A History of Survival:
The Turkish-Muslim Minority in Rural Western Thrace

Şule Chousein Hasan

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Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this dissertation, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

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Abstract

"A History of Survival: The Turkish-Muslim Minority in Rural Western Thrace"
Şule Chousein Hasan, Doctoral Candidate at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2023

Prof Cengiz Kırlı, Dissertation Advisor

This study explores the survival strategies of the Turkish Muslim minority rurals in Greece from the Balkan Wars (1913) until today. It scrutinizes how the minority has survived squeezed in between Greece and Turkey in the historical course of the chequered bilateral relations. Focusing on the rural community in different geographies (highland, middle-line and lowland villages) of Greek Thrace, it elucidates how the rurals devised their strategies of survival in certain historical ruptures by focusing on their narrations about how they remember the past and how their past experiences influenced their survival strategies. Social hierarchies within the rural community, intercommunal relations with the local Greek Orthodox, interactions between the minority institutions and the elite, and their historical bonds with Turkey are explored to find out their impact on the rurals' survival strategies and the social changes and continuities within the rural community.

156914 words

Özet

Bir Varoluş Tarihi: Batı Trakya Türk-Müslüman Azınlık Köylüleri

Şule Chousein Hasan, Doktora Adayı, 2023
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Prof Cengiz Kırlı , Tez Danışmanı

Bu çalışma, Balkan Savaşlarından (1913) bugüne Yunanistan'daki Batı Trakya Müslüman Türk azınlığının varoluş mücadelesini incelemektedir. Tarih boyunca inişli çıkışlı bir seyir izleyen Türk-Yunan ilişkilerinin arasında sıkışan bu azınlığın nasıl ayakta kalabildiği bu çalışmanın odak noktasıdır. Farklı coğrafi yapıdaki köylüleri (dağ, yaka ve ova) göz önüne alarak, köylülerin belirli tarihi kırılmalarda hayatta kalma stratejilerini nasıl oluşturduğu, geçmişi nasıl hatırladıkları ve geçmiş yaşanmışlıklarının hayatta kalma staretejilerine olan etkileri kendi anlatılarına dayanarak açıklanmıştır. Köylü toplumunun kendi içindeki sosyal hiyerarşiler, yerel Ortodoks Yunan halk ile etkileşimleri, azınlık kurumları ve elitleri ile olan ilişkileri, Türkiye ile olan tarihi bağları, hayatta kalma stratejilerine ve toplumsal süreklilik ve değişime olan etkisi çerçevesinde incelenmektedir.

156357 kelime

Curriculum Vitæ

ŞULE CHOUSEIN HASAN

24.11.1976
Komotini, Greece

EDUCATION

Ph.D.	Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, Boğaziçi University, 2023
M.A.	Political Science Central European University 2007
	International Relations Istanbul Kültür University 2006
	Business Administration
B.A.	Boğaziçi University 1998

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS/EMPLOYMENT

- 2013- : English Language Instructor, Yeditepe University
- 2003-2011: English Language Instructor, Kültür University
- 1999-2001: Assistant Manager, Dışbank

PUBLICATIONS

- "Turkish-Greek Relations: 1999-2010", Trakya Üniversitesi Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi, Vol.3, Nr.1, July 2014, 1-23.

- "Unwelcome Citizens: Muslim Turks of Greece and Greek Orthodox of Turkey", Journal of Suleyman Demirel University Institute of Social Sciences, Issue:27, 10.01.2013
- *Minority Rights and the Case of Muslim Turkish Minority of Greece*, Lambert Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, August 2011
- "Bir Romanın Düşündürdükleri: Komşu Kapı" (A Book Review), published in Gündem, Greece,21.10.2011, available online at: http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/news/de-tay_04.php?h3_id=1420.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- Hellenic Observatory PhD Symposium on Contemporary Greece and Cyprus, paper presented: "Migration Patterns of Western Thracian Minority to Turkey", London School of Economics, London (7-8 June 2013)
- International Balkan Symposium, Süleyman Demirel University, paper presented, "Unwelcome Citizens: the Muslim Turks of Greece and the Greek Orthodox of Turkey" (5-7 October 2012)
- Workshop on "Balkans and Eastern Europe", organized by The presidency for Turks abroad and related communities, (20.06.2012)
- "Islam and the Non-Muslim Other: Doctrines, Attitudes and Practices", organized by the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies (NISIS) and The Institut d'études de l'Islam et des sociétés du monde musulman (IISMM), paper presented: The Muslim Turks of Greek Thrace(26 -30 March 2012)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Turkish – Native Speaker
- English – Fluent
- German – intermediate
- Modern Greek- intermediate

LANGUAGES

- Turkish – Native Speaker
- English – Fluent
- German – Intermediate
- Greek – Intermediate

In memory of my great grandmother Safiye

Dedicated to all peace-loving peoples of Western Thrace

Table of Contents

List of Tables *xvi*
List of Figures *xvi*
Glossary of Non-English Terms *xvi*
Abbreviations and Acronyms *xvii*
Note on Transliteration *xvii*
Acknowledgements *xix*

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Literature Review 9
1.2 Historiographic Method 21
1.3 Theoretical Framework 30
1.4 The Concept of Survival 41
1.5 Distribution of Chapters 48

2 WHO ARE THE WESTERN THRACIAN TURKISH-MUSLIM MINORITY? 51

2.1 The Rural Landscape 51
2.2 The Urban Community 70
2.3 Diaspora & Transmigrant Communities in Turkey 71
2.4 Transmigrant Community in Germany 74
2.5 Minority Institutions and Cultural Associations 75
2.6 Language, Identity and Social Boundaries 79

3 BECOMING MINORITY IN MOTHERLAND 107

3.1 The Final Ottoman Retreat from the Balkans 107
3.2 Narratives of Surviving Ancestors: Immigration Stories, Multiethnic Roots 114
3.3 State-building efforts: Tamrash Republic & Western Thracian (Turkish) State, 119
3.4 Forced Christianization of Pomaks (1912-1913), 128

3.5 Western Thracian and Eastern Macedonian Muslim Conscripts in WWI, 133
3.6 Allied Occupation and Annexation of Western Thrace to Greece , 136
3.7 The Controversial Issue of Plebiscite, 139
3.8 Western Thracians: Muslim Minority in Greece, 142

4 SOCIAL AND SPATIAL REORDERING OF WESTERN THRACE, 147

4.1 Refugee Settlement in Western Thrace 149
4.2 Implications of Turkish Reforms in Western Thrace 160
4.3 Immigration to Turkey 173

5 SURVIVING WWII AND THE GREEK CIVIL WAR , 178

5.1 Fighting For Homeland Greece 178
5.2 Bulgarian Occupation of Western Thrace (1941-1944) 181
5.3 Minority Rurals during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949)198
5.4 Internal Migration to Lowlands 221
5.5 External Migration during the Civil War 224

6 DISSOLUTION OF LARGE LANDOWNERS, FIVE NARRATIVES 233

6.1 Ferezler (or Firuzlar) Ciftlik in Yenice (Genisea), 248
6.2 The Mandacı Family, 254
6.3 Two Ciftlik owners in the Rhodopean lowlands: Ali Efendi, İzzet Bey, 255
6.4 Two Large landowner Families in Galini, 262

7 CONSOLIDATION OF GREEK STATE, REFORMS AND IMMIGRATION TO TURKEY

7.1 Educational Revolution: a by-product of Greek-Turkish Rapprochement, 277
7.2 Land Distribution and Land Disputes, 288
7.3 Evacuating Villages: Immigration to Turkey: 1952-1967

7.4 Depopulated and Dwindling Villages, 307

8 SURVIVING STATE OPPRESSION (1967-1991)

8.1 Reflections of the 6/7 September Events & the Outset of the Cyprus Dispute, 313
8.2 Minority Governance Redefined: 1967-1991, 318
8.3 Rurals' Experiences of the military conflict in Cyprus, 331
8.4 Parallel regimes: Democracy for Greece, Oppression for the Minority, 345
8.5 Elite-led Rural Protests, 362
8.6 The First Minority Mobilization in 1988, 369
8.7 The Independent Movement and Dr Sadık Ahmet, 371
8.8 The Pogrom of 1990, 374
8.9 The Long awaited Minority Opening, 376

9 POLITICIZATION OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND ACTORS

9.1 Politicization of the Mufti Institution, 381
9.2 Interview with the Official Mufti of Komotini, 391
9.3 Interview with the elected Mufti of Komotini, 395
9.4 Rurals' perception of the appointed and elected Muftis, 403
9.5 Imams between the state and Muftis, 405
9.6 Muslim Waqfs, Victim of Retaliation and Corruption, 410

10 RELIGION AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS, 427

10.1 Muslims Challenging the Implementation of Sharia, 427
10.2 Practice of (Sunni) Islam in the Lowlands, 439
10.3 Practice of (Sunni) Islam in the Highlands- Kendavros,
10.4 Traces of Bektashism in Rural Sunni Religious Traditions,
10.5 Bektashis/Alevi in Western Thrace, 459
10.6 Redefining Cultural and religious festivals: a novel survival strategy?,477

11 CONCLUSION 480

APPENDICES 493

A Maps 493

C Photos 494

BIBLIOGRAPHY 501

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BAKEŞ	Batı Trakya Eğitim ve Kültür Şirketi/ Western Thrace Foundation for Education and Culture
BCA	Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri / Turkish Prime Ministry Republican Archives
CoE	Council of Europe
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DEB	Dostluk Eşitlik Barış Partisi/Friendship, Equality and Peace Party
DK	Danışma Kurulu /Advisory Board
DSE	Democratic Army of Greece
EAM	National Liberation Front
EAO	National Guerilla Bands
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EDES	National Republican Greek League
ELAS	National People's Liberation Army
EU	European Union
KKE	Communist Party of Greece
OSCE	Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe
PASOK	The Panhellenic Socialist Movement, social democratic political party in Greece
PCIJ	Permanent Court of International Justice
SYN	The Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology
UN	United Nations
VIZ	Vaaz İrşad Heyeti / Sermon and Guidance Committee

A Note on Transliteration /Village Names in Western Thrace

This section contains the Greek and Turkish names of provinces, townships and villages in Latin alphabet. Throughout the dissertation, the village names appear in Turkish because it is the popular reference by the minority.

Western Thrace

Evros River	Meriç Nehri
Evros Prefecture	Meriç Vilayeti
Alexandroupolis	Dedeağaç
Rhodopean Prefecture	Rodop Vilayeti
Komotini	Gümülcine
Ksanthi Prefecture	İskeçe Vilayeti

Evros	Meriç

Municipalities	
Alexandroupolis	Dedeağaç
Orestiada	Kumçiftlik
Didymothiko	Dimetoka
Soufli	Sofulu
Samothraki	Semadirek

Villages

Thymaria	Köpekliököy
Dikela	Dikilitaş

Leptokarya	Fındıcak
Mesimvria	Güvendik
Atami	Hotallar
Perama	Güreci
Makri	Miri
Avra	Hasanlar
Sidirohorion	Çilingir Mahalle
Gonikon	Babalar
Megalo Derio	Büyük Derbent
Mikro Derio	Küçük Derbent
Chloi	Hebilköy
Sidiro	Demirören
Roussa	Ruşanlar

Rhodope	Rodop
Municipalities	
Komotini	Gümülcine
Maronia-Sapon	Maronya-Şapçı
Arianon	Kozlukepir
Iasmos	Kozlukepir
Kehros	Mehrikoz
Organi	Hemetli

Villages	
Glikoneri	Karapınar
Bekirli	Pelekiti
Sasallı	Salpi
Ortacı	Amvrosia
Karamusa	Mosaiko
Balabanköy	Dialampi
Palazlı	Palladio
Yalanca	Galini
Yalımlı	Koptero
Arabacıköy	Amaksades

Bekirli	Pelekiti
Narlıköy	Polianthos
Kozlardere	Linos
Susurköy	Sosti
Büyük Müsellim	Mega Pisto
Çepelli	Mishos
Bulatköy	Asomatos
Gebecili	Rizoma
Eşekçili	Tamna
Ayazma	Agiasma
Sendelli	Dimi
Yuvacılı	Folia
Fener	Fanari
Sarıyer	Arogi
Meşe	Mesi
Nuhçalı	Glifada
Ortakışla	Porpi
Kalanca	Kallisti
Melikli	Meleti
Kalkanca	İfestos
Çuhacılar	İfande
Bayatlı	Pagouria
Sarıca	Kalamakastro
Büyük Doğanca	Megalo Dukato
Küçük Doğanca	Mikro Dukato
Sarıca	Kalamokastro
Küçük Songurlu	Mikro Kranovio
Ortakışla	Porpi
Baraklı	Stilario
Demircili	Sidirades
Tuzçuköy	Kikidio
Kalfa	Kalhas
Yahyabeyli	Amaranta
Makıf	Vakos

Pamforon	Aşağıköy
Triorion	Kafkasköy
Uysallı	Isalos
Yardımlı	Ergani
Muratlı	Mirana
Demirbeyli	Venna
Salmanlı	Salmoni
Hambarköy	Pamforo
Hacımustaköy	Amfia
Ircan	Arisvi
Evrenköy	Evrenos
Karakurcalı	Krovili
Lefeciler	Lofario
Ksilagani	Kuşlanlı
Hacılar	Proskinite
Mehrikoz	Kehros
Durhasanlar	Neda
Hebilköy	Hloi
Hacıören	Ano Vrisini
Gerdeme	Kardamou
Sarancina	Sarakini
Keziren	Kimi
Kardere	Drimi
Kuzören	Kato Vrisini
Musacık	Mirtiski
Çalabı	Smigada
Üntüren	Ano Drosini
Organi	Hemetli
Hacıviran	Vrisini
Kozdere	Drania
Kızılağaç	Ragada
Dündarlı	Drosia
Küçüren	Kato Drosini
Üşekdere	Esohi

Kayrak	Ardia
Üç Gaziler	Nikites
Payamlar	Plagia
Menetler	Skaloma
Dolapçılar	Strofi
Değirmendere	Darmeni
Delinazköy	Dilina
Işıklar	İpio
Kurcalı	Likio
Küçük Müsellim	Mikro Pisto
Bıyıklıköy	Mistakas
Sirkeli	Filira
Küçük Sirkeli	Agras
Karacalköy	Aratos
Çelebiköy	Arhontika
Ballahor	Vragia
Basırlıköy	Passos
Domruköy	Dokos
Omurluköy	Omuriko
Satıköy	Lambru
Sıçanlık	Pontikia
Ksanthi	İskeçe
Municipalities	
Ksanti, the municipal center	İskeçe, şehir
Mikis	Mustafçova
Stavroupoli	-
Topiros	-
Avdiron	Bulustra
Vistonida	Borugöl
Villages	
Yassıören	Oreon
Elmalı	Melivia

