Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-Building States

Analecta Isisiana: Ottoman and Turkish Studies

47

A co-publication with The Isis Press, Istanbul, the series consists of collections of thematic essays focused on specific themes of Ottoman and Turkish studies. These scholarly volumes address important issues throughout Turkish history, offering in a single volume the accumulated insights of a single author over a career of research on the subject.

Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-Building States

Collected Articles

Martin van Bruinessen

The Isis Press, Istanbul

gorgias press

2011

Gorgias Press LLC, 954 River Road, Piscataway, NJ, 08854, USA

www.gorgiaspress.com

Copyright © 2011 by The Isis Press, Istanbul

Originally published in 2000

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise without the prior written permission of The Isis Press, Istanbul.

2011

ISBN 978-1-61143-105-6

Reprinted from the 2000 Istanbul edition.

Printed in the United States of America

Martin van Bruinessen is ISIM professor of the comparative study of modern Muslim societies at Utrecht university, where he also teaches Kurdish language and culture and Kurdish and Turkish history. He carried out extensive fieldwork in all parts of Kurdistan during the years 1974-75 and has since then made numerous shorter research trips to the region. He is the author of *Agha, Shaikh and State* (1978, 1992) and numerous articles on the Kurds, some of which are reprinted here and in the companion volume *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society* (2000).

He is also an expert on Indonesia, where between 1982 and 1994 he spent altogether nine years, doing research and teaching. He published four books in Indonesian on various aspects of Islam in Indonesia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. Ethnic identity and ethnic diversity

1. "The ethnic identity of the Kurds", From: *Ethnic groups in the Republic of Turkey*, compiled and edited by Peter Alford Andrews with Rüdiger Benninghaus [=Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B, Nr. 60]. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1989, 613-21. 13

2. "Diversity and division among the Kurds", From: *Warreport, bulletin of the institute for war and peace reporting* #47 (November-December 1996), 29-32. 23

3. "Kurds, Turks and the Alevi revival in Turkey", Published in abbreviated form in: *Middle East Report* #200 (Summer 1996), 7-10. 31

B. State-induced nation-building, Kurdish ethno-nationalism, and the modalities of its suppression

4. "Kurdish society and the modern state: ethnic nationalism versus nation-building", From: Turaj Atabaki and Margreet Dorleijn (eds), *Kurdistan in search of ethnic identity*. Utrecht: Department of Oriental Studies, 1991, 24-51. 43

5. "Genocide in Kurdistan? The suppression of the Dersim rebellion in Turkey (1937-38) and the chemical war against the Iraqi Kurds (1988)", From: George J. Andreopoulos (ed), *Conceptual and historical dimensions of genocide*, pp. 141-170. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994. [Copyright ©1994 University of Pennsylvania Press. Reprinted by permission] 67

6. "Genocide of Kurds", From: Israel W. Charny (ed), *The widening circle of genocide [= Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, vol. 3], pp. 165-191. New Brunswick, NY: Transaction Books, 1994. 97

C. Kurdish uprisings in Iran: tribal, religious, ethno-national and inter-state factors

7. "Kurdish tribes and the state in Iran: The case of Simko's revolt",
From: Richard Tapper (ed.), *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*. London: Croom Helm, 1983, 364-400. 125

8. "Nationalismus und religiöser Konflikt: Der kurdische Widerstand im Iran",
From: Kurt Greussing (Hg.), Religion und Politik im Iran [=*Mardom nameh, Jahrbuch zur Geschichte und Gesellschaft des Mittleren Orients]*. Frankfurt a.M.: Syndikat, 1981, 372-409. 157

9a. "The Kurds between Iran and Iraq",
9b. Appendix: "Major Kurdish organizations in Iran and Iraq",
From: *MERIP Middle East Report* #141 (July-August 1986), 14-27. 197

D. The Kurdish movement in Turkey since 1960

10. "The Kurds in Turkey",
From: *MERIP Reports* #121 (February 1984), 6-12. 225

11. "Between guerrilla war and political murder: The Workers' Party of Kurdistan",
From: *MERIP Middle East Report* #153 (July-August 1988), 40-46. 237

12. "Turkey and the Kurds in the early 1990s: Guerrilla, Counter-insurgency, and Emerging Civil Society",
Originally published as "Historical background and Developments since Newroz 1993", in: *Violations of human rights in Turkish Kurdistan. Report of a fact-finding mission of Pax Christi and the Netherlands Kurdistan Society to Newroz 1993*. Amsterdam: Netherlands Kurdistan Society, 1996, pp. 1-8 and 22-33. 249

13. "Turkey, Europe and the Kurds after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan",
Revised version of an article originally published in German as "Die Türkei, Europa und die Kurden nach der Festnahme von Abdullah Öcalan", *INAMO, Informationsprojekt Naher und Mittlerer Osten,* Nummer 18 (Sommer 1999), 9-15. ... 277

14. General Bibliography 289

PREFACE

The articles in this volume represent another aspect of my research on Kurdish society than those covered in my *Agha, Shaikh and State* (1978, 1992), which dealt primarily with "traditional" social structure and its interactions with the surrounding states, and the first volume of collected articles, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics* (2000), which focused on religion.[1] Most of the articles in the present collection deal more explicitly with the Kurdish ethno-national movement or with individual Kurdish uprisings. Whereas during my fieldwork of the mid-1970s I had cautiously avoided any but casual contacts with political activists, not wishing to arouse their or the various intelligence services' suspicions, such contacts developed quite naturally in the following years, primarily through my involvement with political refugees. Once my first writings had been published and noted by Kurdish intellectuals, it became easier to win the confidence of persons actively involved in politics, and during field trips to the various parts of Kurdistan (in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria) in the late 1970s and 1980s I could conduct numerous lengthy interviews with politically active Kurds and observe the relations between political movements and the wider society. The articles in the third and fourth parts of this volume owe much to those field trips.

