1 More problematic was the rigour with which, at a meeting at Marmara University in Istanbul, he made every effort to purge all Russian loanwords from a planned Khakas-Turkish dictionary (personal communication of Prof. Dr. Emine Gürsoy-Naskali).

2 This figure is an estimate in as much that even within one and the same inscription group some signs are represented by several variants.

signs comprises the consonant clusters nt (nd) and nč (nǰ), which are entirely independent of the vocalism of the word in question. While these signs are usually read with the vowels a/ä (the vowels can either precede or follow the consonant clusters) in the absence of further specifications, a fourth group of consonantal signs require other vowels. This group comprises the three k-signs (one of the most frequently occurring consonants of the Turkic languages) (ï)k(ï), (o/u)k(o/u) and (ü/ö)k(ü/ö).One example of the application of the Runic script is found in the journal Xaqas Čirĭ or "Khakas Land".[3]

№	Русск.	Енис.	Орхон.	Латин
1	а, э			a, ä
2	э		–	ä
3	ы, и			ï, i
4	о, у			o, u
5	ё, ю			ö, ü
6	$д^1$			b^1
7	$д^2$			b^2
8	$г^1$			g
9	$г^2$			g
10	$дж^1$			d^1
11	$дж^2$			d^2
12	з			z
13	$й^1$			j^1
14	$й^2$			j^2
15	$к^1$			q
16	$к^2$			k
17	ык, кы			ïq, qï
18	ок, ко			oq, qo
19	ёк, кё			ök, kö
20	$л^1$			l^1

№	Русск.	Енис.	Орхон.	Латин
21	$л^2$			l^2
22	м			m
23	$н^1$			n^1
24	$н^2$			n^2
25	$нг^1$			$ŋ^1$
26	$нг^2$			$ŋ^2$
27	ний			ñ
28	нт, нд			nt, nd
29	нч			nč
30	п			p
31	$р^1$			r^1
32	$р^2$			r^2
33	$с^1$			s^1
34	$с^2$			s^2
35	$т^1$			t^1
36	$т^2$			t^2
37	ч			č
38	$ш^1$			$š^1$
39	$ш^2$			$š^2$
40	разд.	:	:	–

[3] *Čir* is the equivalent of modern Turkish *yer* 'soil, land, etc.' with regular sound correspondence between the two words.

Хакас чирі

Газета 1927 чылдағы 1 июньнаң сығарылча ХАКАС РЕСПУБЛИКАНЫҢ ХАЛЫХ ЧОН ГАЗЕТАЗЫ

№ 101 (18924) Вторник, от айының 1 кӱні — 1 июль 2003 чыл. Садылчатхан пааз пос.

Пістің аалчыбыс

«ХАКАС ТІЛІН ОН КӰНГЕ ӰГРЕНІП АЛДЫМ», — тіпче Америкадаң килген Хельга АНЕЦХОФЕР

Школа тоосчатханнарның пайрамынаңар

АЛТЫН-КӰМӰС МЕДАЛЬЛАР ООЛ-ХЫСТАРҒА ПИРІЛДІЛЕР

КӦҢНІЛЕРІ ТОЛҒАН

On the title page above the Khakas title in the top right hand corner the name of the journal also appears in the Runic script, in the following form: $k^1k^1s^1$: $čr^2I$. The usual reading of this sequence would be Qaqas Čäri. The use of k^1 to

denote Khakas x is acceptable, since the Runic script has no separate sign for x; at the same time a K-sound in back vocalic words regularly becomes x in Khakas (see above). In contrast, the absence of the first syllabic vowel in čr²I could be considered correct only if the author consciously wanted to reflect an archaic, pre-Khakas reading with ä (which is, however, most likely not the case here); otherwise the Khakas shape of this word (čir) would require the insertion of the Runic sign I. Most probably the shape of the word is simply taken over from a publication about Old Turkic in Runic script without taking into account the spelling rules of Runic Turkic.