Bratankova	Gorgona
Kiramahallesi	Kirra
Basaykova	Mantena
Dolaphan	Sminthi
Ketenlik	Kendavros
Şahin	Echinos
Gökçepınar	Glafki
Paşevik	Pahni
Demircik	Dimarion
Kozluca	Kotili
Balkanova	Amonion
Thermes	Ilıca
Ilıca Birinci Mahalle	AnoTherme
Ilıca Orta Mahalle	Mese Therme
Ilıca İkinci Mahalle	Kato Therme
İsmail Mahalle	Diasparton
Memkova	Medusa
Satron	Sinikova
Uğurlu	Katotiho
Çalaperde	Tsalapetinos
İsice	İsea
Keçili	Pilima
Emirli	Mega Evmiron
Köresten	Orestini
Aşağı Kozluca	Kalitthea
Atmacalı	Gerakas
Gökçeler	Seleron
Sünnetçiköy	Sounio
Dinkler	Filia
Karaçanlar	Simantra
Sakarkaya	Lefkopetra
Yelkenciler	Grigora
Höyükköy	Velohorion
Koruköy	Akarpon

Koyunköy	Kimmeria
Öksüzlü	Orfanon
Gencerli	İliokentima
Taraşmanlı	Paleon Erasmion
Kırköy	Kirnos
Beyköy	Avaton
Bekaovası	Dekarhon
İnhanlı	Evlavo
Kurdhasanlı	Kremasti
Balabanlı	Vanianon
Davutlu	Mikron Thimpanon
Nuhullu	Paleon Ovlivon
Yenice	Genisea
Boyacılar	Vafeika
Mizanlı	Paleos Zigos
Misvaklı	Feloni
Karaköy	Paleon Katramion
Alıççılar	Alkion
Kırköy	Kirnos
Beyköy	Avato
Bekeobası	Dekarhon
Köresten	Orestini
Otmanören	Eranos
Horozlu	Petrinos
Bedirli	Lefki
Okçular	Toksotes

Bulgaria

Burgas	Burgaz
Yambol	Yanbolu
Sliven	İslimiye
StaraZagora	EskiZağra
Haskovo	Haskova
Plovdiv	Filibe

Smolyan	Paşmaklı
Pazardjik	Pazarcık
Khurzali	Kırcaali

Acknowledgements

This research partly reflects my own life story that has been interwoven in between two countries, or two motherlands; Greece and Turkey. My family's story is one of many others', torn apart by recurrent migration between Greece, Turkey and also Germany. Born and raised in a tiny lowland village of Greek Thrace, we immigrated to a hectic district of Istanbul in the autumn of 1984. The change for me, as an eight -year- old, was quite traumatic. Equally traumatic was it when my parents immigrated to Germany in 1992. My father and my aunt were deprived of Greek citizenship based on the notorious Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Law. Eventually, in 1999, after years of legal struggle, my father regained his Greek citizenship and returned to Greece. That was a year after the racist citizenship law was abolished at the CoE and my parents' long cycle of migration came to an end. They have been living in Western Thrace, Greece, peacefully ever since.

On the other hand, my brother and I have remained in Turkey. We have been living in between, visiting our parents occasionally and spending our holidays in our village in Greece. As a Western Thracian transmigrant in Turkey for thirty-eight years, I feel I have two motherlands. My village in Western Thrace has always been my first motherland, for the unique emotional and historical bonds. Turkey, on the other hand, has become my second homeland for the educational and occupational opportunities she has provided me with along with many thousands of others in times when we, the minority members, were living as unwelcomed citizens in Greece. My personal experiences of being a minority member in Greece and a foreigner but co-ethnic (Turk) in Turkey incited an interest in me on issues of minorities and survival. I have thus decided to write about how my community has survived as a minority for a century now by revealing the rurals' own voices.

In the process of researching and writing this dissertation, I have incurred debts to a number of people. First and foremost, I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Cengiz Kırlı for his valuable guidance, feedback and encouragement throughout the preparation of this work. I would also like to thank Assistant Prof. Vemund Aarbakke, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki who read the draft and gave me enlightening comments.

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As for a final note, I've had to work to sustain myself and my family and this is why my study took longer to complete than expected. I have received no material support from any institution. I could not benefit from scholarships granted to Muslim and/or Turk foreign national students from the Balkans and the Caucasus because some universities, including Boğaziçi University, were excluded.

NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this dissertation.

Minorities are regarded as a 'bridge' between kin and host states. A 'bridge', however, belongs to nowhere, and is usually the first spot to attack in times of conflict.

1

Introduction

The region of Ottoman Thrace lies today within the territories of three countries; Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey (see Appendix A1). Upon the loss of the Rumelian territories after Balkan Wars, the part of Thrace that remained within Ottoman borders was named Eastern Thrace. Today it is Turkish Thrace. It borders Bulgaria on the north, Greece on the West. The lost territory to Bulgaria and Greece in the north and the west of the river Meriç (Evros in Greek, Maritza in Bulgarian) was named Western Thrace. Bulgarian Thrace lies in the southern part of the country and includes the cities of Burgaz, Yanbolu, İslimiye, Eski-Zağra, Haskova, Filibe, Paşmaklı, Pazarcık and Kırcaali, with the highest number of Turkish population. [1]

The current Western Thrace is Greek Thrace, which lies at the extreme north-eastern part of Greece. It borders Turkey in the east, delineated by the river Meriç, Bulgaria in the north, the Aegean Sea in the south. In Greece, it is part of the administrative region of Eastern Macedonia and

1 Nahide Deniz, "Bulgaristan Trakyası: Göçler, kavuşmalar ve efsaneler diyarı", *Trakya'nın Renkli Dünyası: Aşrı Memleket,* (eds) Tuncay Bilecen, İbrahim Dizman, İletişim Yayınları, 2017, 51-63, 51.

Thrace. It consists of three provinces; Evros, Rhodope and Xanthi. The region has a population of 365,571 according to 2011 census.[2]

The Turkish-Muslim minority of Western Thrace and its counterpart Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul, Imbros and Tenedos became minorities as such after the delineation of Turkish and Greek state borders with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1924, signed in the aftermath of the Turkish War of Independence. The Muslim Minority is the only legally recognized minority in Greece, on religious criteria as "Muslim Minority" as was stated in the Treaty of Lausanne. However, there are several other religious and ethnic minorities in Greece such as Old-Calendarists, Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Jehovah's witnesses, Slavo-Macedonians, Vlachs, Armenians, Jews and other immigrant communities post 1990s.[3]

The current number of the minority population is not exactly known because Greece has not conducted an ethnic-based census since 1951.[4] In 2001, the minority population was stated as 100,000 by Greece in an official report.[5] Turkish Republic's sources and the Western Thracian minority media claim the number to be around 150,000.[6] On the other hand, Mavrommatis, a local academician-researcher, estimates the

2 Greek Statistics Authority official website; www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SPO18/2017, last retrieved 27.07.2018.

3 Richard Clogg, "Introduction", (ed) Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society, Hurst&Company, London, 2002; "Greece" World Directory of Minorities, 155.

4 According to 1951 figures, the number of Muslim minority is 112,665; including 92,443 Turcophones, 18,671 Pomaks and 7,429 Roma. Christos L.Rozakis, "The International Protection of Minorities in Greece", Greece In A Changing Europe, (ed) Kevin Featherstone & Kostas Ifantis, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1996,95-116, 98.

5 In the report Submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination under Article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (Nineteenth Periodic Report) at 8 (Mar. 27, 2008), available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,CERD,,GRC,4aa7b7562,0.html, last retrieved 09.09.2019.

6 Official website of Turkish Republic Foreign Ministry, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkish-minority-of-western-thrace.en.mfa, last retrieved 09.09.2018.

local minority population as 80,000.[7] This number excludes the immigrants in Turkey and Germany. Given the low birth-rate in the past decades, this number seems to be the best estimate. Country-wise, the minority makes up around 1.1% of the total population of 10 million, and region-wise around 30%.[8]

The minority is regionally concentrated; Rhodope with capital Komotini is the province with the highest concentration of minority population, almost 55%, of the entire population. In Ksanthi, they constitute 43% of the population whereas in Evros they make up only %6 of the provincial population.[9] The rest of the regional population consists of majority Greek Orthodox, few Armenians and Pontic Greeks from ex-Soviet Union.

As a result of recurrent migrations, today Western Thracians are a fragmented and a transnational community. The capital town of Athens has been the destination of internal migration for labor. Around 10,000 minority members are estimated to live in Athens. There is a considerable number of diaspora and transmigrants in Turkey and Germany. The Western Thracian diaspora and transmigrant population in Turkey is estimated to be quite high, exceeding the minority population that has remained in Greece, although figures are not available.[10] The number of

7 Giorgos Mavrommatis, "Bektashis in 20th Century Greece", *Turcica*, 40, 2008, 219-251, 238.

8 Data taken from http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/greece-population/, last retrieved 28.02.2019; https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-33_en, last retrieved 05.03.2019.

9 "Greece: Status of Minorities", report prepared by Theresa Papademetriou, Senior Foreign Law Specialist, 2012, available online at: https://www.loc.gov/law/help/greece-minorities/greece.php, last retrieved 15.12.2916.

10 Despite a number of attempts, I couldn't get access to the number of Western Thracian Turkish diaspora in Turkey because many of them have acquired Turkish citizenship, and many including those who live in Western Thrace, Greece, have been granted long term residence permits in Turkey since 2016.

Western Thracian diaspora in Germany- a number of whom have also obtained German citizenship- are considered to be around 25,000.[11]

Throughout history, the region of Thrace was home to a number of civilizations. It is considered to have derived its name from the ancient inhabitants called "Tracs" who lived between 2000-1200 B.C in the territory bordering the Black Sea in the east, Marmara-Dardanelles Straits and the Aegean Sea in the south , a chain of mountains on the north and River Struma on the west.[12] It was occupied by a number of tribes such as the Huns, Bulgarians, Avars, Hazars, Pechenegs, the Uz (Oğuzlar), Kumans and Kipchaks and other Turkic tribes who migrated from Central Asia over the Black Sea and settled in Thrace. Later, Thrace became part of the Slavic, Macedonian, Roman and Byzantine empires. The region was finally colonized by the Ottoman Empire and was partly Turkified as a result of immigration and settlement of Turkish tribes as well as locals' conversion to Islam.[13]

Upon Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth century, Turcoman and Yuruk tribes from Anatolia were settled in the region and interbred with the indigenous peoples.[14] Ottoman conquest of the region was aided by *Seyid Ali Sultan* who settled in the highlands of Dimetoka along with nomad Turkic tribes. Komotini was conquered by Gazi Evrenos Pasha in 1362. The current Western Thracian minority are descendants of Yuruk Turk groups, some of whom were settled in the newly acquired lands

11 Cem Şentürk, "Batı Trakya Türklerinin Avrupa'ya Göçleri, Bulundukları Ülkelerdeki Yaşam Koşulları ve Kimlik Algılamaları", *The Journal of International Social Research*, Volume 1, Nr.2, Winter 2008

12 Baskın Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu,* Bilgi Yayınevi, 2.Basım, Ankara,1991, 24.

13 Nursel Özdarendeli, "Trakya Ağızları", *Aşırı memleket : Trakya'nın renkli dünyası*, (eds) Tuncay Bilecen, İbrahim Dizman ,Tanıl Bora, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2017,273-284,273.

14 Irene Melikoff, "14.-15. Yüzyıllarda İslam Heterodoksluğunun Trakya'ya ve Balkanlar'a Yerleşme Yolları", 178-190,180 (in) *Sol Kol:Osmanlı Egemenliğinde Via Egnatia (1380-1699),* (eds) Elizabeth Zachariadou, (cev) Özden Arıkan, Ela Güntekin, Tülin Altınova, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999.

during the Ottoman colonization of the region, including Kurds[15] as well as indigenous inhabitants; Slavs, Albanians, Vlachs, and probably local Greeks who converted to Islam. Sunni Islam is the predominant creed, yet, there are also Bektashis in the highland villages of Rhodope.

Thrace was a passage route for many population movements during the decline period of the Ottoman Empire. During the Crimean war of 1853-1856, the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-1878, and the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, a large number of Muslims passed from the north through Thrace to Anatolia, some of them settling in the region, then Ottoman territory.[16] Furthermore, since early 1990s, Greece has become a passage route as well as a destination for illegal immigrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa crossing from the Aegean islands or the Turkish-Greek land border in Thrace. In early 1990s, a significant number of Pontic Greeks from ex-Soviet Union member states were repatriated and settled in Western Thrace.

'Minority' is a 19th century concept that emerged concomitantly with the nation-state,[17] as altering state borders created minorities. Nation-states and minorities emerged after three major waves of nation-building. The first wave was the birth of European model nation-states following the dissolution of the Habsburg, Romanov, Wilhelmine and Ottoman empires post WWI. The second wave of nation-state building was the result of decolonization post World War II. The third was the consequence of the disintegration of the multinational Communist Bloc- the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia post-Cold War.

Empires were large political entities embodying a variety of communities with distinct languages, creeds and customs. Therefore, in medieval times, minorities were defined by religious criteria. In that respect,

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15 In a notice for a divorce case to be held at the Muftiate of Komotini, the name of the plaintiff Emine is stated as the wife of Kürt Ali oğlu Mehmet, who fled to Turkey 8 years ago and did not get into contact with his wife ever since. *Trakya,* 09.11.1953.

16 Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: demographic and social characteristics*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, 70-71; Justin Mc Carthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims,* 1821-1922, Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995, 23-58.

17 Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, New York, 1999, 41.

Jews and Protestants were the first recognized minorities in Europe. Likewise, in the multinational and multireligious Ottoman Empire, minorities were non-Muslim populations protected by a system of collective rights known as the *millet syste*m.

Definition of minorities by *religion* was replaced by *national* for the first time at the Congress of Vienna (1815) and at the Congress of Berlin (1878). National minority provisions were for the first time included in in the Treaty of Berlin (1878) as a precondition for international recognition of new born nation states. [18] Thus, great powers became the protector of minorities in empires prior to and during the course of the Second World War and successfully provoked them for secession and independence via anti-imperial, nationalist discourses.

Following the dissolution of the empires and the establishment of an international order dominated by the nation-state model, protection of minorities shifted from being in the monopoly of great powers to international organizations. The first one was the League of Nations superseded by the United Nations after World War II.[19] However, great-power interest in the minorities remained intact as part of their balance of power considerations. Moreover, emerging kin-states entered into the equation, assuming the protective role for their kin communities that remained within the borders of other nation-state for various reasons ranging from value-based considerations such as, ethnic, religious and linguistic affinities to balance of power considerations, particularly within the frame of bilateral relations.

The League of Nations was the first international organization to guarantee minority protection with an enforcement mechanism- the Permanent Court of International Justice. The minority rights of the League system were human rights and cultural rights concerning the use of language, religious freedom, and education. On the other hand, post-World

18 Patrick Thornberry, *International Law and the Rights of Minorities*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, 10.

19 Jennifer Jackson Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System*, 1st Edition, Oxford University Press, NY,1998.