During the 1980s and 1990s I wrote numerous papers and articles about contemporary developments in the Kurdish movement. Many of them, evidently, lost their usefulness due to later developments and the observations in them were superseded by later writings by myself and others. In this collection I have only reprinted those articles that I believe to be of more than ephemeral value even though they may be dated. Those in sections C and D document developments among the Kurds of Iran and Turkey, respectively, and contain much that may not easily be found elsewhere. These articles do not, of course, add up to an overall history of the Kurdish movement. For the wider view the reader is referred to David MacDowall's book, which is the best general work, and to the study by Henri Barkey and Graham Fuller, which is the best-informed and most judicious study of the Kurdish question in Turkey (which is less adequately covered by MacDowall).[2] I believe, however, that the observations in these articles remain valid and important for understanding present developments. Although I would say certain things differently now, I believe that my analysis in these articles still stands. Occasionally I have added references to later developments or more recent relevant literature in a footnote; such later additions are placed between square brackets.

---

[1] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*. London: Zed Books, 1992; Martin van Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society. Collected articles*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2000.

[2] David MacDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1996; Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*. Lanham etc.: Rowman & Little Field Publishers Inc., 1998.

The articles in the first and second sections do not have the Kurdish movement itself as their primary focus but questions of ethnic and religious identity and the nation-building policies of governments determined to reduce the importance of or to destroy Kurdish ethnicity, respectively. These topics are closely related, in that it commonly is in response to the political situation (which includes government policies) that a person chooses to emphasise (or de-emphasise) one particular identity out of a number of (partially overlapping) possible identities. An awareness that all identities are ultimately socially constructed not only belongs to the received ideas of contemporary sociology but has also in various ways underpinned government policies towards the Kurds throughout the century. Nation-building in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria has often involved the suppression of Kurdish culture and efforts to assimilate the Kurds to the dominant ethnic group. At other moments the particularistic identities of sub-groups among the Kurds (such as Yezidi and Kaka'i in Iraq, Ahl-i Haqq and Shi'i Kurds in Iran, Zaza and Alevi in Turkey) were officially promoted in an effort to weaken the appeal of Kurdish nationalism.

Of the various aspects of Kurdish history and society that I have written on, it is the passages dealing with the Kurds' cultural diversity (in *Agha, Shaikh and State* and a number of later articles, including the ones reprinted here) that have been quoted most frequently — though often out of context. Various circles have believed that insisting on the Kurds' diversity and lack of unity could serve their political interests. In Turkey, the official ban of Kurdish and denial of the existence of the Kurds as a people distinct from Turks, Arabs and Persians was in the 1990s replaced by the propagation of the view that there are so many Kurdish dialects that there is no single Kurdish language. This argument has repeatedly been used to reject the very idea of allowing the use of Kurdish in school education and in the electronic media, as the European Union demands. My work has been referred to in support of such arguments. It is therefore perhaps appropriate to repeat here a less often quoted observation, to be found in the same passages of my work. In spite of the great linguistic and religious diversity, there has for centuries been a strong awareness, among the Kurds as well as their neighbours, of an overarching Kurdish identity — as is well attested in Ottoman sources from the 16th century on.

Two articles carry the term ìgenocideî in their titles. They were written in response to invitations to take part in theoretical and comparative reflections on the subject. When I began my research for these articles, I was convinced that the concept of genocide (which I understood to refer to the deliberate extermination of an entire people) was not applicable in the Kurdish case. I soon had to revise my understanding of genocide, however, and admit that its legal definition (as enshrined in the 1948 United Nations Convention on Genocide) includes massacres of more restricted scale. The essential elements in this definition are that members of an ethnic, religious, etc. group are killed ìas suchî and that the killings are premeditated. This brought the concept closer to my sociological concern with the construction of identities and nation-building. The massacres in Kurdish history that I identified in these articles as the most relevant for comparative purposes remained in my view borderline cases, and I refrained from giving a final verdict (but I have later gradually shifted to the view that these were in fact cases of genocide). Whether constituting genocide or not, the massacres discussed in these articles were deliberate, and they were the ultimate consequence of a particular style of authoritarian modernisation and social engineering adopted by the countries concerned.

Not all aspects of nation-building were that violent and destructive, of course. Mass education, improved communications (roads, radio, television) and economic integration were altogether benign methods and might have been very effective if they had received priority at an earlier stage. As it was, too little was done and too late, resulting in an acute awareness of unequal treatment. It was, however, especially the counterinsurgency measures of the 1980s and 1990s, in both Turkey and Iraq, that caused a massive disaffection with the state and gave the Kurdish nationalist movements the mass support that they had so far lacked. Stages of this process are documented in the various articles in this volume.

Utrecht, August 2000

THE ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE KURDS IN TURKEY

Most Kurds in Turkey have a strong awareness of belonging to a separate ethnic group, distinct, especially, from the Turks and from the Christian minorities living in their midst. There is, however, by no means unanimity among them as to what constitutes this ethnic identity and what the boundaries of their ethnic group are. This makes it necessary for me to state at the outset precisely whom I mean when in this article I use the ethnic label "Kurds". For pragmatic reasons I use a rather loose and wide definition, including all native speakers of dialects belonging to the Iranic languages Kurmanji or Zaza, as well as those Turkish speaking persons who claim descent from Kurmanji or Zaza speakers and who still (or again) consider themselves as Kurds. Most Kurdish nationalists would agree with this definition (a minority would find it too narrow still); in practice, many Kurds implicitly use much narrower definitions, as will be shown below. Even this simple definition invites some obvious questions: should, for instance, persons who grew up as Kurds, but were in later life voluntarily assimilated to the Turkish majority, be called Kurds or not? Or those members of the Christian minority groups who have formally embraced Islam and have become kurdophone but still retain a memory of their previous identity? My definition would exclude the former and include the latter. Both processes of assimilation will however be considered below.