Let us now take a look at the cover of Viktor Yakovlevich Butanaev's publication Xakassko-russkij istoriko-ėtnografičeskij slovarʹ: Xooray-orïs tarxïn-ėtnografiya söstïgï (Abakan 1999).

The Russian (right) and the Khakas (left) title pages face each other, and the margins of both are decorated with Runic writing from top to bottom.

The left margin of the Khakas title page displays the following sign sequence: k¹Uŋ¹r¹Ay¹ : k¹r¹k¹z :, while on the right margin of the Russian title page we find: Ur¹Is² : s²Üzt¹s²g²I :. It is not difficult to recognize here deviations from the contents of the Khakas title page and to identify some spelling mistakes. First of all, to denote the homeland of the Khakas, the author has opted for the archaic form Qoŋoray instead of the modern Xooray. This is inconsistent with the spelling of s²Üzt¹s²g²I, which reflects the modern Khakas word söstïg 'dictionary'

(< *sözlik) + possessive suffix.[4] But the sequence $s^2Üzt^1s^2g^2I$ on Butanaev's title page mistakenly uses the Rune for z instead of one denoting s^2. The use of t^1 instead of t^2 is a serious violation of Runic orthography. If we make allowances, the use of s^2 may have been an oversight, although it is more likely that it was caused by a general carelessness, as was the case with the preceding t^1 Rune.

Let us now look at the sequence $k^1r^1k^1z$. If the Khakas Runic ornament on the margins is read from top to bottom, starting with the Khakas page followed by the text on the Russian one (which seems to be the only sensible way to read this), we are left with the interpretation of this sign sequence as Qïrqïz, i.e. Yenisey Kirghiz: with this we would get a reading of the Runes on the margins of the Khakas title page Qoŋoray Qïrqïz 'Konghoray-Kirghiz', which makes a lot of sense, given the context of the Khakas national awakening movement. Nevertheless, the existing spelling $k^1r^1k^1z$ should be read as qarqaz. The name of the Kirghiz usually appears in the various inscriptions as (ï)k(ï)Ir^1k^1z or $k^1Ir^1k^1z$. This means that once again we are confronted either with carelessness or/and with ignorance concerning the use of the Runic script, which is now widely regarded as the inheritance of the nation.[5] The word oŕïs 'Russian' is represented by the sign sequence Ur^1Is^2. Here the use of s^2 for the back vocalic s actually corresponds to the orthographic practice commonly found in the different inscription groups. However, in view of the many misspellings mentioned above, it is very unlikely that this old orthographic practice was consciously applied by the author of this recent, neo-Turkic Runic text.

With this our brief excursion in the world of Khakas national awakening has come to an end. As is often the case in similar movements, here, too, those actively taking part in the construction of a new national identity often exaggerate and resort to the misuse and even abuse of the facts which they mobilise for political ends. Driven by nationalist sentiment, persons generally perfectly competent in their chosen fields may start meddling with materials which are far beyond their expertise. We may only hope that such currents will not hold sway among the Khakas and that intellectuals will rather use their energies to solve real rather than imagined challenges of post-socialism.

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4 The development *söz* > *sös* is characteristic of South Siberian Turkic languages in general; the change *...sl...* > *...st...* is also characteristic of the Kipchak languages such as Kazakh or Kirghiz.

5 Let us imagine the unlikely situation that the text should be read in a different sequence, beginning with the first Runes on the top of the Khakas page, continuing with the first word on top of the Russian page, followed by the word at the bottom of the Khakas, finally the word at the bottom of the Russian page. In this case we could interpret $k^1r^1k^1z$ as the wrongly spelt form of *tarxïn* 'historical'. We would have a t^2 instead of a t^1, resembling the mirror image of a k^1, and the n^1 would be replaced with an n^2, which looks very much like a z; but in addition to these confusing changes the orthography of the vowels would also be highly insufficient, and one would have to reckon with an l in the second syllable. In any case, this highly unlikely interpretation would still point to a high degree of incompetence.

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