War II, in order to prevent kin state irredentism like that of Hitler's Germany, minority rights were subsumed within the body of international human rights *(The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948))* of the UN. National minorities were either transferred to kin states or encouraged to assimilate in host states. [20]

Post-Cold War, minority question resurfaced due to security concerns triggered by violent ethnic conflicts in the disintegrated territories of former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Linking human rights directly to continental security, European institutions played a significant role in the assurance of minority rights.[21] Especially the OSCE, the largest regional security organization with fifty seven members from North Africa to Asia[22], managed to prevent a number of ethnic tensions from escalating into violent conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe.[23] Furthermore, the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights played an important role in dealing with the grievances of minorities which were brought into the agenda by kin-states and diaspora groups as well as by individuals from minority groups.

The EU subsumed *respect for minority rights* within the frame of *Copenhagen Criteria* as a precondition for accession into the Union.[24] It has been the strongest leverage in the enforcement of minority rights for

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20 For instance, six and a half million Germans were transferred from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary to their kin state. Ibid., 100.

21 J.J Preece, "National Minorities and The International System", *Politics*, Vol.18, Nr.1, February 1998, 17-23.

22 Official website of OSCE, https://www.osce.org/participating-states, last retrieved 20.02.2021.

23 Safia Swimelar, "Approaches to Ethnic Conflict and the protection of Human Rights in Post-Communist Europe: The Need for Preventive Diplomacy", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.7, No.3, Autumn 2001, 98-126, 118.

24 The Political Criteria within Copenhagen Criteria require stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, "Accession Criteria", available online at official website of European Union: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en, last retrieved 09.04.2019.

candidate states after 1992. However, it had an indirect effect on the minorities of already member states as it came in the form of enforced reforms for the deepening of the Europeanization process. For instance, the grievances of the Western Thracian minority were brought to the CoE agenda by the diaspora groups; the solidarity associations in Germany, and kin state Turkey.

Furthermore, individual cases of Western Thracians brought to the ECtHR made substantial contributions to the democratization of Greek minority politics in mid 1990s.[25] After Turkey was granted candidacy status in 1999, considerable improvements were made for the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul, Gökçeada(Imbros) and Bozcaada(Tenedos) as well, although currently their population has diminished to 4,700.[26]

The nation-states of Greece and Turkey emerged within the first wave of nation building during and after the collapse of Ottoman Empire after years of armed struggles against each other. Both Turkey and Greece had to create a nation after the creation of the state. As neither was ethnically homogeneous, nationhood was constructed on religion, Islam and Orthodox Christianity. Thus, Vlachs, Slavo-Macedonians, Armenians and Turkish speaking Christian Orthodox peoples from Anatolia (Karamanlis) were Greekified, or Hellenized,[27] whereas Muslims from the Caucasus, Balkans, Greece were Turkified. [28]

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25 Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, "Strasbourg Court Jurisprudence and Human Rights in Greece: An Overview of Litigation, Implementation and Domestic Reform", Juristras Report, *ELIAMEP*, May 2008, 1-73, 57-63.

26 The number given by Dr. Elpidophoros Lambriniadis belongs to a census of the adherents of Greek Orhodox Church made in 2006 as otherwise Turkish Statistical Instution does not conduct census on ethnic basis, "İstanbul'da Rumlar ve Paskalya [The Rums and Easter in Istanbul], https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/04/140428_istanbul_paskalya, last retrieved 05.04.2019.

27 Richard Clogg,"Introduction", (ed) *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society,* Hurst&Company, London, 2002.

28 Soner Cagaştay, *Who is a Turk?,* Routledge, 2008, 38.

Reflecting the Ottoman *millet* system, the Muslim minority in Greece and the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul were legally determined as "Muslim and non-Muslim" by the provisions of Lausanne (articles from 38-45) signed in the League period and incorporated extensive negative and positive rights and liberties for each. They were based on the model of the first minority Treaty in history; the Polish Minority Treaty which was signed at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 in order to protect the Jewish and German minorities in Poland albeit with more specific provisions for the Jews.[29]

§ 1.1 Literature Review

Until late 1990s, literature on the Western Thracian minority was scarce and non- or semi-academic, reflecting either Turkish or Greek national point of view. Even in early 2002, for instance, Meinardus wrote:

> For many Greeks I assume that a workshop on minorities would be a heretical meeting. For we are dealing with what for many years has been a taboo not only in public, but also in academic debate in Greece. [...] The Greeks [...] see the minority issue mainly as an issue of national security, they perceive a clear Turkish threat in Western Thrace and the fear that of the minority as a national security issue, and the fear this area might one day become a second Cyprus, subject to invasion, and possible annexation, by Turkey. [30]

[29] Carole Fink, "The Paris Peace Conference and The Question of Minority Rights", *Peace &Change*, Vol.21, No.3, 1996, 273-288, 281.

[30] Ronald Meinardus, "Muslims: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies", Richard Clogg, *Minorities in Greece,* 2002. 81-93, 81

The Muslim-Turkish minority of Western Thrace has attracted considerable academic attention since early 1990s; after the ethnic tensions in the region received international attention. Henceforth, the number of academic studies on Western Thrace have proliferated involving not only Turkish, Greek and Western Thracian Turk but also foreign researchers. A number of MA theses and PhD dissertations have also been written in third countries (Britain, the USA) by Greek Orthodox Greeks and Western Thracian minority member Greek citizens.

The earliest semi and non-academic books and articles about the minority were written by Western Thracian immigrants in Turkey and the Turkish primary and secondary school exchange teachers who taught in minority schools.[31] The second type of early literature are irregular periodicals and bulletins published by Western Thracian Turks Solidarity Associations in Turkey and Germany. The earliest journal, for instance, was published by the Western Thracian immigrant journalist *Selahattin Yıldız*, also one of the founders and administrators of the Western Thracian Turks Solidarity Association in Istanbul.[32] The Western Thracian Turks Solidarity Association published around 105 issues of the journal *Batı Trakya'nın Sesi* between 1987 and 2007.[33]

Western Thracians, like other Muslim-Turk communities in the Balkans and the Caucasus have usually remained in the *Turkish Right's* sphere of interest. Several articles were published by the Turkish academic journals of *Türk Dünyası* and *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları* between

31 Nadir Yaz, *Ağlayan Batı Trakya*, Yeni Batı Trakya Dergisi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1986; Adil Özgüç , *Batı Trakya Türkleri*, Istanbul, Kutlu Yayınları,1974.

32 He published 27 issues of the journal: *Batı Trakya: Siyasi, Kültürel ve de Türkçü Dergi* between 1969 and 1994. Interview with Selahattin Yıldız, August 2012.

33 http://www.bttdd.org.tr/bati-trakya/yayinlar.html, last retrieved 19.07.2018.

1964 and 1973. A number of articles[34] and books[35] were written about the bilateral treaties between Turkey and Greece and human rights violations.

Two non-academic books written by the Western Thracian author Mehmet Arif -under the pseudo-name *Kemal Şevket Batıbey* are worth mentioning. In *Batı Trakya Türk devleti: 1919-1920*[36], the author, with no references, makes the allegation that a plebiscite was held concerning the future of Western Thrace during the allied administration. His second book, *Ve Bulgarlar geldi: Batı Trakya'da teneke ile alârm*[37] is about his

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34 Cengiz Orhonlu, "Batı Trakya'da Türk nüfusu." *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları*, Ankara I(1): 59–87,1964; "Batı Trakya Türkleri.", *Türk Kültürü* II.Cilt, Nr.17,: 5–8, 1964); (1966a). "Batı Trakya Türk azınlığının ismi meselesi ve Yunanistan'ın parçalama siyaseti." *Türk Kültürü* IV. Cilt, Nr.44: 683–688; "Batı Trakya'da Türk basınına yapılan baskı." *Türk Kültürü* IV.Cilt, Nr.44: 695–697. ; Ahmet Kayıhan,"Rodoplar neresidir." *Türk Dünyası* VII: 25–32, 1972; Erdoğan Merçil, "Batı Trakya Türklerinin Eğitim Meselesi ve Yunan Baskısı", Erdoğan Merçil, *Türk Dünyası,* s.44, 1966, 689-694; M.Toroslu, "Batı Trakya Türkleri'ne Baskı Yapılıyor", *Türk Kültürü*, sayı 31, 436-441, 1965; "Batı Trakya Türkünün Çilesi", *Türk Kültürü*, s.33, Yıl.3, Temmuz 1965; Abdürrahim Dede, (1975). *Rumeli'de bırakılanlar, Batı Trakya Türkleri.* Istanbul, Ota Matbaası, 1978; *Batı Trakya Türk folkloru.* Ankara, Kültür Bakanlığı yayınları, 1978; *Balkanlar'da Türk istiklâl Hareketleri,* Istanbul, Türk Dünyası Yayınları, 1980; *Azınlıklar ezilmemeli. Batı Trakya Türkleri.* Istanbul. 1984; *Tarih ve memleketim, İskeçe'deki Türk eserleri.* Istanbul, Batı Trakya Dayanışma Derneği, 1984; *İnhanlı destanı: Batı Trakya Türklerinin Direniş Hikâyesi,* Istanbul, 1988.

35 Ahmet Kayıhan, *Lozan ve Batı Trakya : 1913'de ilk Türk cumhuriyeti*, Ötüken Yayınevi, 1967; Ahmet Kayıhan, *Lozan ve Batı Trakya : 1913'de ilk Türk cumhuriyeti*, Ötüken Yayınevi, 1967; Ahmet Kayıhan, *Lozan ve Batı Trakya : 1913'de ilk Türk cumhuriyeti*, Ötüken Yayınevi, 1967; Ahmet Kayıhan, *Batı Trakya Faciasının İçyüzü,* İstanbul, 1971; Ümit Kurtuluş, *Batı Trakya'nın Dünü Bugünü***,** Sincan Matbaası, Ankara, 1971; Andartlık hikâyeleri." *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1(4): 90–97,1980; "Batı Trakya'nın cografi ve ekonomik durumu." *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi* (5, Nisan): 28–39, 1980; "Batı Trakya'da bir Turk köyünün ölümü: Kaşıkçılar." *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1(6, Haziran): 35–40, 1984.

36 Kemal Şevket Batıbey, *Batı Trakya Türk devleti: 1919-1920,* Boğaziçi Yayınları, Istanbul, 1979

37 Kemal Şevket Batıbey, *Ve Bulgarlar geldi : Batı Trakya'da teneke ile alârm,* Boğaziçi Yayınları, istanbul, 2000.

observations, experiences and the hardships and sufferings of the inhabitants of Western Thrace during the Bulgarian occupation of 1941-1944.

The only publication in the 1980s that differs from the rest is Mihri Belli's *Gerilla Anıları*.[38] It is about his personal experiences during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) in Western Thracian highlands where he fought as the commander in charge of the Muslim recruits under the pseudonym *Captain Kemal*. It is hardly ever mentioned in Turkish academic or non-academic publications, probably due to his political orientation as a communist. However, it incorporates prolific observations about the social conditions, everyday life, culture and practices of religion among the rurals of the Rhodopean highlands.

Aydın Ömeroğlu, a late Western Thracian author, published an irregular newspaper *Diyalog* in late 1990s and authored a few books on Western Thrace. His best known (and cited) book is about the struggle of Western Thracian Solidarity Associations in Germany against the Greek state's breach of the minority's human rights in Western Thrace. As an opponent himself, in his book- *Belgeler ve olaylar ışığında, bilinmeyen yönleriyle Batı Trakya Türkleri ve gerçek*- he shed light on the rivalry, intrigues and disputes among the minority notables about the organization and execution of the struggle for minority rights in 1980s.[39]

Concerning the history of Thrace from Balkan Wars to Lausanne, the late Turkish veteran, officer, historian and statesman Tevfik Bıyıklıoğlu's *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele* [40] is a significant source. Yet, some of his arguments concerning the struggle in current Western Thrace are challenged by Aarbakke et.al.[41] Furthermore, Baskın Oran's *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu (1991)* is a well- articulated study based

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38 Mihri Belli, *Gerilla Anıları: Yunan İç Savaşından,* Belge Yayınları, 3rd Edition, 1998.

39 Aydın Ömeroğlu, *Belgeler ve olaylar ışığında, bilinmeyen yönleriyle Batı Trakya Türkleri ve gerçek,* Avcı Ofset, İstanbul, 1994.

40 Tevfik Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele,* Cilt I, Ankara, TTK, 1987,

41 Vemund Aarbakke, Vasileios Koutsoukos and Georgios Niarchos, "The Independent Republic of Gumuldjina (1913): A New Test for Young Turk Policy Makers" in(ed) Dimitris Stamatopoulos *Balkan Nationalisms and the Ottoman Empire***,** Vol.III, The ISIS Press, Istanbul, 2015.

on a thematic elaboration of the injustices and discriminations against the minority within the international human rights framework including also his personal communications and observations in the region.

Post 2000, academic literature on Western Thracian minority has proliferated. Research topics are usually minority rights and the minority's position in bilateral relations between Turkey and Greece[42] with a number of studies on more specific research areas such as religion, identity, education and local traditions. However, either due to the lack of archives about the minority, and/or personal reasons, there is barely any academic work (except for Aarbakke) which challenges or builds upon the former. For this reason the academic studies will be mentioned according to their themes hereafter.

On the other hand, socio-economic development (or non-development) of the minority has received little attention from Western Thracian and Turkish academia. Unavailability of statistical data on ethnic basis stands as a major obstacle against a research of this type. Ömeroğlu's books on the share of Western Thracians in the regional economy, for instance, depends on the author's individual assumptions and observations[43] and therefore lack validity.

Likewise, ethnographic and cultural studies have attracted little attention from Turkish and Western Thracian academics. Halim Cavusoglu's book on Pomak Turks in the Ksanthian highlands was the first ethnographic research conducted in the village of Echinos in 1990.[44]It is based only on questionnaires about everyday life, traditions, gender roles, rituals. Due to language barrier, however, participants, particularly

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42 Turgay Cin, *Müslüman Türk Azınlığın Din ve Vicdan Özgürlüğü,* Ankara, Seçkin Yayınları, 2003; *Yunanistan'daki Türk Azınlığın Hukuki Özerkliği***,** Orion, 2009; Hikmet Öksüz, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* Karam Yayınları, Çorum, 2006.

43 Aydın Ömeroğlu**,** *Batı Trakya Türklerinin Bölge Ekonomisindeki Yeri ve Geleceği*, Diyalog Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998; *Batı Trakya'da tütünün geleceği*, Diyalog Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002; *Batı Trakya'nın Bölgesel Kalkınma Sorunu ve Azınlığın Katkısı,* İskeçe, 2010.

44 Halim Çavuşoğlu, *Balkanlar'da Pomak Türkleri, tarih ve sosyo-kültürel yapı*, Kök Sosyal ve Stratejik Araştırmalar Vakfı, Ankara, 1993.

women, spoke through young inhabitants-students-, who translated Pomak language to Turkish. [45]

In this context, an ethnographic research by two Turkish scholars on the attitudes of Western Thracian Turks against their mother tongue is worth mentioning.[46] The article scrutinizes the attitudes towards the choice and use of mother tongue (Turkish) and the perception(s) of cultural identity among the middle-aged, the elderly and the young. The sample consists of 148 persons (70 men and 78 women) living in the towns of Komotini and Ksanthi. The findings are evaluated within the theoretical framework of ethnolinguistic vitality theory[47] and acculturation.[48] The research concludes that the Western Thracian Turks are scrupulous about the use of their mother tongue Turkish and the maintenance of their culture.