When asked to specify what constitutes their identity, most Kurds would mention language and religion first. Kurmanji and Zaza are both Iranian languages, grammatically quite different from Turkish, although their vocabularies contain many loan-words from Arabic and Turkish. Few, if any, Kurmanji speakers understand Zaza, but most Zaza speakers know at least some Kurmanji. Virtually all Zaza speakers consider themselves, and are considered by the Kurmanji speakers, as Kurds. They do however constitute a distinct subgroup (or rather a number of distinct sub-groups) that still tends to endogamy and differs from the Kurmanji speakers in several other cultural features. For instance, their agricultural and horticultural techniques are on the average more developed, and where they are tribally organised their tribes tend to be smaller than those of the Kurmanji speakers. These differences are however not perceived as significant. The second criterion, religion, is even less apt than language to set all Kurds (as defined by me) apart from other ethnic groups. Most Kurds, it is true, are Sunni Muslims following the Shafi'i *mezhep*. This neatly distinguishes them from the Shi'i Azeris and Persians as well as from the Hanefi Turkish and Arab Sunnis (and, of course, from their Christian neighbours). A stranger is frequently asked what his mezhep is, as a cautious way of finding out whether he is a Turk or a Kurd. Many Alevis, however, speak Kurmanji or Zaza dialects and consider themselves as Kurds, and there are still pockets of (Kurmanji speaking) Yezidis, a non-Muslim sect living among the Sunni Kurds. In Iran and Iraq, moreover, a considerable number of Kurds belong to the orthodox Shi'a, and a smaller number to the heterodox Ahl-i Haqq sect. Many Shafi'i Kurds, in fact, refuse to consider the Alevis and Yezidis as Kurds. Intermarriage between these religious groups is extremely rare, much rarer than between Turkish and Kurdish Alevis or even Turkish and Kurdish Sunnis. It might, in fact, be more apt to consider the Kurds not as one, but as a set of ethnic groups (for instance, Sunni, Alevi, Yezidi), although even then the definition of boundaries would not be easy. The Kurdish rebellions of the early years of the Republic showed how little unity there was: Şeyh Sa'id's rebellion (1925) remained largely restricted to the Zaza speaking tribes along the Murad Suyu, and in the Dersim revolt of 1937 only Alevis (both Kurmanji and Zaza speaking) participated. Nationalist leaders tried in vain to exhort others to join in. During the 1970s, the Kurdish nationalist movement became quite influential, even in the villages, and it seemed to create a stronger sense of oneness among the Kurds. The economic and political developments of that decade, however, tended to exacerbate rather than alleviate the long-standing tensions between Sunnis and Alevis, and to revive the importance of religion as a symbol of identity. The difference between Shafi'is and Hanefis is insignificant when compared with that between these Sunnis and the Alevis.

A third criterion, rarely explicitly mentioned but often implicitly used, is that of affiliation with a Kurdish tribe or one of the Kurdish "great families". A person descending from a well-known Kurdish family or tribe is always considered a Kurd, whatever he claims himself to be. This criterion, however, does not define an ethnic boundary: many persons who consider themselves, and are generally considered, as Kurds do not belong to a tribe or great family. Other, secondary symbols are even less apt to define a boundary: "Kurdish" dress, music, folklore, cooking, etc. show great regional variations, while the similarities with those of other ethnic groups in the same region are sometimes striking. These symbols of separateness have since the late 1920s been suppressed by the republican Government, which paradoxically made it possible for the nationalist movement of the 1970s to promote a re-invented, more unified Kurdish tradition, that appeared to be strongly influenced by that of the Kurds of Iraq. This does, however, not seem to have had a lasting impact.

Some other symbols of identity, stressed by Kurds themselves as well as by non-Kurds consist of differences in degree rather than in kind: the (Sunni) Kurds have on the whole maintained more of the traditional Islam than the other Muslim ethnic groups: the *medrese* did not entirely disappear as elsewhere in Turkey but (clandestinely) survived into the 1960s, and there are still many *şeyhs* (associated with the Nakşibendi or Kadiri tarikat) who wield great influence. The concept of honour (*namus*) and the institution of blood revenge associated with it still play a quite central role in social life. Another traditional institution (although not an Islamic one), the payment of a high bride-price, is still widely adhered to, and the modern one of birth-control is widely disapproved of. The position of women is, on the whole, a more subjected one than among other ethnic groups. None of these cultural features, however, nor a combination of them, defines an ethnic boundary between Kurds and non-Kurds. They are at least to some extent a corollary of the economic backwardness of the region, and each of them may be encountered among different ethnic groups in other backward areas as well. Several of these features sharply distinguish the Sunni from the Alevi Kurds: among the latter, *medreses* and *şeyhs* (apart from a single Bektaşi *şeyh*) are conspicuously absent, as are, in most Alevi villages, mosques. Most of the specific Alevi religious traditions have virtually died out as well, so that it is rather the absence of visible religious symbols that seems to characterize the Alevis. Many, though by no means all, Alevis occasionally drink alcohol, and the relations between the sexes are freer than among most Sunni Kurds — two features that the latter disapprovingly stress and perceive as major differences. There is a lower incidence of blood feuds among Alevis, and if there is a bride-price, it tends to be much lower than among the Sunnis; women have a relatively more important role in social life. While differentiating the Alevi from the Sunni Kurds, these features unite them with the Turkish Alevis. Apart from the language, the Kurdish and Turkish Alevis are culturally very similar, and intermarriage among them is relatively frequent (although there is still a tendency to local and tribal endogamy). They may be considered as one ethnic group, the cultural variations being regional rather than between the linguistic sub-groups. Although many young Kurdish Alevis became active participants in the Kurdish nationalist movement of the 1970s, this did not lead them to stress their differences with the Turkish Alevis; rather, the latter were perceived as a sort of Kurds who happened to speak Turkish but were very different from the dominant Sunni Turkish majority. And, in fact, some Turkish Alevis themselves started claiming that they were really Kurds, who had in the past been turkicised.

There is, then, no unambiguous ethnic boundary separating Kurds from non-Kurds, and in the course of even recent history the boundaries as perceived by various groups have shifted. Large numbers of people have moreover purposively crossed what they perceived as the major ethnic boundary, not only individually, as is wont to happen virtually everywhere, but in many cases collectively. A short historical sketch may be appropriate here to highlight some of the changes in ethnic (self-)definition.