A significant development for the promotion of publications on Western Thracian minority is the foundation BAKEŞ[49], a research center in Komotini in 2008. It is also an archive hosting all publications on the minority, including the minority media. It has funded publications by minority authors as well as reports and bulletins of congresses and seminars organized by minority associations in the region. For instance, it funded the preparation and publication of the book based on narrations of rural elderly males and females about their experiences and memories of Greek Civil War period[50] and an encyclopedia in two volumes on the

45 Ibid., 13.

46 Kadir Yalınkılış and Kutlay Yağmur,"Batı Trakya Türklerinin Anadillerine ve Kültürlerine Karşı Tutumları", *Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi,* nr.70, 280-308, summer 2014.

47 Edwards, J. (1992) "Sociopolitical aspects of language maintenance and loss: towards a typology of minority language situations". *Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages.* Ed. W. Fase, K. Jaspaert, & S. Kroon. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co. 37-54.

48 J. W. Berry, (1997). "Immigration, acculturation and adaptation". Applied Psychology: An International Review 46: 5-68

49 Batı Trakya Eğitim ve Kültür Şirketi

50 Rahmi Ali and Tevfik Hüseyinoğlu, 1946-1949 *Yunan İç Savaşında Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı,* BAKEŞ, Gümülcine, 2009

villages in Western Thrace. By reference to Ottoman archives, these volumes present historical facts about the establishment of the villages, current data on geography and livelihood by reference to Greek sources, and stories and myths based on either narratives or minority newspapers .[51]

In this research, three minority newspapers are extensively used; the 1946-1966 editions of *Trakya* published by the late minority MP Osman Nuri; *İleri,* published by Halil Haki until early 2000, and *Nokta (1988-1989)* by Abdülhalim Dede. Currently, there are seven minority newspapers, two weekly magazines printed and published online (*Öğretmen'in Sesi, Rodop Rüzgarı*), a printed weekly children's magazine (*Saklambaç*). Of the six newspapers, *Gündem, Millet, Cumhuriyet* are released both in printed format and online whereas *Birlik, Azınlıkça, Trakya'nın Sesi and Tiken* are published online as news portals.

A significant number of Greek sources in Greek language on the Western Thracian minority focus on political developments between Greece and Turkey and their reflections on the minority, the institution of the Mufti, and education. Therefore, in this research the main academic source in Greek language is a PhD dissertation by Koutsoukos[52] on the Greekification of Western Thrace; the spatial alterations that took place from 1900 to 1950. The research investigates the functional, organizational, economic, political, administrative changes and their spatial linkages in the process of the region's integration within the Greek nation-state.

Greek academicians and researchers occupy a predominant position in the Western Thracian minority studies in English language although some Western Thracians have also conducted academic studies on the subject in English language in British and Turkish universities. In fact, the most comprehensive political history of the minority and particularly that of the minority elite, as also referred to in this research, belongs to a

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51 İbrahim Baltalı, *Batı Trakya Köyler Ansiklopedisi-Cilt 1,2* BAKEŞ Yayınları, Gümülcine, Ekim 2017.

52 Vassilis Koutsoukos, "Από την Αυτοκρατορία στο Εθνικό Κράτος: Χωρικές Όψεις της Ενσωμάτωσης της Θράκης", unpubished PhD, Univerity of Rethimno, 2012.

Norwegian scholar, Vemund Aarbakke , entitled *The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace (2000)*.[53] It covers a macro period of almost a century from 1913 to 2000; from the Balkan Wars to the democratization of Greek state's minority policy.

Aarbakke scrutinizes the history of the minority within the broader framework of Greek Turkish relations and the behavior of the minority elite by extensive reference to minority media. His impartial approach and his use of Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, English, French and German sources on the subject also challenges and questions many of the mainstream Turkish and Greek master narratives. He discloses the disputes, whims and intrigues among the minority notables and their consequences for the minority.

Anagnostou compares the Muslim-Turkish minority of Greece with the Muslim-Turkish minority of Bulgaria.[54] She scrutinizes how changes in regional economy and state policies have impacted on changes in social dynamics for both minorities. She argues that the post 1990 changes in the Greek state's minority policy have generated positive, integration-oriented impacts and flexibility in ethnic identification for the Western Thracian minority whereas the change of regime and the diminishing social services and employment opportunities have led to the strengthening of ethnic identity [Turkish] in the case of Bulgaria.

The section on Greek Thrace includes 24 interviews, 40 questionnaires and communications with the minority members in towns (Ksanthi and Komotini) and a few from villages. Yet, her interview sample consists of the minority elite, the educated, and not the mainstream rurals.[55]

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53 Vemund Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace", unpublished PhD, University of Leiden, 2000.

54 Diamanto Anagnostou, "Oppositional and Integrative Ethnicities: regional Political Economy, Turkish Muslim Mobilization and Identity Transformation in Southeastern Europe (Greece, Bulgaria)", unpublished PhD, Cornell University,1999.

55 Administrative authorities and specialists for agriculture, investment from the municipal, prefectural and regional departments, political activists and elected officials, ibid., 344.

The questionnaire is designed to obtain data on four sets of subjects; economic and employment conditions; work and family relations; gender, work and social norms; religion, community and daily life. However, rurals are barely included in the sample.

A social-anthropology dissertation by Demetriou investigates how the inhabitants of Komotini; Turks, Greeks, Pomak, Gypsies- perceive their identities and communities in everyday life; in their relations with each other and the state. She inquires into how and in what ways the change in Greek policy has affected the minority and also questions the notions of tradition and modernity. Yet her work is confined to the 'town' and villagers are only indirectly mentioned.[56]

In a similar vein, Papanikolaou explores the politicization of minority rights. She underscores the main actors and agents in this process, particularly two oppositional (national) agents; *the Coordinating Council of Greece,* responsible for the once effective implementation of discriminations against the Muslim minority in Thrace according to secret government decisions, and the role of *the Turkish Consulate* in Komotini, as a result of which the minority becomes an arena of struggle for sovereignty. [57] Yet, her ethnography is also confined to the town of Komotini.

The only academic study that partly includes rurals' narrations about a historical rupture- the Greek Civil War- period belongs to Featherstone et.al.[58] They elucidate the survival strategies of the minority during the period of Bulgarian occupation in Western Thrace (1941-1944) and the subsequent Civil War (1946-1949). As the first academic publication about this period, it fills a significant gap in Western Thracian historiography. They investigate why the minority remained passive and did

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56 Olga Maya Demetriou "Divisive Visions: A Study of Minority Identities Among Turkish-Speakers in Komotini, Northern Greece," *LSE*, 2004

57 Antigoni Papanikolau, *The Politicization of Rights in the case of the Muslim-Turkish Minority of Greece*, University of Sussex, 2007.

58 Kevin Featherstone, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Argyris Mamarelis and Georgios Niarchos, *The Last Ottomans: The Muslim Minority of Greece, 1940-1949,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

not cooperate with the communist guerillas despite promises for autonomy in Western Thrace. In their final analysis they relate the reasons to the dynamics of the traditional Muslim society, the anti-communist stance of kin state Turkey and the violence inflicted on the rural minority by the communist guerillas.

Mavrommatis's *The Children of Kalkantza*[59] is based on ethnography in a minority village of Muslim Roma where he worked as the Greek teacher at the village primary school. In close proximity to Komotini, this is a Muslim, Turkish-speaking Roma village built in mid 1950s for the Roma who lived in huts in Komotini town center. Arguably the most marginalized ethnic group of the Western Thracian Muslim minority, the author illustrates vividly the social structure of the village community of Roma, their relations with the other groups of the minority and the majority, and the state in general.

In this regard, I have detected a gap in the literature; rurals' survival strategies during the historical ruptures and the accompanying social changes and continuities. Consequently, this research intends to make a contribution to the existing literature by researching into the survival strategies of rural Turkish-Muslim community in different geographical settings (highlands, lowlands) through a blend of oral history and ethnography.

§ 1.2 Historiographic Method

This study intends to use a multidisciplinary approach by adopting the historiographic method of oral history (life story approach), ethnographic fieldwork, and a theoretical international relations framework

59 Mavrommatis, Giorgos, Τα παιδιά της Καλκάντζας (cev) Berin Myisli, *Kalkanca'nın çocukları: Yunanistan'da bir müslüman azınlık toplumunda yoksulluk, sosyal izolasyon ve eğitim* İstanbul : Kitap Yayınevi, 2007.

to elucidate on the position of the minority in-between Greece and Turkey. The primary purpose of adopting oral history method in this study is to reveal the voices of the rurals; to expose how they remember the past and how their and/or their ancestors' experiences of the past have impacted on their survival.

Oral history is by nature closely related with memory, narrative, ethnography, story-telling, and folk history.[60] Oral history is "the first kind of history" that dates back to ancient Greeks and Romans.[61] In 1930s, the "new history" method influenced by Marxist ideology and social science methodology became the trend and lasted until 1950s.[62] Oral history as a historiographic model re-emerged in 1950s with a historical documentation project conducted by the Columbian University historian Allan Nevins who recorded the memoirs of important people in America. This previously private funded project was expanded by funding from national institutions, local fund givers and retiring politicians in such a way that in 1998 Columbia Center for Oral History archive included over eight thousand testimonies. In 1960s and 1970s, the oral history method was adopted in studies for labor history, Indian history, the civil rights movement, black history, and folklore and in 1980s for women's history. [63]

Oral history makes a more fair judgement possible because the witnesses (narrators) can be chosen from among the lower, suppressed classes. It offers a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past by challenging the narrations of established order. [64] On the other hand, as most of the existing sources reflect the opinion of authorities, it is not

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60 Natalie L Federer, "The use of oral history and narrative research in broadening the historical foundation of the agricultural communication field", unpublished PhD, Purdue University, USA, 2015, 11.

61 Paul Thomspon and Joanna Bornat, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History,* Fourth Edition, Oxford University Press, 2017; Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of the Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History", *Past and Present,* No.85, Nov.1979, p.3.

62 Stone, "The Revival of the Narrative",1979, 5.

63 Thompson and Bornat, *The Voice of the Past,*2017, 55-56.

64 *Geçmişin sesi : sözlü tarih* / Paul Thompson ; (cev) Şehnaz Layıkel, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, Istanbul, 1999,5.

surprising that many historical judgements side with the existing power structures. Ordinary peoples are regarded as some statistical findings collected in the course of an administrative research. Some documents, which constitute the raw materials of history writing, are either hid or eradicated by the owners, because ' the power was working as a huge device recording history in line with its own perceptions'.[65]

Oral history also means a shift of focus for many of the existing historiographies. An education historian, for instance, is concerned not only with the problems of teachers and administrators but also the experiences of children and students. In this respect, oral history can incite new topics for research in previously hidden areas such as family histories; relations within the family, relations with the neighbors and kin, the roles of males and females within the family, the raising of children, birth control and abortion. [66] It serves a social function by helping ordinary people understand the changes in their lives. Thus, 'history becomes more democratic.'[67]

Oral history has been an effective method in research into the history of the minorities; particularly immigrant studies and history of the Blacks. Sociologists (of Chicago school) and historians directed themselves to a balanced approach using oral history in research areas such as the ordinary experience of migration, job finding process, support from the kin and neighbors, institutions established by the minorities, preservation of ancient cultural traditions, and problems caused by ethnic tensions and discrimination.[68] By directly embarking on people involved in the making of history itself, historians shift their position from 'object' to 'subject' , they help make history become more real and more precise. They also eliminate the risk of reflecting the historian's self-experiences and imagination in the narration of these peoples' opinions and experiences from a specific angle. [69]

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65 Ibid., 3.

66 Ibid., 5-6.

67 Ibid., 7.

68 Thompson, *Geçmişin Sesi,* 1999, 87.

69 Ibid., 88.

The most common criticism against oral history is the 'unreliability of memory'; "[…]that memory is distorted by physical deterioration and nostalgia in old age, by the personal bias of both interviewer and interviewee, and by the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past."[70]Proponents have devised several responses to this criticism. Early oral historians, for instance, reminded them that the source of a number of documents were also narrations of people who witnessed or experienced the events.

Nonetheless, they created standards to check the reliability of testimonies and learn what happened in the past. They borrowed several approaches from other disciplines: representative sampling from sociology, and data from the concerned written historical sources. Furthermore, in late 1970s, oral historians came up with the counter argument that the claimed unreliability of memory was its strength. "The subjectivity of memory provided clues not only about the meanings of historical experience, but also about the relationships between past and present, between memory and identity and between individual and collective memory."[71]

Michael Frisch argues that oral accounts do not necessarily have to reflect what really happened in the past.[72] Instead, 'memory' should not only be the method of oral history but should be treated as its object. By making memory the object, it is possible to elucidate "how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them."[73]

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70 "Part 1: Critical Developments: introduction", *The Oral History Reader* (eds.) Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, Routledge, NY, second edition, 2006, 1-13, 3.

71 Ibid.

72 Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Pub-lic History, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1990, p.188, cited in The Oral History Reader, 4.

73 Ibid.

In a similar vein, Portelli contends that the claimed weakness of oral history should be regarded as its strength. He maintains that subjectivity – what the narrators believe that happened should be treated equally important as a historical fact- what really happened. He contends that it is only by oral history that we can learn "[…] what people did, what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did."[74] Therefore, he adds, "Oral sources' credibility should be analyzed by their difference from facts and not by adherence to them, because they might be reflecting the narrators' imagination, desire, psychology".[75]

Thompson also acknowledges that there might be contradictions between the general values of the past considered to be true and the more precise records of the everyday life.[76] However, he argues that these contradictions can be quite illuminating within themselves as they might represent some of the dynamics of social change and perceptions for which oral evidence is the only way to reach. If there is difference between the oral and written evidence, this does not mean that one is more reliable than the other. The interviews can reveal the reality behind the written documents or both may be representing different views of the same event. Consequently, these points of view together can provide historians with the correct interpretation of it.[77]

Popular Memory Group[78] concludes that it is significant to understand all the ways in which a sense of the past is constructed in (the) society, a theory which they call "social production of memory". [79] In this

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74 Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different?", *The Oral History Reader*, 32-43, 36.