Though some Kurdish intellectuals claim that their people is descended from the Medes, there is not enough evidence to permit such a connection across the considerable gap in time between the political dominance of the Medes, and the first attestation of the Kurds (as Cyrtii).[1] This is not to deny that there may have been some continuity in the population of the area as a whole. Although politically dominant for some time, the Medes may not have constituted a numerical majority in the area at any one time. Cultural variations between the various regions of Kurdistan, as well as the existence of two culturally distinct social strata in several regions, seem to indicate that the present Kurds have incorporated quite heterogeneous ethnic elements. It is not clear when precisely a distinct Kurdish identity emerged. The ethnic label "Kurd" is first encountered in Arabic sources from the first centuries of the Islamic era; it seemed to refer to a specific variety of pastoral nomadism, and possibly to a set of political units, rather than to a linguistic group: once or twice, "Arabic Kurds" are mentioned. By the 10th century, the term appears to denote nomadic and/or transhumant groups speaking an Iranian language and mainly inhabiting the mountainous areas to the South of Lake Van and Lake Urmia, with some offshoots in the Caucasus. If there was a Kurdish speaking subjected peasantry at that time, the term was not yet used to include them. The arrival of sizeable groups of Turkic nomads, from the 11th century on, had a considerable impact on the Kurdish tribes of those days. In the western parts of the Kurdish-inhabited zone, Turkish and Kurdish nomads joined forces to establish huge tribal confederacies, and a new brand of pastoral nomadism emerged, with long-distance seasonal migrations between the Armenian highlands and the Syrian plains.[2] The cultures of the two nomadic peoples mutually influenced each other. Membership of a tribe is, in spite of the genealogical ideology, ultimately a matter of political allegiance. Many Kurdish speakers joined Turkish chieftains and vice versa, and it is highly likely that members of other ethnic groups (Christians as well as subjected Muslim peasants) were occasionally recruited into these tribes. Conversely, tribesmen, because of impoverishment or conflicts, may have settled and gradually merged with the subject peasantry.

A sharp distinction between the Sunni and Alevi varieties of Islam did not yet exist among these tribes. Even if nominally Sunni, their beliefs were strongly coloured by veneration for the Shi'i imams and for Muslim saints, and by messianistic expectations. The popular mysticism brought from Central Asia and Iran by the Turks found acceptance among the Kurds too, and the many Christians who were assimilated and islamicised maintained, and even disseminated, many of their previous beliefs and practices of popular worship. It was only when the Ottoman and Safavid empires were competing for control of the area and attempted to impose orthodox Sunni and (initially) heterodox Shi'i Islam respectively, in order to strengthen political loyalties, that distinct Sunni and Alevi groups emerged and gradually came to perceive themselves as ethnically distinct. This process, however, took a long time. During the 16th century, major tribal groups switched their political loyalties and accordingly their religious affiliation -which is reflected in the fact that chieftains gave their sons typically Sunni or Shi'i names according to their political allegiance of the day.[1]

---

[1] Minorsky (1940) and MacKenzie (1961).

[2] De Planhol (1968).

Around 1600 AD, too, we encounter the first written expressions of a Kurdish ethnic awareness. The poet Ahmed-i Khani (Ehmedê Xanî) lamented in the prologue to his famous epic Mem û Zîn (1105/1694) the dividedness of the Kurds, which had caused them to be dominated and ruled by Turks and Persians ('Ajam, which referred to both Persians proper and to the Safavids, and the speakers of Azeri dialects in general). He contrasted the Kurds with Arabs, Turks and 'Ajam, apparently using a combination of linguistic and political criteria. The ruler of the autonomous Kurdish emirate of Bitlis, Sharaf al-Din Khan, composed a history of the Kurds, *Sharafnama* (1005/1596), in which he compiled detailed information on Kurdish dynasties of the past and all tribes of his day. He included Sunnis and Yezidis as well as Alevi Kurds, and the speakers of Zaza as well as of Kurmanji dialects, and even such groups that would not be considered as Kurds today, such as the Lor and Bahtiyari in Iran. Both authors paid little attention to the lower strata of society; where they spoke of Kurds they seemed to mean the ruling families and their tribal followers only. Not all tribesmen, it should be stressed, were pastoral nomads or transhumants. There were also sedentary tribesmen, who were free cultivators or had become townsmen. In many places the tribesmen dominated a subject stratum of peasants and craftsmen, whose position was often not better than that of serfs. Many of these were Christians (Armenians, Jacobites, Nestorians) but there were also many Kurdish speaking Muslims among them. It is not clear whether the two authors mentioned included the latter among the Kurds; half a century later, the great Turkish traveller, Evliya Çelebi, definitely did. For him, everyone who spoke Kurdish was a Kurd, irrespective of class or religion. Evliya explicitly included Zaza among the Kurdish dialects; Kurdish Alevis, however, he often brought together with their Turkish co-religionists and the Safavids under the label of "Kızılbaş". This inclusive, democratic definition of Kurdish ethnicity was, however, an outsider's. Until the beginning of this century, Kurdish leaders themselves seem not to have thought of the subject peasantry as Kurds proper.

---

[1] This becomes abundantly clear in the history of Kurdish tribes and emirates, Sharafnama, completed in 1597 A. D., by the Kurdish emir of Bitlis, Sharaf al-Din Bidlisi. For a more detailed discussion, see Bruinessen (1981).

From the 17th century on, then, there existed a clear awareness of Kurdish ethnic identity; the political stability brought by Ottoman supremacy tended to consolidate the ethnic boundaries. There continued, however, to be cases of entire tribes crossing these boundaries within a time span of a few generations. This usually coincided with a crossing of political boundaries. The Dumbuli (Dumbeli), for instance, are mentioned in the *Sharafnama* as a Kurmanji-speaking tribe, originally Yezidis but later converted to Sunni Islam. Part of the tribe having moved from the mountains south of Lake Van to the area of Khoy, their chieftains allied themselves with the Safavids, and were rewarded with high positions. In Sharaf al-Din Khan's time, at least a part of the tribe had become (heterodox) Shi'i. During the following centuries, the Dumbuli continued to play a prominent role in regional politics, gradually Turkicising. At present, all Dumbuli are turcophone Twelver (*ithna 'ashari*) Shi'is.

An example of the reverse development is the Karakeçili tribe, semi-nomads living on the slopes of the Karacadağ mountain to the south-west of Diyarbakır. They are kurdophone, but according to local tradition they were originally Türkmen from Western Anatolia, who had been settled in this region by Sultan Selim I after the Ottoman conquest. Sections of the Karakeçili who stayed behind in Western Anatolia retained their Türkmen identity; the ones settled on Karacadağ gradually Kurdicised, as a result of intermarriage and the incorporation of Kurdish allies into the tribe. This process must have been completed before the middle of the 18th century, for the descendants of a section of these Karakeçili who moved to Haymana (South of Ankara) around that time also continue to speak Kurdish.[1]

From the last decades of the 19th century on, increasing numbers of Armenians, whose position was becoming more precarious, adopted Islam (especially in its Alevi variety) and the Kurdish language, and gradually merged with their Kurdish neighbours.[2] After the Armenian deportations and massacres this process was speeded up, and minor groups of the other Christian minorities followed suit. In the provinces Siirt, Van and Hakkari there are small pockets of people who claim to be Kurds and Muslims but retain a clear memory of their previous identity as Armenians or Jacobites. They still tend to marry amongst themselves, and are distinguishable by their superior agricultural techniques and crafts, but are generally recognised as Kurds by their neighbours.

---

[1] "Notes on Kurdish tribes (on and beyond the borders of the Mosul vilayet and westward to the Euphrates)", Baghdad: Government Press, 1919. Probably compiled by Major Noel. Enclosed in Public Records Office file 1919: 44A/149523/3050. C. Türkay (1979), pp. 32, 99, 476. G. Perrot (1865), pp. 607-631.

[2] Probably the first to mention this process was Molyneux-Seel (1914), who noticed that many of the Kurdish Alevis he met in Dersim had not so long ago been Armenians.

Soon after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, its government embarked upon a radical programme of nation-building. Ethnic diversity was perceived as a danger to the integrity of the state, and the Kurds, as the largest non-Turkish ethnic group, obviously constituted the most serious threat. They were decreed to be Turks, and their language and culture were to be Turkish. All external symbols of their ethnic identity were suppressed. Use of the Kurdish language was forbidden in cities and towns. Turkish teachers were despatched to Kurdish villages with the teaching of Turkish as their chief objective. Distinctive Kurdish dress was forbidden. Personal and family names had to be Turkish; later, village names, too, were Turkicised. The closing down of *medreses* and the ban on the Sufi orders (*tarikat*), though not exclusively directed against the Kurds, were felt as major blows to Kurdish culture, in which these traditional institutions had a prominent place. In the 1930s, after the first Kurdish rebellions, large numbers of Kurds were deported to Turkey's western provinces, while other ethnic groups (Circassians, Laz, and *muhacirs* from the Balkans) were settled in the Kurdish districts: all attempts to speed up the Turkicisation of the Kurds. These assimilation policies were backed up by a new historical doctrine according to which the Kurds were really Turks originally, but had by historical accident lost their language.

There was no official discrimination against those Kurds who agreed to be assimilated: they could reach the highest positions in the state apparatus. Those who refused, however, often met with severe repression. Publicly proclaiming oneself to be a Kurd has often (though not always) been treated as a major offence, an act of separatism. The assimilation policies were not without effect. Many individuals have for all practical purposes been Turkicised and do not consider themselves as Kurds any more. Most of the Kurds who migrated to the big cities up to the 1960s were rapidly assimilated, and their children do not know Kurdish any more (during the past decades, Kurdish migrants have been too numerous to be assimilated). In several rural areas, too, Turkish has to a considerable extent replaced Kurdish, at least outside the family situation. In much wider areas, Kurds began calling themselves Turks, and it has long been hard to see how serious they were about it. In the relatively liberal atmosphere of the 1970s, when Kurdish nationalism flourished, it became apparent that this Turkicisation was only skin-deep.

From the late 1960s on, Kurdish nationalism, which in Turkey had until then remained restricted to a limited circle of intellectuals only, suddenly found itself a mass base. The military and political successes of the Iraqi Kurds under Barzani constituted one of the major influencing factors; large-scale migration to the cities, the increasing number of Kurdish students, and the weakness and division of the central government combined to make the emergence and growth of a nationalist movement possible. This is not the place to discuss the history of that movement;[1] the relevant fact is that it revivified or created symbols of Kurdish ethnic identity that affected the way many Kurds saw themselves. Books on Kurdish history were published, and a large number of Kurdish literary, cultural and political magazines appeared. Due to the ban on the Kurdish language, it had long not been able to develop in accordance with the needs of the day. For political discourse, for instance, it was quite inadequate, and most discussions were still held in Turkish. Moreover, the differences between the various dialects were so great that communication was often difficult. Nationalists set out to remedy this situation: there were attempts to create a unified Kurdish (Kurmanji) language, and many neologisms were coined. This modernised Kurdish was disseminated through a variety of journals and many (clandestine) Kurdish literacy courses. A Kurdish national music was re-invented, and became rapidly well-known and popular through the cassette recorder. People started wearing Kurdish clothes again in many cases a fancy dress, based on that worn by the Iraqi Kurds. Kurdish folklore was also re-invented, including the celebration of *Newroz*, Kurdish New Year, which few remembered as ever having existed in Turkey, but which was the Iraqi Kurds' national holiday. The nationalists stressed the ethnic unity of Sunni and Alevi Kurds; and in fact, Sunnis and Alevis worked together in all Kurdish organisations without much friction.

Towards the end of the 1970s, it seemed that this nationalist movement was changing the self-perception of a considerable section of the Kurds. People who had long called themselves Turks started re-defining themselves as Kurds; youngsters in the cities, who knew only Turkish, began to learn Kurdish again.

These developments were cut short by the military take-over of September 1980. The military authorities have taken tough measures against the Kurdish nationalist movement and have reverted to a rigorous policy of forced assimilation. The successes of the Kurdish nationalist movement may well prove to have been ephemeral only. It remains to be seen, however, whether the present government's efforts will be more successful in changing the ethnic map of Eastern Turkey.

---

[1] Cf. Bruinessen, 1984.

References:

Bruinessen, M. van, "Kurdischer Nationalismus und religiöser Konflikt", in: *Religion und Politik im Iran.* Berlin/Frankfurt, 1981. [reprinted in this volume]

—, "The Kurds in Turkey", *MERIP Reports*, no. 121 (1984), pp. 6-12. [reprinted in this volume]

MacKenzie, D. N., "The Origins of Kurdish", *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1961, pp. 68-86.

Minorsky, V., "Les origines des Kurdes", in: *Actes du XXe Congrès International des Orientalistes* (1938), pp. 143-152. Louvain, 1940.

Molyneux-Seel, L., "Journey into Dersim", *Geographical Journal,* 44,1 (1914), pp. 49-68.

Perrot, G., "Les Kurdes de Haïmaneh", *Revue des deux mondes* 55 (1865), pp. 607-631.

Planhol, X. de, *Les fondements géographiques de l'histoire de l'islam.* Paris.

Türkay, C., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Oymak, Aşiret ve Cemaatlar.* Istanbul, 1979.