75 Ibid., 37-38.

76 Thompson, Geçmişin Sesi, 1999, 210.

77 Ibid., 211.

78 Popular Memory Group at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

79 Popular Memory Group: "Popular Memory: Theory, politics, method", extracted with permission from R. Johnson et.al. (eds) Making Histories: Studies in History Writing and Politics, p, London, Hutchinson, 1982; in *The Oral History Reader* (ed) Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, Routledge, NY, second edition, 2006, 43-53, 44.

respect, a distinction is made between two ways of constructing the past; public representations and private memory. The first is produced by the agents of public culture; mainly the state, media, civil and political organizations. The second, on the other hand, refers to the family, community and is produced in the flow of everyday life; narratives and everyday conversations as well as in more private forms such as letters, photos, diaries. It this type of a history production which is not recorded, but silenced and marginalized.[80]

As the former permeates into the society by all means of the state or into the community by its major institutions, and receives the approval and support of the people, it becomes the "dominant memory". Therefore, any study of the private, or group memory, cannot be detached from the dominant memory, or dominant historical discourses. Furthermore, under the burden of everyday life concerns and duties, private memory is within time subsumed by the dominant memory. Therefore, it is important to scrutinize the relations between dominant memory and oppositional forms of memory in everyday life as experienced by people. [81]

Oral history as a historiographic model is based on collecting historical data through talking to people (interviews) and studying documents as diaries, biographies, autobiographies and photos. My methods of collection include life story interviews, some of which also include narrations about the family-tree, some single-issue testimonies[82], participant observations and personal communications. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted with snowballing technique in lowland, middle-line villages[83] and two highland villages[84] to be representative of the rural landscape and society.

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80 Ibid., 45

81 Ibid., 46

82 "Ways of Listening", Hugo Slim, Paul Thompson, Olivia Bennett and Nigel Cross, pp:145-146, in (eds) Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, second edition, Routledge, NY, 2006.

83 The lowland and middle-line villages of Rhodope are Yalanca, Yasiköy, Narlıköy, Palazlı, Susurköy, Müselimköy, Melikli, Domruköy, and in the Ksanthi Öksüzlü and Kireççiler.

84 Ketenlik in Ksanthi and Ruşanlar in Rhodope.

The participants are mainly elderly and middle-aged males and females with a fewer number of young. The interviewed group also includes a number of educated professionals (journalists, doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers) and the elite (religious authorities and administrators of a few cultural organizations) in the towns of Komotini and Ksanthi who have been affiliated with the rural community either by way of their origins, kinship ties or frequent contacts owing to their occupations.

I did the interviews between years 2012-2017, with a break between 2013 and 2015 due to childbirth. Some of my lowland respondents are my relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances. I reached the others through snowballing method. In the Ksanthian highland village Ketenlik, I was hosted for a few days by a family who were an acquaintance of a cousin of mine. In the Ksanthian lowland village Öksüzlü, a friend of mine introduced me to her cousin's family where I did interviews with ten inhabitants. In the highland village Ruşanlar, I was hosted by an acquaintance for a night and day. She was the key informant. There was no language barrier in the village, however, the villagers were reluctant to speak. Therefore, I could only do interviews with the key informant and her parents.

Highlanders were not as easily accessible as the lowlanders due to reasons such as geographical remoteness, lack of public transport and lack of relatives or friends to host. I was well received in Ketenlik, however, the native language (Pomak) was a barrier in communication. The family I stayed with spoke Turkish fluently, even better than the native speakers in lowlands, because they had attended school in Turkey before they got married. However, particularly the elderly and the middle-aged were not competent enough in another language for the interviews.

Being an insider, a member of Western Thracian minority myself, put me in an auspicious condition for the ethnography. On the one hand, I had easy access to the local community; on the other hand, there was the challenge of 'insider bias',[85] which I tried my best to avoid. Contrary

85 Norman K.Denzin and Ivonna S.Lincoln, "Introduction", p.8 (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,* Sage Publications, 2000.

to the previous academic studies when the respondents were uncomfortable with the tape recorder and the researcher had to take notes instead,[86] my respondents were comfortable with the tape recorder.

My sample consists of 120 respondents. Males and females have equal weight in the sample. 62 of the participants are females whereas 60 are males. I addressed the elderly participants with titles of kinship as is the common expression of respect for elderly in the village setting. I told them the purpose of the study, emphasizing that it is nothing political, and that their names will not be mentioned. Then, in a conversational manner, I began by asking: "Uncle Hasan/ aunt Fatma, can you tell me about your life? Were you born in this village? Were your parents born in this village?" With the tape recorder on, I began listening and at the same time looking directly at the face of the narrator while drinking the traditional coffee offered with no interruption until the speaker stopped.

Some narrators got surprised at the question and remarked: "I'm an ignorant man/woman... What can I tell you?" Then I explained that I was interested to learn how they remembered the past and how they survived the difficult times. I also added that it is important to pass on their life stories to future generations so that their narrations will have a place in the collective memory when they pass away. At this point, they smiled and started to talk eagerly.

An interesting impact of oral history is stated to be its contribution to 'memory therapy' for the elderly. The experts working on ageing claim that the ability to remember is to keep alive the self. Remembering and narrating are also therapy techniques for the sad, depressed and senile persons.[87] Some of my elderly respondents got excited during the interviews and narrated with joy. At the end of the interviews, they thanked me and said it made them feel good to talk about the past although some memories were painful. An elderly narrator who had a chronic heart disease, for instance, did not stop her narrations despite my warnings and suggestions to continue the next day. In the end, she told me she felt

86 Aarbakke 2000; Anagnostou 2001; Demetriou 2004.

87 Thompson, *Geçmişin Sesi,* 1999,5.

great. To my surprise, her granddaughter told me; 'You can never know how happy you have made her, she loves talking about the past but we are no longer interested in listening to her.'

At certain points, I asked for more details and/or clarifications. When the narration was poor or excluded any reference to a historical rupture, I followed up by supplementary questions such as: "What was the most unforgettable event/ time for you?" Sometimes the answer came either automatically as "The Civil War, the Cyprus conflict, the dark period of discriminations, and subsequent protests for our rights." Sometimes I was asked to clarify the question. Then I mentioned about the major historical ruptures to help them understand the question. This is not surprising given the everyday life concerns of the elderly and middle-aged peasants which are usually family-related issues such as health, income and education of their children.

Interviews were conducted in narrators' houses. On the other hand, interviews with the urban participants were conducted in open air cafeterias. They were recorded on a digital voice recorder. The verbatim transcription of interviews is a word-to word written record of the participants' own words. I have done the transcription myself because there are some differences in the Turkish language spoken by the minority even within different geographical settings in terms of intonation, toning, expressions and colloquialisms as compared to the mainstream Turkish spoken in Turkey.

Prior to the interviews, anonymity and confidentiality was promised to participants not only to protect their personal privacy but also to prevent any suspicion that their responses could be used for surveillance or any other secret purposes. I am lucky to conduct this fieldwork in a relaxed time of relations between the Greek state and the minority. Otherwise, respondents may not have allowed me to use a tape recorder and/or give detailed answers to my questions. Nonetheless, being an insider eliminates these kinds of suspicions. Furthermore, I employed a conversational approach during the interviews. It strengthened the friendly atmosphere between me and the narrators in such a way that the interview flowed like a conversation.

Moreover, the content and structure of the interview questions were carefully designed so as not to include anything political in order to avoid any kind of misunderstandings or reluctance to answer them. Academic sources and minority newspapers and journals were also used to compare, contrast, clarify and substantiate the narrations. In order to sustain reliability and sincerity, actual names of respondents are replaced with pseudonyms as was declared to the participants before the interviews. However, names of villages are real as they represent the geographic variety and are home to cultural events elaborated in the final chapter.

The longest and most interesting narrations belong to two types of elderly respondents; the ones who experienced the historical ruptures as children or adults, and those who took in the past active roles in the village, and therefore had interactions with minority and public institutions. They are usually male narrators because in a patriarchal society they are the active participants and witnesses to events within and outside of the village. Many of the narrations concerning the historical ruptures are cross-cutting.

It is the interpretation of narrations that form the hypothesis. One way of interpreting the compilation of narrations that consist of full life stories and/or narrations of specific events is to assemble them in accordance with themes. Another way is cross analysis. It is possible to combine both methods in the interpretation of narrations and usually more than one is used in many oral history projects. [88] In this study, both methods are employed in the analysis of narratives and embedded in the relevant chapters. They are also supplemented by several academic sources to illuminate whether they converge and diverge with the historical events as given by written sources.

88 Thompson, *Geçmişin Sesi,* 1999,209

§ 1.3 Theoretical Framework: Contextualization of Brubaker's Triadic Nexus and the Concepts of National Minority, Nationalizing State, External Homeland

Both Greek and Turkish nation states were created in the first wave of nation building upon the collapse of Ottoman Empire after decades of armed struggles. While the establishment of an independent Greek state was national revival for the Greek nation, it was catastrophe for the Ottoman Empire and its Muslim-Turk subjects. Similarly, the Greek defeat in Anatolia turned out to be a national catastrophe for the Greek nation as it ended up with the uprooting of Greek Orthodox peoples from Anatolia, yet, a triumph for the new-born Turkish state. Consequently, the historical path that shaped the notion of citizenship in the process of nation building and state formation in Turkey and Greece were similar but at the same time oppositional to each other.

In Western Thrace, inter-communal relations between and the Turkish-Muslim minority and the mainstream Greek Orthodox society have followed the pattern of the Ottoman millet system with social boundaries intact. On the other hand, at the state level, the treatment of Muslim-Turk minority has been shaped by bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey. Both the Greek Orthodox of Istanbul and the Turkish-Muslim minority of Western Thrace have been pawned for balance of power considerations and made to pay for the Greek-Turkish disputes, particularly Cyprus.

The provisions from 38 to 45 enshrined in the Treaty of Lausanne guaranteed them a number of civil, political, and multicultural rights.[89]

89 The rights conferred by Lausanne included the right to non-discrimination, free use of any language in commerce, religion, in the press, in publications of any kind or at public meetings as well as before the Courts (Art 39), the right to assembly; to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, schools or other establishments for instruction and education where they can use their

However, these provisions would challenge the aspirations of homogenization in the course of nation building in both countries. Consequently, neither Turkey nor Greece would ultimately abide by them. In fact, neither Greece nor Turkey recognized the Muslim and non-Muslim minorities as "citizens". The perception of citizenship and citizenship policies were largely shaped by ethnic nationalisms.

In rhetoric, both seemed to have adopted civic nationalism, however in practice, ethnic nationalism was at stage. Indeed, this was a consequence of the relatively late nation-state building compared with the West.[90] Furthermore, constitution of oppositional 'others' to the national identity was necessary in the process of homogenization.[91] The Turks would be assigned this role in the process of Greek nation building and the Greeks in the process of Turkish nation building. It follows that the remaining Muslim -Turk and Greek Orthodox minorities would constitute part of the 'oppositional 'other' in both Turkey and Greece.[92]

Hence, the treatment of both minorities depended on the state of bilateral relations. In times of rapprochement, both minorities would enjoy relative freedom and security, whereas, in cases of conflict, for which

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language and religion freely (Art40), transfer of equitable share from public funds under the state, municipal or other budgets for educational, religious and charitable purposes(Art41), legal autonomy in matters related to family law such as marriage, divorce similar to that of the millet system (Art 42), the right to enjoy their own religious holidays (Art43), and the League of Nations determined as the international body in resolution of disputes between the minority members and the state.

90 The terms 'ethnic' and 'civil nationalism' were coined by Anthony Smith with reference to the work of Hans Kohn on the analysis of Eastern versus Western nationalism (Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism,* 1976). Accordingly, civic nationalism was based on the idea that the nation was constructed around common laws and institutions on a shared territory, whereas ethnic nationalism was the idea of nation as a rigid, composed of individuals possessing common traits by blood and soil. Anthony Smith, *Nationalism*, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, 39-41.

91 Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

92 Umut Özkırımlı & Spyros A. Sofos, *Tormented by history : nationalism in Greece and Turkey,* New York : Columbia University Press, 200, 2-5.

the Cyprus conflict marks a turning point, they would each be retaliated against by the host states. The kin and host states used them as pawns for their frictions over territory (mainly Cyprus and the Aegean). As a reaction to such a mistreatment, the other took revenge by mistreating the counterpart minority. This kind of a revenge attitude became an established state policy in Greece especially after the dramatic reduction in the number of Orthodox Greek minority in Istanbul post 1970s. To make matters worse, it was legitimized on the basis of the reciprocity principle (Article 45) of the Lausanne Treaty which in fact means parallel responsibilities for Turkey and Greece.

In this regard, survival of the Muslim and the Greek Orthodox minorities in their historical homelands (the latter not a subject of this study) fit into the theoretical framework of ethnic relations model- the triadic nexus- developed by Brubaker.[93] The triadic nexus links the minority communities themselves, the states in which they live, and their (assumed or real) external homelands.

This is 'an arena of struggle' where each element; the national minority, the nationalizing state, and the external national homeland are constructed as interdependent, competing stances.[94] The national minority '[...] is a field of struggle in a double sense."[95] The first one concerns its stance vis-a-vis the host state and the second one is the imposition and sustainability of a certain vision of nationalizing state. If this vision is, for instance, oppressive, sustaining it will be the only rationale for minority mobilization. [96]

The model has two outstanding features. The first is the positioning of nationalizing state, the national minority and the external national homeland in a *relational nexus* instead of treating them separately. The second is the prioritization of *perceptions*. To illustrate, in the nationalizing state and/or the national minority might perceive signs of projects

93 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

94 Ibid., 67.

95 Ibid., 64.

96 Ibid.

of 'nationalization' or 'national integration' and perceive the state as oppressive and mobilize against it by seeking autonomy or even secession. The homeland may provide material and moral support for this kind of initiative and protest the nationalizing state by bringing the issue to international platforms. The nationalizing state, in return, may not abandon the nationalizing projects, but even intensify them. She might accuse the minority of disloyalty and the external national homeland of intervening in internal affairs in breach of her sovereignty.[97]

Brubaker articulated this theoretical framework 'to illustrate the dynamically interactive quality' in the context of the break-up and violent civil wars in ex-Yugoslavia, particularly the Serbo-Croatian conflict, yet, excluding Bosnia. However, he also states that it has explanatory power for the peoples suffering a 'mismatch between cultural and political boundaries', which he calls 'nationally mismatched persons', who have a 'structurally ambivalent membership status, belonging by formal membership or residence to one state and by putative ethnonational affinity to other'.[98] 25 million ethnic Russians in post-Soviet states, 3 million ethnic Hungarians in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine, 2 million Albanians in Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, one million Turks in Bulgaria, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh, and others whose relations with their kin-states were limited during the Communist rule but intensified afterwards are cases in point.[99] Brubaker defines *national minority* as a:

> dynamic political stance, a family of related yet mutually competing political stances, not a static ethnic-demographic condition who have a public claim to a different ethnocultural nation than the dominant one, demand state recognition of their separate identity, and claim certain collective cultural and political rights. There are variations concerning the kind of stances to adopt within the national minority ranging from minimalist demands

97 Ibid, 58.

98 Ibid., 56.

99 Ibid.

> like education in minority language to maximalist demands of territorial and political autonomy. Some may prefer to actively participate in the institutions of the host state (the nationalizing state) whereas others may prefer a separatist, non-cooperative stance. [100]

In this regard, some may seek to prove their loyalty as legal citizens to the state they live in by refusing (political) demands from external parties (external homeland) while others might seek patronage from external parties such as the external homeland or international organizations.[101] Consequently, these different stances adopted by members of the same group may be distinct or mutually antagonistic. There might also be different and even conflicting claims to the designation of the identity of the national minority. Therefore, it is important if the group or potential group perceive and represent itself as a minority.[102]

In our context, the Western Thracian Muslim-Turk minority is a minority from the legal perspective (Lausanne 1924) and by objective and subjective criteria. It is in a non-dominant position in terms of population number, territorially concentrated and have distinct religious creed (Islam) and languages (Turkish and also Pomak). Designation of individual identity may vary depending on the context and the individual. However, due to a number of historical developments and emotional and other reasons, the minority in general perceive themselves as a Turkish minority although not in the sense of a group of Turkish citizens.