DIVERSITY AND DIVISION AMONG THE KURDS

There is little apparent unity among the Kurds, and the fact that Kurdistan has been divided between four countries — or even more, if we take the Kurdish enclaves in the Transcaucasian republics into account — is only one of the reasons. Differences in religion, language and other aspects of culture mean that Kurdish society is itself highly diverse. But the effects of the political separation by state borders — and thus in formal education, military service, state radio and television and participation in different political systems — have made the Kurds of Iran, Iraq and Turkey more different from one another than they had been before.

Countless Kurds

Some of the simplest questions about the Kurds are among the most difficult to answer. The question of how many of them there are, for instance. Different sources give estimates varying from less than 10 million to 40 million, apparently reflecting the degree of sympathy for the Kurdish nationalist cause more than anything else. There are no reliable figures based on actual census-taking. Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, which have (in this order) the largest numbers of Kurdish citizens, have attempted to assimilate them, though not all with the same degree of coercion, and they have commonly refrained from counting them.

Turkey has been the most consistent, and long the most successful, in its suppression of Kurdish identity. Until recently, the very existence of the Kurds as a distinct group was officially denied, and the Kurdish language was declared to be a corrupt Turkish dialect — but nevertheless banned as a threat to Turkish unity.

In the late 1980s it became possible publicly to mention the Kurds, and in 1991 the government lifted the ban on publications in Kurdish. The late Prime Minister (and from 1989 until his death in 1993 President) Turgut Özal, to whom this liberalisation is generally attributed, also was the first public person to speak of the demographic importance of the Kurds. His estimate of 12 million (i.e., almost a fifth of the total population) may in fact have been a little on the high side and was probably meant to convince his countrymen of the seriousness of the Kurdish problem. However that may be, since Turkey has recognised that it has a considerable Kurdish population, there have also been efforts to emphasise and strengthen existing divisions among them. Some members of the Alevi religious minority as well as some speakers of Zaza, a language closely related to Kurdish, have started organising themselves separately from, and in opposition to, the majority of the Kurds.

The Kurds of Iran number at least 5 million or 6 million. Kurdish is related to Persian, and the Kurds have at most times been better integrated in Iran's political and cultural life than has been the case in Turkey or Iraq. Most of the Kurds, in Iran as elsewhere, are Sunni Muslims, which sharply distinguishes them from Iran's Shi'i majority. There are also Shi'i Kurds, however, in the southern parts of Kurdistan.

In Iran, the Kurdish movement has only found significant support among the Sunnis. The Shi'i Kurds appear to identify themselves more strongly with Iran than with the idea of a Kurdish nation; the Islamic government has found it easy to mobilise them against the Kurdish nationalists. Unlike its neighbours, Iran has at most times refrained from systematic oppressive measures against the Kurdish population as a whole. It has allowed some limited room for Kurdish cultural expression but acted decisively whenever demands for autonomy were voiced. It has successfully marginalised the Kurdish movement by systematically assassinating its most effective leaders, in most cases on foreign soil.

Iraq is the only of these states that has always recognised the existence of the Kurds as a distinct component of its population, and its Constitution explicitly mentions them as one of the country's two peoples (although a later paragraph has it that Iraq is at the same time an integral part of the greater Arab nation). Most of the Iraqi Kurds live in the former Ottoman province of Mosul, which after the First World War remained contested. Both Turkey and Iraq laid claims to it, and some British officials briefly toyed with the idea of making it a semi-independent Kurdish buffer state between those two.

Only in 1926 did the province of Mosul definitively became a part of the Kingdom of Iraq. At that time, the Kurds constituted almost a quarter of the country's total population. Iraq's troubled history of expulsions (Jews, Kurdish and Arab Shi'is allegedly of Iranian descent) as well as of genocide has affected many other groups besides the Kurds, and they probably still represent a similar proportion of the population, or in absolute numbers some 4 million.

The absence of census data is not the only reason for the widely divergent estimates of the number of Kurds. Another reason is that it is often not possible to establish unambiguously who is a Kurd and who is not. Sunni Muslims who have Kurdish as their first language are a clear case, but as a result of assimilation and of intermarriage with other ethnic groups there are, especially in Turkey, numerous people of Kurdish descent who have Turkish (or Persian or Arabic, in the other countries) as their first language. Many young people who in the 1960s considered themselves a Turks have "rediscovered" their Kurdish roots and now define themselves in the first place as Kurds.

On the other hand, there have also been Kurds who, when migrating to another part of the country, made efforts to hide their Kurdish backgrounds in order to be more easily accepted. Finally there are various religious and linguistic minorities in Kurdistan, who in certain situations may define themselves as Kurds but not in others, such as the Zaza speakers and the Alevis in Turkey, the Kaka'i and Yezidi religious minorities in Iraq. Turkey favours the view that the Zaza speakers are not Kurds (both used to be considered as distinct Turkish ethnic subgroups). The Iraqi regime defines the Kaka'is and Yezidis, like all other religious minorities in that country, as Arabs, and the Yezidis' refusal to accept that designation appears to have been the chief reason why part of the community was rounded up and apparently executed in 1988, in the aftermath of the genocidal *Anfal* campaign.

The Diaspora

The vast majority of Kurds used to live in the region traditionally known as Kurdistan, roughly consisting of the mountains and highlands separating Asia Minor and Mesopotamia from the Iranian plateau and including the northern edges of the Mesopotamian plains. This region comprises most of Turkey's east and south-east, parts of north-western and north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, and the adjacent parts of western Iran. It contains major cities like Diyarbakır and Van (in Turkey), Duhok, Erbil, Kirkuk and Sulaimania (in Iraq), Mahabad, Sanadaj and Kermanshah (in Iran) but its economy used to be primarily based on agriculture and animal husbandry, and most of the Kurds used to live in villages. Since 1970, a considerable proportion of the Kurds have left this region, voluntarily or under coercion. The oil boom and rising employment opportunities in cities outside the region on the one hand, and the mechanisation of agriculture on the other, caused a mass exodus from the villages. The Kurdish communities of Tehran and Baghdad, Istanbul, İzmir and Adana increased rapidly, and the first Kurdish communities in western Europe emerged.

Iraq deported Kurds from the oil-producing districts of Kirkuk and Khanaqin and replaced them with Arab peasants. In a later phase, all villages in a wide "forbidden zone" along the Iranian border were evacuated and destroyed — a measure designed to prevent Kurdish guerrilla fighters crossing from or into Iran but which largely failed to have the intended effect. In the 1980s, the "forbidden zone" was ever further extended, until 4,000 villages were evacuated and destroyed (out of a total of 5,000). Some of the evacuees were deported to the south of the country but most ended up in closely guarded large resettlement camps in the region. This policy of destruction culminated in the chemical arms-assisted *Anfal* operations of 1988, in which all districts that had been under guerrilla control were systematically razed, their inhabitants driven off to collection points, and some 100,000 of the men despatched to firing squads and mass graves.

In Turkey, systematic village evacuations and destruction began in 1991, with the obvious aim of cutting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) off from the village population and denying its guerrilla fighters food and other logistical support. Beginning in the regions close to the Iraqi border, where hardly any villages are left but those of pro-state militias ("village guards"), there have been successive waves of village evacuations further inland. At least tens of thousands of families were forcibly evicted; many times that number fled the region because the war conditions made normal life practically impossible. The population of cities in eastern Turkey such as Diyarbakır has tripled or quadrupled in a few years; between 1 million and 2 million have left the region for southern and western Turkey, most of them ending up in the vast slum districts surrounding the big cities.

Different creeds and tongues

Linguistic and religious distinctions among the Kurds also served as divisive factors. In Iraq, which is dominated by Sunni Arabs, Shi'i Kurds have tended to define themselves as Kurds first and have taken part in the Kurdish movement without bothering that the movement was dominated by Sunni Kurds. In Shi'i Iran, however, they identified themselves primarily as Shi'is and, as noted, the Islamic government could recruit many Shi'i Kurds actively to fight the nationalist movement.

In Turkey, the difference between the Sunni Muslims and the heterodox Alevis (among both of which there are Turks as well as Kurds and minor linguistic groups) is perhaps even sharper that that between Turks and Kurds. Alevi Kurds, many of whom moreover speak Zaza, which is quite different from ordinary Kurdish, therefore have ambivalent attitudes towards the Kurdish movement: some play active and even leading roles in it, others prefer to stay aloof or even perceive it as a threat to their distinct identities.

The secular Turkish elite has welcomed the emergence of a strong Alevi self-awareness during the past decade as a potential ally against both Muslim fundamentalism and Kurdish nationalism. Not surprisingly perhaps, the fiercest confrontations between the Turkish army and the Kurdish PKK over the past two years have taken place in the zone inhabited by Alevi Kurds, in and around the province of Tunceli, where both are fighting for the people's loyalties.

Even within Kurdish proper, the differences between the northern ("Kurmanji") and southern ("Sorani") dialects are momentous; these dialects are not mutually intelligible. Within each dialect group there is again considerable variation, and attempts to develop a common standard language have been only partially successful. In Iraq there exists an accepted form of standard Sorani that is generally understood, but the suppression of Kurdish in Turkey has prevented the emergence of a widely accepted Kurmanji standard. Both the Iranian and Iraqi state radio and television broadcast programmes in a variety of Kurdish dialects, in what appears to be a deliberate effort to prevent the emergence of a common standard for Kurds.

It has often been observed that the two Iraqi Kurdish parties that have been at each other's throats during the past years, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), receive the majority of their support from the Kurmanji-speaking northern part of the Kurdish region and the Sorani-speaking southern part, respectively. It would be wrong, however, to reduce the causes of the conflict to this regional-linguistic difference, if only because previously each of the parties also had considerable support in the other region. It is probably more correct to say that the political conflict has had the effect of opening up a gap between the Kurmanji-speaking and Sorani-speaking regions, even though the battle lines never precisely coincided with the linguistic boundary.

Different loyalties

The really divisive factor in Kurdish society is not its cultural and linguistic heterogeneity but the lasting importance of tribal structures. Kurdish tribes, which may consist of thousands to tens of thousands of families, are based on (a belief in) common descent and loyalty to a traditional chieftain. Each tribe is associated with a distinct territory, from a few villages to entire valleys, and its internal cohesion is strengthened by rivalries and conflicts with neighbouring tribes. Not all Kurds belong to tribes, however, and migration to the cities has loosened up tribal loyalties. Urban nationalists have commonly considered detribalisation a necessary condition for the emergence of truly national loyalties.

In times of armed conflict between central governments and the Kurdish movement, however, the tribes have time and again emerged as decisive forces. There had long been conflicts between the family of Barzani, to which the charismatic leader of the Kurdish movement belonged, and some neighbouring tribes. Throughout the 1960s, the Iraqi government paid and armed these tribes as pro-government militias (nicknamed *jash*, "donkey foal" by the nationalists). The Kurdish movement itself in turn also became more dependent on tribal support, especially in the northern part.

As the scope of the conflict enlarged, the number of tribes recruited by one side or the other increased. The great amounts of money and arms thus entering society strengthened the position of the chieftains (who were the recipients, and who could redistribute them as pleased them), shored up tribal coherence and fanned conflicts between neighbouring tribes. The alliances of the tribes with the government or with the Kurdish movement were a matter of expedience and always temporary.

By the late 1980s, a majority of the major tribes had become *jash*. In 1991, following Iraq's defeat in Kuwait, it had been precisely these *jash* tribes that started the large Kurdish uprising against the central government, and later most of them allied themselves with one or the other of the Kurdish parties without, however, cutting all their ties with Baghdad. Several *jash* chieftains have become regional warlords, only nominally subservient to one of the parties. The latter, unwilling to repudiate these militarily powerful allies, have been unable to discipline them. Depredations by these warlords have repeatedly unleashed new rounds of fighting between KDP and PUK guerrilla units.

In Turkey too, the tribes have acquired a renewed prominence due to state intervention. Since 1985, the government has recruited ever more tribesmen as "village guards" to fight against the PKK, some voluntarily, others under threat of eviction from their villages. The total number of these village guards by now appears to exceed 60,000. As in Iraq, these militias remain under the command of their own chieftains, through whom they receive their payment and arms; this has obviously greatly increased the power of these chieftains. As a part of the counter-guerrilla forces, the village guards have been able to kill and steal with impunity. This has sharpened tribal conflict and revived tribal solidarity, with a corresponding decline in security. The PKK, it should be noted, has not come to depend on tribal militias of its own, as the Iraqi parties have to some extent. Many if not most of its guerrilla fighters may be of tribal origins, but they operate under strict party command.