Therefore, evaluation of the concept of nationalizing state in the triadic nexus requires some modifications in our context. Brubaker defines 'nationalizing state' as "a dynamic political stance" and not a "static condition". [103] 'Perception' has a significant weight in his ethnic relations model. In other words, the perception of the state as *nationalizing* by the

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100 Ibid., 60.

101 Ibid., 60-61.

102 Ibid., 62.

103 Ibid., 63.

representatives of the national minority and/or the external national homeland is the driving force.[104] However, in this case, in 1924, the nation states of Greece and Turkey were legally established and internationally recognized.

Thereafter, they were nationalizing states albeit in the same vein but in mutually opposing ways. Greece was embarking on Greekification of Western Thrace among many other measures by settling a number of Anatolian refugees in the region. Turkey, on the other hand, was trying to nationalize the bourgeoisie, concentrated in the hands of non-Muslim minorities in Istanbul. During The Second World War, Greece was occupied by Bulgarians, Italians and the Nazi Germany. Right after the end of World War II, she was further devastated by the Civil War which lasted for another three years. This interrupted the Greek nation state consolidation.

Turkey, on the other hand, managed to abstain from World War II. Furthermore, in the chaotic war years with no supranational organization in effect, she had a free hand in carrying out the project of national bourgeoise creation that peaked with the notorious *Wealth Tax* that particularly targeted the non-Muslim bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Greece enlarged her borders post World War II[105] and became even more ethnically homogenous after the Jews, Armenians and the Bulgarians who had resettled during the Bulgarian occupation were gone. Therefore, by 1950s, both countries had completed nation-state making and had no irredentist claims against each other. The only challenge to this status quo was the Cyprus issue that emerged in mid 1950s and has plagued relations at varying degrees ever since.

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104 "[It is]an 'unrealized' nation-state, a state destined to be a nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation, but not yet in fact a nation-state and the concomitant disposition to remedy this perceived defect, to make the state what is properly and legitimately destined to be, by promoting the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation. (Brubaker 1996: 63)

105 The Dodecanese islands were given to Greece by Italy as war reparations. The territorial waters were extended from 3 miles to 6 miles in 1936.

As regards the external homeland, the triadic nexus does not necessarily define it as the actual homeland, in other words, the state where the minority and/or their ancestors lived before. It is not a fixed or static condition, but a 'dynamic political stance'. It is based on the idea of shared nationhood with people outside of the territory of the state and the status of legal citizenship. It is based on a real or imagined common ethnocultural affinity coined by the term 'co-ethnics'.[106] However, the (assumed) external homeland monitors and promotes the minority, the co-ethnics, "[...] protest alleged violations of their rights, and assert the right, even the obligation, to defend their interests."[107]

The extent to which the external homeland should act in favor of the co-ethnics concerning issues of material and moral support, immigration and citizenship privileges, the kind of stance for co-ethnics to take against the states they live in, the way of bringing the co-ethnics' problems to international platforms are contested questions that may change from one external homeland to another. Ultimately, external homeland politics are limited by international law, according to which states must protect their citizens when they live in other states. Consequently, it is not considered legitimate to protect the ethnic co-nationals who are legal citizens of the state they live in.[108]

In the case of Western Thracian Turkish-Muslim minority (and the Greek Orthodox in Turkey), the categories of kin state and host-state requires some modification. First of all, they are natives, not immigrants. Neither Turkey nor Greece is not hosting them because they had been there before the establishment of Turkey and Greece as independent nation states. Although Turkey is referred to as "motherland" (anavatan), and Greece as "homeland" (vatan) in the minority media and to a certain extent in public discourse, this terminology is quite problematic. The rhetoric of "motherland" indicates falsely that the minority immigrated from Turkey and settled in Western Thrace.

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106 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed,1996*, 57, 66.

107 Ibid., 57.

108 Ibid., 67.

I argue that Greece and Turkey are both homelands. Western Thrace, or Greek Thrace is homeland, because it has been home to the minority ever since an uncertain past. Turkey is the second homeland due to reasons of religious, linguistic and historical affinities. Turkey, as the assumed external homeland, has always had a patronage over the minority, particularly the elite. Depending on the political orientation of Turkish governments, their patronage shifted between religious and secular cadres. This was considered a breach of state sovereignty by Greece post 1974, sparking the paranoia that Western Thrace could be another Cyprus.[109]

The relationship between the nationalizing state (Greece or Turkey), the national minority (The Western Thracians and the Greek Orthodox) and the external homeland (Turkey or Greece) were not conflictual until the emergence of Cyprus dispute. The first minority to pay for it was the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul (5-6 Sept events and the 1964 expulsion)[110] as a consequence of which their population dramatically declined. This triggered Greece to employ policies to reduce the population of the Western Thracian Muslim minority.

This kind of a perception of reciprocity principle (Art.45) of the Lausanne Treaty, which in fact meant parallel responsibilities for the Muslim and non-Muslim minorities, was a reflection of the 19th century attitude towards minorities and the reluctance to regard them as citizens. Therefore, reciprocating mutual minorities for the disputes and/or clashes over territory is not peculiar to Greece and Turkey, but a nation-state problem.

In early 1900s, for instance, the native Greek communities in Bulgaria were enjoying cultural, administrative and religious autonomy. However, due to the clashing territorial claims of Bulgaria and Greece over the region of Macedonia, they were retaliated with a pogrom. Their

109 For more details, see Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace", 2000.

110 Samim Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları:Ulus-Devlet Çağından Küreselleşme Çağına Bir Azınlığın Yok Oluş Süreci*, (cev) Ceyla Gürmen, İletişim Yayınları, 1. Baskı, 2007, 262.

churches were burned, houses and properties attacked by local mobs.[111] In 1906, Bulgaria intended to assimilate her Greek Orthodox minority who only constituted 1.89% of the entire population because there were no Bulgarians in the territory of the then Greece. On the other hand, a good deal of autonomy was provided to the Muslim minority who were 14.4% of the entire population, due to the presence of Bulgarian population in the then Ottoman Empire.[112]

In mid-1990s, the triadic nexus was transformed into 'the quadratic nexus', incorporating in the Brubaker's model a fourth element, international organizations-in this context-European institutions.[113] J. Smith criticizes Brubaker for ignoring the role of international organizations in ethnic conflict prevention in post-communist Central and Eastern European states (CEEs).[114] In this regard, Smith argues that " [...] it would be more apt to talk of *a quadratic nexus* linking nationalizing states, national minorities and external national homelands to the institutions of an ascendant and expansive 'Euro-Atlantic space'.[115]

In fact, Brubaker does not disregard the role of international organizations. He acknowledges the development that through the end of Cold War minority rights have transcended state borders and become an international concern.[116]However, he underrates the role of international organizations and has a somewhat pessimistic attitude towards them as he compares them to the League of Nations and its failed minority protection mechanism. [117]

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111 Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900-1946,* Cornell University Press, New York, 2011.

112 Ibid., 62-63.

113 David J. Smith, "Framing the National Question in Central and Eastern Europe: A Quadratic Nexus?", *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*,Vol.2,no.1,September2002,3-16; Robert Sata, *Multicultural Pluralism:Towards a Normative Theory of Ethnic Relations*, unpublished PhD , Central European University, Budapest, September 2006.

114 David J. Smith "Framing the National Question", 2002, 3-16

115 Ibid., 9.

116 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed,1996*, 47.

117 Ibid., 106.

On the other hand, upon the collapse of the Communist Bloc, international organizations, particularly the OSCE, was quite influential in prevention of potential ethnic conflicts in Baltic states. After the declaration of independence, for instance, Latvians and Estonians had nationalist preferences which excluded the Russian ethnic minority. Latvia passed an initial resolution and law on citizenship which prevented the Russian minority, which constituted a third of the population, from acquiring citizenship. The harsh naturalization laws were demanding knowledge of the Latvian language. The language requirement was also brought to the exercise of certain professions. Likewise, in Estonia, knowledge of Estonian language was made mandatory for the naturalization of Russian minority members.[118]

The High Commissioner on National Minorities of the OSCE induced Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania[119] to amend their citizenship laws by lifting the requirement of competence in state language. Consequently, the Russian minority members were naturalized without having to take the language exam. [120] However, without the leverage of *EU membership* this might not have been possible because the impact of these international organizations is usually confined within systems of norms and regulations, which are disregarded at the domestic level, unless they have sufficient leverage.[121]

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118 Judith G. Kelly (eds.) *Ethnic Politics in Europe: the Power of Norms and Incentives,* Princeton Univ.Press,2004,21;, "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe", p.11 (eds) Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe,* Cornell University Press, 2005, 45.

119 Safia Swimelar, "Approaches to Ethnic Conflict and the protection of Human Rights in Post-Communist Europe: The Need for Preventive Diplomacy", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.7, No.3, Autumn 2001,98-126, 108

120 David J. Smith,"Chapter 5: Estonia:Reluctant Cooperation", (eds) Kelly, 95-115.; Swimelar, 108.

121 Guido Schwellnus, "The Adoption of Nondiscrimination and Minority protection Rules in Romania, Hungary, and Poland", *Ethnic Relations in Europe: the Power of Norms and Incentives,* 2004, 51-69, 51.

In fact, the EU interest in minorities was triggered by *security concerns* because of the outbreak of violent ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia, which posed a serious threat to European security as it was in close proximity to the EU member states.[122] Membership to the CoE was determined as a prerequisite for the EU membership. CoE membership, on the other hand, was made contingent upon respect for human and minority rights. Accordingly, the applicant state's relevant constitution, laws, and practices were inspected[123]. The CoE and the EU Commission were vested with the obligation to monitor adherence to Copenhagen Criteria.[124] EU conditionality was strong and non-negotiable, because it held a strong bargaining power as the benefits from the reward (EU membership) were perceived to outweigh the costs of rule adoption and diminish the role of opposition. [125]

On the other hand, not all minority standards set by the EU were applied in existing member states although their adoption was made obligatory for applicant states[126] which raised concerns for double standards. For instance, there was not much European leverage on Greece for a change of policy behavior against the Western Thracian minority as it was already a member and therefore was not supposed to adhere to Copenhagen Criteria. Even worse, for instance, the EU was blind to the existence of a discriminatory citizenship law which deprived Greek citizens of non-Greek ethnic origins of citizenship until 1998.

Sata expands Smith's quadratic nexus by adding another actor ; diaspora communities who can also assume the role of international organizations, and act as a 'lobby state'.[127] This makes the quadratic nexus

122 Kelly, "Introduction: The Europeanization", 2004, 18.

123 Ibid.

124 Official website of the European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accession_process/criteria/index_en.htm,last retrieved 24.03.2019.

125 Schwellnus, "The Adoption of", 2006, 51.

126 Ibid..; J.Smith, "Framing the National Question", 2002, 10.

127 Sata, "Multicultural Pluralism", 2006, 118.

a multi-sided one. [128]To reiterate the case of the notorious Greek citizenship law; it was not unveiled by the CoE but brought to its agenda along with other human rights violations, by the Western Thracian Solidarity Associations in Germany since early 1980s[129] as well as kin-state Turkey. Thus, the eventual change of Greek minority governance in mid-to late 1990s owes more to the multi-sided nexus. Nonetheless, the undertaken decentralization reforms as requirement of the Europeanization process post 1993s considerably benefited the minority.

§ 1.4 The Concept of Survival

Western Thracian minority are legal citizens of Greece but have real or imagined historical, linguistic and religious links with Turkey. Throughout history, their position lied somewhere in between a traditional Ottoman *millet*, multicultural (Muslim) Greek citizens, and aliens-potential agents of Turkey- threatening national security. This research seeks to inquire into how the Western Thracian rural Turkish-Muslim community has survived squeezed in between two states with precarious bilateral relations shifting from mutual hostility to reconciliation. Although the rural community is the main theme of the research, the urban community, the diaspora and transmigrant Western Thracian groups in Germany and Turkey are also incorporated as *relational categories*, with respect to their seasonal residence in the village as well as their ties and interactions with the rural community.

In this regard, the study seeks to offer answers to the questions; How have the Western Thracian Turkish-Muslim minority survived? What survival strategies did they devise to survive in particular historical ruptures such as the Civil War period and the Cyprus conflict? How have

128 Ibid.

129 Aydın Ömeroğlu, *Batı Trakya Türkleri ve Gerçek-I* Avcı Ofset, İstanbul, 1994, pp: 132-150; Yeni Adım, nr.2, 30 July 1991.

they maneuvered between two states- Greece and Turkey- in order to survive? Has the Western Thracian rural community been treated as a traditional Ottoman *millet*, or equal, multicultural citizens, or have they been assimilated, marginalized, segregated or forced to migrate? Have they exercised strong agency, sought only kin-state patronage, or only physical survival? What social changes have they gone through particularly post 1950s, after the consolidation of Greek state?

This research aims to dwell on the survival strategies of the Western Thracian rural community. Survival strategies in general can be classified as those pertaining to physical, economic, political and cultural survival. More or less the minority has physically survived. Unlike that of the Greek Orthodox in Istanbul, Western Thracian minority population has not dramatically shrunk despite substantial migration waves and deprivation of a substantial number of Greek citizenship. At least sixty thousand minority members were deprived of (Greek) citizenship including not only those staying and working in Turkey but also ordinary peasants in their villages in Greece. Once deprived of citizenship, these minority members ceased to legally exist.

Physical survival was most formidable during the Second World War and the consequent Civil War; not only for the minority but for all citizens of the country. Yet, in 1974, Greece was to engage in a violent conflict in Cyprus, far from her territory. Until then, Muslim, and Turkish, were used interchangeably in public and official discourse to address the minority. Afterwards, however, the use of "Turkish" as an identification was strictly shunned. The Cyprus conflict generated two opposing outcomes for the minority. While it instigated fear of a counter-violence by the local Greeks, it secured survival for the then Muslim recruits in the Greek army. They were separated from their Christian counterparts and none were sent to fight in Cyprus. This turned out to be the only case when being minority was more advantageous than being majority.

Political survival has been subject of a considerable number of academic studies, particularly post late 1990s. Therefore, it is not included within the scope of this study. The minority has in general been represented in the Greek Parliament throughout history. Minority MPs were

elected from Greek political parties except for one short period in early 1990s when they elected independent minority MPs.