Inter-state Rivalries

Iran, Iraq, Turkey and to some extent Syria have similar problems with their Kurdish populations and therefore, one would assume, a common interest in suppressing Kurdish separatist tendencies and hopes for independence. They have at times assisted one another in countering the threat of Kurdish nationalism the previous pro-western defence alliances, the Saadabad Pact (1937) and the Baghdad Pact (1955), in which the first three took part, enabled them to develop common Kurdish policies, and the Kurds constitute the major topic of discussion in the regular tripartite meetings between Turkey, Syria and Iran.

When there were major clashes of interests between these neighbours, however, they have also repeatedly supported uprisings among each other's Kurds. All Kurdish political parties have, at one time or another, perceived the need for support by a neighbouring state, and most have become highly dependent on it, to the extent that major policy decisions were influenced (or even dictated) by their foreign sponsors. From 1963-75, Iran gave increasing financial and military support to the Iraqi Kurdish movement led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Then the Iraqi regime made important concessions in a long-standing border conflict, after which Iran obliged Barzani to give up. Some of the Iranian Kurdish leaders, meanwhile, lived in exile in Iraq biding their time; they returned during the Iranian revolution and reorganised their party.

During the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq supported various Iranian Kurdish parties and groups, and Iran allied itself with the Iraqi KDP then led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani's sons to the extent of carrying out joint military operations against Iraq. These alliances at times also led to armed confrontations between Iraqi and Iranian Kurds: thus in 1968, when Barzani's Peshmerga fighters helped the Iranian government suppress a radical guerrilla movement in Iran, and again in the early 1980s, when the Iraqi KDP fought side by side with Iranian troops against the Iranian sister party.

Both Syria and Iraq depend for their water supply to a large extent on the Euphrates and Tigris, and they feel seriously threatened by Turkey's ambitious Southeast Anatolia Project, which diverts much of the water of these rivers for irrigation purposes. Syria moreover has a territorial claim on Turkey's province of Hatay, which has a large Arab population.

To put pressure on Turkey, Syria has been almost openly supporting the PKK, which since the early 1980s has had training facilities in the Syrian-controlled south of Lebanon and appears to enjoy free movement in northern Syria. (Turkey in turn supports the major Syrian opposition movement, the Muslim Brothers.) The PKK appears to be allowed to enlist the support of

Syrian Kurds, but it has also been accused of acting as an extension of the Syrian state in suppressing other Kurdish movements in Syria as well as northern Iraq.

Since 1991, a large part of Iraqi Kurdistan has been de facto semi-independent under international protection. Besides the various Iraqi Kurdish parties (and those of the Assyrian and Turcoman minorities), the Iranian KDP and the PKK also have their bases here. All four states of the region have been much concerned about the effects this semi-independence could have on the other parts of Kurdistan, and all have made great efforts to extend their influence there.

The Turkish armed forces have repeatedly invaded northern Iraq and maintain a low-key presence in the territory, allegedly to wipe out the PKK bases there but probably as much to impose its will on the Iraqi Kurdish parties and to prevent Iran and Syria from extending their influence. Iran has supported the Iraqi Shi'i opposition and the Kurdish Islamic parties for ideological reasons, and it has had various strategic alliances, first with the KDP and later with the PKK. Last summer it carried out a raid far into the region in an unsuccessful attempt to capture the oppositional Iranian Kurds living there. Syria has been projecting its influence both through the PKK and through a balanced patronage of the Iraqi parties. One important reason the fighting between the Iraqi Kurdish factions has been so persistent is that each of these neighbouring states (as well as the Iraqi regime) has attempted through this conflict to change the balance of power to its own advantage, and has sabotaged peace negotiations that could cost it crucial influence.

KURDS, TURKS AND THE ALEVI REVIVAL IN TURKEY[1]

Until a few years ago, Kurdish nationalism was the only movement in Turkey that openly defied the official doctrine that Turkey is a homogeneous nation-state. Informally, people would freely apply ethnic labels to their acquaintances; everybody was aware of the rich ethnic variety of the country,[2] but it was thought undesirable to acknowledge this and most people were reluctant or afraid to define themselves as anything but Turks. In the 1970s, Kurdish nationalists had begun challenging this official view, and in 1979 a cabinet minister caused a political scandal by calmly remarking that he too was a Kurd.[3] The military regime of 1980-83 made a last-ditch attempt to silence those Kurds who wished to be different, but its oppressive measures had the opposite effect of what was intended; they strengthened the Kurds' sense of their distinct identity and resulted in massive sympathy for the separatist PKK. By 1990, the Turkish government realised that further efforts to impose uniformity would probably be counterproductive and that they would moreover hamper closer relations with Europe, where the protection of minority cultures had become an important political issue. In a sudden reversal of policy, the government in 1991 repealed the law banning the use of other languages than Turkish in publishing.[4]

This relaxation allowed not only an upsurge in Kurdish cultural activities. Two other ethnic groups, the Laz and especially the Circassians, also began publishing and organising. These activities were stimulated both by the Kurdish example but perhaps even more by developments in the (former) Soviet Union. The Laz live in the region bordering on the republic of Georgia and their language is related to Georgian. The Circassians (called Cherkes in Turkish) originate from the northern Caucasus; the name is in fact

---

[1] [Written in the spring of 1996 and published, in slightly abbreviated form, in *Middle East Report* 200 (Summer 1996)].

[2] A recent study, Peter A. Andrews' *Ethnic groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1989), enumerates 47 distinct ethnic groups in Turkey, and the choice of another set of criteria for ethnic identity might have yielded an even higher number.

[3] This was Şerafettin Elçi, then minister of public works. After the 1980 military coup he was sentenced to two years imprisonment for this remark.

[4] This law was a product of the 1980-83 military regime. It violated several international agreements on the protection of minorities to which Turkey was a party. See C. Rumpf, "The Turkish law prohibiting languages other than Turkish", in: *Documentation of the International Conference on Human Rights in Kurdistan, 14-16. April 1989* (Hochschule Bremen, 1989), pp. 68-89 and the same author's "Das Sprachenverbot in der Türkei unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer völkerrechtlichen Verpflichtungen", Orient 30 (Hamburg, 1989), 413-27.