Economic survival, on the other hand, was restrained by a number of discriminatory policies such as land expropriations, refusal of work permits and even driving licenses, denial of university diplomas acquired in Turkey, restrictions on opening small businesses, and employment in the public sector until late 1990s. Economic autonomy was also successfully impeded by the restrictions on the management of communal property or pious foundations, namely *waqfs*. Therefore, potential investments for education, and employment were blocked. Due to the ban on the purchase of land and immovables, though, they had to resort to illegal housing and/or invested the agricultural surplus on immovables in Turkey.

Social and cultural survival were restrained for decades by discriminations and oppression that led to economic backwardness and poor minority education. Nonetheless, after the Greek minority opening in early 1990s, combined with a number of other developments such as the unprecedented pace of globalization, technological developments and the growth of supra-national institutions such as the European Union have generated significant social changes for the community. Therefore, this study also seeks to elaborate on the strategies for social survival as well as social changes and continuities within the minority.

To conclude, this research argues that recurrent migration, good, neighborly inter-ethnic relations, infringing law in everyday life, resorting to clientelism and bribery in dealing with bureaucracy, growing significance of higher education post-1990s, commitment to creed (Islam) and investment on cultural traditions, the latter which has acquired a new character since late 1990s, have been the major survival strategies of the Western Thracian minority rurals.

§ 1.5 Distribution of Chapters

This study consists of ten chapters. *Chapter 1: Introduction* includes the literature review, theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the methodology. *Chapter 2: Who are the Western Thracian Turkish-Muslim minority?* introduces the Western Thracian rural minority in different geographical settlements of the villages, urban, transmigrant and diaspora groups as well as the minority institutions such as the Mufti Office, the charitable foundations (waqfs), and the cultural associations. It also sheds a light on the internal and external group boundaries within the region. Identity discourses are elaborated with reference to narrations of migration and multiethnic roots. *Chapter 3: Becoming Minority in Homeland* elucidates the historical path leading to the genesis of the minority; particularly the key historical events such as the Balkan Wars and the struggle for an independent state of Western Thrace and their traces on collective memory. *Chapter 4: Social and Spatial Reordering of Western Thrace* elaborates on the social impacts of two key events for the rural minority; refugee settlement in Western Thrace and dissemination of Atatürk's Reforms in the region. *Chapter 5: Surviving WW2 and the Greek Civil War (1946-1949)* dwells into the survival strategies of rurals during World War II, the concomitant Bulgarian occupation (1941-1944), and the Greek Civil War. *Chapter 6: Dissolution of Large Landowners: Five Narratives* is entirely based on the narrations of descendants of large landowners and the lowlander rurals about social organization and everyday life during their periods, their immigration to Turkey and the eventual change of big landownership to the favor of local Greek Orthodox.

Chapter 7: Consolidation of the Greek state, Reform and Immigration to Turkey focuses on two contradictory social developments in 1950s; outstanding reforms in minority education with the collaboration of Greece and Turkey and the first massive immigration wave to Turkey. The shift from rapprochement to deterioration of bilateral relations due

to the emergence of Cyprus conflict is discussed with a focus on the implications of 6-7 September events in Western Thrace. *Chapter 8: Surviving State Oppression, 1967-1991* elucidates the change of Greece's minority governance to the detriment of rurals and their survival strategies during the oppressive junta and the successive center-left party PASOK government.

Chapter 9: Politicization of Religious Institutions and Actors looks at the politicization and polarization of the Mufti institution as a result of the conflictual bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey in late 1980s. Its relevance lies in the deterioration of the Mufti institution and particularly the waqfs supposed to be the major economic source for the enjoyment of multicultural rights. *Chapter 10: Religion and Cultural Traditions* elaborates on the impact of religion and traditions in everyday life and communal identity. The revival of local religious and cultural traditions, the social and political dynamics behind signal a novel pattern of a survival strategy and a controversial sphere of agency.

2

Who are the Western Thracian Muslim minority?

§ 2.1 The Rural Landscape

Greece has 13 regional districts, or administrative regions, and 51 prefectures. Western Thrace is within the extended periphery of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. It has three prefectures from east to west: Evros, Rhodope and Ksanthi. The Rhodopean mountain range is the natural border with Bulgaria. The part of the mountains in Greek territory are called southern Rhodopes whereas those remaining in Bulgaria are northern Rhodopes as defined by the 1919 Treaty of Neuilly. In the middle line, or belt, are villages on the mountain skirts called *yaka* or *cebel* in the vernacular (Turkish) language. The lowlands stretch until the seaside. Tobacco is the main agricultural produce of highlands and middle line villages. In the lowlands, corn, cotton, wheat, trefoil are the main crops whereas in the lowlands of Evros, vineyards and rice cultivation are common.

The climate differs from highlands to lowlands. Mediterranean climate reigns in the lowlands. Winters are mild and rainy; summers are extremely hot and humid. In the highlands, however, winters are cold and snowy whereas summers are warm and rainy. Due to insufficient rainfall in lowlands during the summer, irrigation systems are operative day and night. Although irrigation systems are necessary for agricultural efficiency, pipes that are placed at deeper levels of water wells are claimed to be draining water resources and harming the soil.[1]The prospect of drought in the near future is a major environmental concern.[2]

The region of Western Thrace is twice a periphery, a geographical border between Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey, and home to the historical Turkish-Muslim minority. The region's relative underdevelopment owes to its geographical and social position. Until the recent decade, as eloquently stated by Yiakoumaki,

> '[...] in the popular Greek imagination and in everyday parlance, 'Thrace' functioned almost a synonym for borderland, and signified exile, desertion, remoteness, backwardness, development programs, industrial subsidies and military camps.'[3]

Muslims in Rhodope constitute 65% of the population and own 53.5% of the land whereas in Ksanthi they constitute 50% of the population and own 23% of the arable land. The rest of the land belongs to local Christians in both provinces. The minority population is more intensively concentrated in the northern highlands and the middle-line, in between the highlands and lowlands. The population of the southern zone, the

1 Narrations of male peasants.

2 https://www.thenationalherald.com/225105/dry-future-for-greece-water-shortages-predicted/, last retrieved 10.05.2019.

3 Vassiliki Yiakoumaki, "Ethnic Turks and 'Muslims', and the Performance of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Dromeno of Thrace", *South European Society & Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2006,145–161 148.

lowlands, on the other hand is Christian dominated. This geographical difference also represents a socio-economic difference.[4]

Due to the rugged terrain, in every province, the villages situated on highlands are called Balkan villages (*Balkan köyü)*. The Turkish word for mountain, "dağ" is never used to refer to these villages or to hills or mountains in general. It's been somehow replaced by "Balkan". The villages in between the highlands and lowlands are called middle-line (*yaka*) and those stretching towards the Aegean lowland villages *(ova köyü)*. As part of nation-state making project, these villages were given Greek names, a process completed by 1930.[5] Nevertheless, minority members usually refer to their villages by their Turkish names among themselves. Interestingly, even in mainland Greece, Greek Orthodox locals are claimed to have referred to their villages with their Turkish names until as late as 1960s.[6]

The lowland villages have the most fertile and abundant lands extending to the Aegean Sea in the south. The highlands are homogeneous Muslim villages except for the Greek-Orthodox Stavroupoli municipality in Ksanthi. The middle line and lowland villages are heterogeneous although there are also homogeneous Muslim and homogeneous Christian villages. Many Turkophone villages such as Balabanköy, Timurbeyli (later Demirbeyli), Yahyabeyli bear the names of the Ottoman raiders or the names of the *timariot* holders.

Western Thracian Muslim-Turk minority are predominantly peasants and live in villages. There is a group of small bourgeoisie and a group of educated professionals most of whom live in the towns of Komotini and Ksanthi. The main sources of rural income are agriculture and animal husbandry. However, many middle-aged males have multiple jobs; me-

4 Dia Anagnostou, and Anna Tryandafyllidou, "Regions, Minorities and European Integration: A Case Study on Muslims in Western Thrace, Greece", *ELAMEP, Report,* EUROREG, 2003.

5 Ahmet Aydınlı, *Batı Trakya Faciasının iç yüzü,* Akın Yayınları, İstanbul, 1971, 44.

6 Ernestine Friedl, *Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece,* New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962, 7.

chanics, carpenters, part-time waiters in the nearby towns or construction workers or cleaners on islands during the tourism season. The common crops of lowlands are cotton, corn, wheat, sunflowers, tomatoes, trefoil and asparagus, a novel crop of the recent decade.

On the other hand, in the highlands and middle-line villages tobacco is the dominant crop due to the lack of enough arable land and insufficient water. As a labor-intensive family job, tobacco is only cultivated by the Turkish- Muslim minority in the region. This makes it an ethnic job. The highlands of all three prefectures are the most deprived zone of the region in terms of natural resources, mainly land and water. The highland villages of southern Rhodopes extend from Ksanthian northernmost village Thermes to the Rhodopean highland village of Organi. They are predominantly home to Muslims whose native tongue is a Slavic language called Pomak.

The setting is common in all villages. In every village, there is a sign at the entrance with the name of the village in Greek script. There is a flat center in the middle of the village, sometimes adjacent to a park or a coffeehouse for the villagers to gather for significant occasions, and in times of elections for MP candidates and politicians to give speeches. There is a mosque and a graveyard either attached to the mosque or separate. There is a separate minority primary school building (active or closed) with a yard surrounded by trees. There are one or more grocery stores and coffeehouses depending on the size of the village. In big villages, there are two mosques, fast-food restaurants and taverns, a drugstore (pharmacy), a health center, an automobile repair shop, a hardware shop, and others. There is a public telephone, a kiosk, a football field, and one or two children's parks. The houses in lowland villages are neatly arranged on one side of the paved road that extends to other villages and the town. The fields extend on the other side of the paved road and surround the settlement.

In the mosque complex, there are two or more rooms, which had a primary school function prior to 1950s when the *village imam* was also the primary school teacher. One of the rooms, called *köy odası* is a meeting place for the males to chat before or after the prayer times. However,

since 1960s, males prefer to meet and chat in the village coffeehouses. Today it is used for Qur'an teaching to the children and/or females of the village. The second room is the *guestroom*, which provides accommodation for imams employed from outside of the village, single minority schoolteachers, and guests in general. In the past, the mosque complex offered shelter to the refugees during wars, accommodation to long distance travelers, and temporary shelter to miserable persons such as widowed women with children from other villages driven off from their houses.

In heterogeneous (Muslim-Christian) villages, Muslim and Christian neighborhoods are segregated. This is a historical pattern of settlement. For the Anatolian Greek Orthodox immigrants of 1924, the government built either separate villages or constructed separate neighborhoods on public lands of Muslim villages. Similar to those in Greek Macedonia, they were much better designed.[7] Within time, as population grew, they were unified.

In such villages, each community has kept its schools and places of worship intact. They present a beautiful cultural tapestry with Greek and Muslim national symbols of mosque and church, separate graveyards, separate primary schools, a monument to honor war heroes, small statutes and memorials constructed in honor of a deceased person bearing the cross, and the Greek flag in the center. There are separate and mixed coffeehouses which are frequented by both Muslim and Christian males.

The coffeehouses also sell (although not in every village) alcohol and offer grilled or fried meat, salads and meze upon request. They are the males' domain, where they converse, play cars, backgammon and gossip. Yet, keeping a coffeehouse is a family business with a gendered division of labor. The owner's wife and daughters make coffee, do the cleaning, cooking and dishwashing but do not serve the customers. Serving is the owner man's duty. Coffee is the traditional drink (Ottoman style hot

7 Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia,* 1870-1990, The University of Chicago Press, 1997, 8.

coffee and Greek cold coffee- Frape- consumed more in summers). Unlike in the town, in a village cafe, a man can stay as long as he likes (even the entire day) for a cup of coffee.

In all villages, houses are whitewashed. This is a female task repeated every spring. Trees along the main road and in the yards are also whitewashed in order to keep away harmful insects. House are one or two story with balconies, terraces, tiled roofs and spacious yards encircled by walls or fences. There is a garage-like shelter for the cars, tractors and other stuff in one corner of the yard, and a separate multi-functional room to use to cook, to prepare food for the winter, to store food items, vegetables and fruits.

The natural outcome of multi-ethnic origins manifest itself in the physical appearances of the inhabitants of villages, even among the members of a family. They look like a United Nations picture with the white-skinned, blue eyed, blonde peoples on the one hand, the slant, almond-eyed pale-brown skinned persons on the other hand. In a few villages, there are Black Muslims, descendants of African slave-laborers who had settled during the Ottoman Empire.

2.1.1 *Evros Prefecture*

The province of Evros is the eastern prefecture of Greece bordering Bulgaria on the north and Turkey on the east with the river Evros as the natural border. The Turkish name of the province and the provincial center-Dedeağaç- apparently took its name from a Bektashi dervish(Dede) who used to sit in the shade of an old tree (ağaç).[8] It was renamed as Alexandropolis (the city of Alexander) after the then Greek King Alexandros when it was ceded to Greece in 1920.

Dedeağaç and Dimetoka are the first conquered territories in Rumelia and the first Bektashi settlements in the Rumelian lands. Until the

8 Nusret Çam, *Yunanistan'daki Türk Mimari Eserleri,* Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2000, p.29

14th century, Dedeağaç used to be a fishing village. When the Eastern Railway passed through the village in 1880s, it started to develop into a town. According to the Edirne Register of 1901 *(1319 Edirne Salnamesi)* the population consisted of 11,900 Muslims, 7.180 Greek Orthodox, 10,459 Bulgarians, 121 Jews, 659 Armenians and 81 Catholics.[9]

Today the province consists of four main municipalities from north to south; Orestiada, Didymothiko, Soufli, the island of Samothraki and Alexandroupoli. According to the 2011 census, the population of Evros prefecture is 146,378. The highest concentration is in the municipality of Alexandroupoli with 63,920 inhabitants. There are no minority-inhabited villages in Orestiada, Dimetoka, Samothraki. There is only one minority village -Demirören- within the municipality of Soufli. The rest of the minority villages are within the municipality of Alexandroupoli.

The Muslim town dwellers and many rurals of Dedeağaç had already migrated to Turkey during the Balkan Wars, and many others during and after the Population Exchange although they were exempted. [10] Therefore, today this is the prefecture with the lowest number of minority population.[11] The small number of current minority members in this province is predominantly Muslim Roma.[12]

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9 İsmail Bıçakçı, *Yunanistan'da Türk Mimari Eserleri,* ISAR Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p.41.

10 Other evacuated villages include Akpınar(Aspronerion), Armutlu(Apidohori), Bahadırviran(Patara), Beyköy(Aristinon), Bıdıklı(Tiheron) ,Bıldırköy(Pali), Bulgarköy (Elllinohori), Çakırcı (Prolithos), Çavuşköy(Zoni), Çavuşlu (Kiani), Çekirdekli (Amfitriti), Çengerli (Tsiggeli), Çömlekçi (Lagina), Duraliköy (Dorikon), Çörekköy (Kastanies), currently the Greek-Turkish border. Based on Baltalı*, Batı Trakya Köyler Ansiklopedisi,* 3. Rurals who migrated to Turkey during settled in the villages of Edirne.

11 The census conducted by the allied administration before the ceding of the region to Greece in 1920 gives the number of Turks in Dedeagac,, Sofulu and Kumciftlik as 4,691 whereas the numbers for Gümülcine and İskeçe are 39,601 and 30,432 respectively. Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 29.

12 Their number is mentioned 5,000 for the year 1980 by F.De Jong, "The Muslim Minority in Western Thrace", (in) G.Ashworth, (eds.), *World Minorities in the Eighties,* Sunbury : Quartermaine House Ltd.,1980, 95.

A number of Greek Orthodox exchanged peoples were settled in the villages of Evros after the Population Exchange.[13] The new names of the exchanged Greeks villages usually start with "Nea"- "New", and are followed by the names of their original villages in Turkey; Nea Vissa, Nea Kesani. This holds for the Muslim Turk migrants from Greece who settled in Turkey as well. For instance, Ahırköy (Nea Vissa), whose inhabitants migrated to Turkey and settled in Edirne gave the same name to their new village.[14]

In the lowlands of Evros, minority members live in heterogeneous villages. The current lowland villages with mixed Muslim and Christian inhabitants are; Köpekliköy, Dikilitaş, Fındıcak, Güvendik, Hotallar, Güreci, Miri. Hasanlar is the sole middle lin village with homogeneous Muslim-Turk population. Çilingir Mahalle was entirely evacuated during the Balkan Wars and Bulgarian occupation, yet, it was revitalized by the settlement of immigrants from the Rhodopean highland of Mehrikoz between 1950 and 1959.[15] Olive cultivation is the main source of income in lowland villages.

The homogeneous Turkish-Muslim minority villages are concentrated on the highlands of Evros; Babalar, Büyük Derbent, Küçük Derbent, Hebilköy, Demirören, and Ruşanlar. After the original Muslim-Turk inhabitants fled to Turkey during the Balkan wars, these villages were refilled by the highlanders on the vicinity of Bulgarian border during the Greek Civil War of 1946-1949 and later. These villages were all early Bektashi settlements. Today Babalar and Ruşanlar villages are homogeneous Bektashi whereas Hebilköy and Büyük Derbent are heterogeneous (Sunni and Bektashi).

13 İbrahim Baltalı, *Batı Trakya Köyleri Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt I, BAKES Yayınları, October 2017, 3.

14 Ibid., 4

15 Ibid., 112-113.

2.1.2 *Rhodope Prefecture*

Rhodope is the province with the greatest number of Muslim-Turk minority population, which constitute almost 65% of the provincial population of 108,556.[16] The biggest four municipalities of the Rhodope prefecture are; Komotini with a population of 55,813, Maronia-Sapon with 18,873 mixed population of Muslims and Christians, Arianon (Kozlukepir), with 18,308 overwhelming Muslim-Turk inhabitants and Iasmos, 15,562 with majority Turkish-Muslim inhabitants. In the highlands, the biggest municipalities are Kehros and Organi. There are approximately 101 villages out of which 65 are homogeneous Muslim-Turk, 20 are homogeneous Greek Orthodox and 20 are mixed.

The main lowland villages of Rhodope are those within the municipality of Iasmos, Komotini and Sapon. These municipal centers have mixed Muslim and Christian populations. Rhodopean villages extend from Glikoneri (Greek Orthodox) in the south to the Ksanthian administrative border of Bekirli in the west. Sasallı, Ortacı, Karamusa, Balabanköy, Palazlı, Yalanca and Yalımlı. Koptero and Galini are homogeneous Turkish-Muslim villages. The rest are mixed.

Some were once timariot villages and home to ciftliks of Muslims, Bulgarians and the Greek Orthodox. As will be elaborated in Chapter 6, in the vicinity of Yasiköy were the Ortacı ciftlik of Osman Ağa, Karamusa ciftlik of Ali Ağa, Balabanköy ciftlik belonging to Ali Efendi, Hacı Yakup Ağa and others. In the south extending to the seashore were Büyük Kaval, Küçük Kaval, Songurlu, Anaköy ciftliks. To the southeast closer to Maronia were the İmaret, Yardımlı, Demirbeyli ciftliks and Yahyabeyli, claimed to have founded by a certain Yahya Bey.[17] Today rurals in these villages are small to large landholders.

The highland villages of Iasmos municipality are Ballıca, Gülecik, Kayabaşı, Dullu, Kavacık, Kuruçay, Kuzuoba, Dağ Karamusa, Beygirciler, Kirazlı, Mescit Mahalle, and Tekedere. Dağ Karamusa, Beygirciler, Dullu,

16 Dia Anagnostou, and Anna Tryandafyllidou, "Regions, Minorities" 2003.

17 "Adım Adım Batı Trakya: Yahyabeyli", *Gündem Gazetesi,* nr.520, 2 March 2007.

Gülecik, Kayabaşı are Turkish-speaking villages whereas Ballıca, and Tekedere are Pomak-speaking.

The middle-line villages of the municipality from west to east are; Arabacıköy (mixed), Bekirli(mixed), Narlıköy (mixed), Kozlardere, Susurköy(mixed), Büyük Müselim, Çepelli, Bulatköy, Gebecili, Eşekçili, Ayazma, Sendelli, and Yuvacılı. Half of these villages are heterogeneous whereas the other half homogeneous Turkish-Muslim. Eşekçili, for example, was recorded in Ottoman land register in the end of 16th century as conquered and established by Tanrıdağı Yürüks.[18]

The lowland villages within the municipality of Komotini are; Fener, Sarıyer, Meşe, Nuhçalı, Ortakışla, Kalanca, Melikli, Kalkanca, Çuhacılar, Bayatlı, Sarıca, Büyük Doğanca, and Küçük Doğanca. Fener, by the seaside, a previously mixed village, is today homogeneous Greek Orthodox. Arogi and Mesi are also previously mixed villages with few minority members remaining. Except for Melikli, Sarıca, Büyük Doğanca and Küçük Doğanca, these villages are heterogeneous.

Bayatlı, for instance, is recorded in the Ottoman land registers of 1530 as a *timariot* village.[19] *Bayat* is claimed to the name of a Turkish clan of Oguz Turks and also a name of Turkmen and Yürük clan.[20] It was a homogenous Muslim Turk village before 1922. It became heterogeneous after a number of exchanged Greek Orthodox families were settled in houses built on pasture lands of the village. After 1945, gradually, Sarakatsans, nomadic Greek Orthodox peoples from highlands, were settled in the village. By 1967, the village population consisted of 229 Turks and 280 Greek Orthodox.[21]It is circumscribed by the village of Sarıca on the northeast, Küçük Songurlu on the north, Ortakışla on the west, Anagöl

18 Başbakanlık Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defteri, No.230, s.51, "Kendimizi Tanıyalım: Tamna Eşekçili", *Nokta*, 7 April 1989, n.32.

19 Başvekalet Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defteri No.167, s.10, "Kendimizi Tanıyalım: İşte Biz Buyuz: Bayatlı (Pagurya)", *Nokta*, 7 October 1988, n.21.

20 Baltalı, *Batı Trakya Köyleri Ansiklopedisi*, 2017, 54.

21 "Kendimizi Tanıyalım: İşte Biz Buyuz: Bayatlı (Pagurya)", *Nokta,* 7 October 1988, n.21.

and the former ciftlik lands on the south.[22] The middle-line villages are Baraklı, Demircili, Tuzçuköy, and Kalfa.

In the municipality of Sapon, the municipal center Şapçı is heterogeneous whereas the lowland villages of Yahyabeyli Makıf, Uysallı, Yardımlı, Muratlı, Demirbeyli and Salmanlı are homogeneous Turkish-Muslim. Hambarköy, Hacımustaköy, Ircan, Evrenköy are mixed, Karakurcalı and Lefeciler are homogeneous Turkish-Muslim whereas Kuşlanlı and Hacılar are homogeneous Greek Orthodox. The final two were originally Bulgarian villages.

Finally, in the municipality of Arrianon, all villages are highland and middle-line villages and are homogeneous Turkish-Muslim including the municipal center Kozlukepir. The highland villages are; Mehrikoz, Durhasanlar, Hebilköy, Hacıören, Gerdeme, Sarancina, Keziren, Kardere, Kuzören, Musacık, Çalabı, Üntüren, Organi, Hacıviran, Kozdere, Kızılağaç, Dündarlı, Küçüren, Üşekdere, and Kayrak. The middle-line villages are Üç Gaziler, Payamlar, Menetler, Dolapçılar, Değirmendere, Delinazköy, Işıklar, Kurcalı, Küçük Müselim, Bıyıklıköy, Sirkeli, Küçük Sirkeli, Karacalköy, Çelebiköy, Ballahor, Basırlıköy, Domruköy, Omurluköy and Satıköy.

2.1.3 *Ksanthi Prefecture*

The population of Ksanthi prefecture is 110,887 according to the 2011 census. It has six municipal zones; from north to south, in the highlands Mikis and Stavroupoli, the municipal center of Ksanti, in the lowlands partly extending to the seashore, Topiros, Avdiron and Vistonida. The municipality of Mikis with a population of 20,573 consists of homogeneous minority population, the historical homeland of Pomak-Turks. In other municipalities the population is mixed although there are also homogeneous minority villages. The municipality of Ksanthi is the most populated with 52,473 inhabitants, the municipality of Avdira 23,044,

22 Ibid.

and Topiros 14,797. In Ksanthi, out of a total of 70 villages, Muslim-Turks live in 35 villages, 10 of them homogeneous Pomak-Turk villages and the rest mixed[23].

The highland villages of Ksanthi within the municipality of Mikis are Mustafçova, also the municipal center, Yassıören, Elmalı, Bratankova, Kiramahallesi, Basaykova, Dolaphan, and Ketenlik as the most populous one with the highest number of population -2,500, followed by Şahin with a population of 2,300 and Gökçepınar with 1,200. There are also small neighborhoods with 10 to 50 inhabitants called *mahalles*.

The commune of Kotilis include the villages of Paşevik as the largest one with a population of 1,200, followed by Demircik and Balkanova. In the commune of Thermes (Ilıca), Ilıca Birinci Mahalle , Ilıca Orta Mahalle , Ilıca İkinci Mahalle, İsmail Mahalle, and Memkova are the main villages. In the commune of Satron (Sinikova), the main villages are Sinikova Orta Mahalle, Sinikova Eske Mahalle , Sinikova Dur Mahalle, Uğurlu, Çalaperde and three other tiny villages with a small number of inhabitants between 10-20. Finally in the municipality of Stavropoli, İsice, Keçili, Emerli, Köresten, Aşağı Kozluca, and the only mixed village of Atmacalı.

In the second biggest highland village of Şahin, there are three mosques, and two shrines belonging to Karaca Ahmet and Karaca Ayşe, built in 1450. They are believed to be the founders of the village. A church was built in late 1950s although there is no Christian in the village but only a local patrol. The village of Kozluca, in the north of Şahin, was among the estates of an Ottoman Palace doctor Ahi Çelebi. The land was granted him as appanage by Yavuz Sultan Selim Han in 1530.[24] According to this archival source, the village consisted of 18 households, of which 5 were Yürüks, 16 households and 1 bachelor (single).[25] In the Eşkünci

23 Statistical data from official website of Greek Statistical Institute; http://www.statistics.gr/2011-census-pop-hous?fbclid=IwAR1CwlcEa6smeFSFAg4Z_FmRREQdTS30nVg7UADNhi-PJELIvfi5J5tPbw, last retrieved 02.06.2019.

24 Başbakanlık Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defteri, No: 167, s.28, cited in *Nokta*, "Kotili-Kozluca", 9 December 1988.

25 Ibid.

and Yamak records belonging to the 16.century,[26] Halil Turak and Abdullah Karaali were recorded as "yamak", an Ottoman military category, from Tanrıdağı Yürüks.[27]

The middle-line villages of İskeçe are referred as "Soğanyakası" in parlance. They are scattered in between the mountain skirts and the adjacent lowlands divided by the old highway linking Evros to Greek Macedonia. The biggest middle-line village is Gökçeler with a population of 1800. It was first recorded in Edirne Salnamesi of 1892[28]. According to some Turkish sources, the inhabitants of the villages named Gökçeler, Gökçeli and Gökçellik are descendants of Gökçeli and Elvan clans of the Turkish Yürük tribe of Üçoklar who conquered Çukurova in the 13th century.[29] The village has been received a significant number of settlers from highland villages. Other villages are Sünnetçiköy, Dinkler, Karaçanlar and Sakarkaya and are mixed. On the other hand, Yelkenciler, Höyükköy, Koruköy and Gökçeler are homogeneouTurkish-Muslim villages.

The lowland villages of Ksanthi are within the municipalities of Ksanthi, Vistonida and Topiros. They were once home to a number of ciftliks which were dissolved in certain periods, during the Balkan wars, during the refugee settlement and post 1950s as a result of migration to Turkey. These villages built on fertile lands were either part of the Sultan's

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26 Ibid.

27 Başbakanlık Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defteri, No: 230, s.51., Ibid.

28 The information on the Western Thracian villages was collected by the minority journalist Abdurrahim Dede and published in his newspaper *Nokta* in 1988 under the series "Kendimizi Tanıyalım"[Let's learn about our history] in 1988. Under this title he provides the Turkish translation of Ottoman archival information on the villages (majority those in lowlands) of Western Thrace.*Edirne Vilayeti Salnamesi,* H.1310, s.471, in "Gökçeler(Seleron) Tarihi", Nokta, Kasım 1988.

29 Faruk Sümer, *Oğuzlar, Türkmenler; tarihleri, boy teşkilâtı, destanları,* Ankara Üniversitesi, 1972, p.177; Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Anadolu'da Türkmen Aşiretleri, p.*130, cited in Nokta "Gökçeler", ibid; The name Gökçeler is also a village name in several parts of Anatolia and one in Constanta (Köstence) in current Romania. Cevdet Türkay, Başbakanlık Arşivi belgelerine göre Osmanlı İmparatorlugunda oymak, aşiret, ve cemaâtlar,Tercüman, Istanbul, 1979, s.377, cited in Nokta, ibid.

has and/ or *timariots.* Upon the dissolution of the timariot system, sharecroppers, ex-slaves from Africa, and Muslim Roma worked on the ciftliks for the owner referred to as 'Bey'. The region was also home to many leading modernists of their time who pioneered the adoption of Turkish secular reforms.

The Ksanthian lowland villages are all mixed with an exceptional number of homogenous Muslim-Turk villages. The land is plentiful and fertile. Households own larger plots of land as compared to other villages. Therefore, as compared to the monocrop (tobacco) in highland and middle-line villages, a variety of crops including cotton, corn, tomatoes, pepper and recently asparagus are cultivated here.

The biggest lowland village is Koyunköy(Kimmeria), a Muslim-Christian mixed village with a population around 4,000. It has been attracting immigrants from several villages of Ksanhtian highlands who buy land and settle here. In the municipality of Topiros, all villages are mixed except for Öksüzlü, Gencerli, Taraşmanlı, Kırköy, Beyköy, Bekaovası, İnhanlı, Kurdhasanlı, Balabanlı, Davutlu and Nuhullu.

In the municipality of Vistonida (takes its name from lake Vistonida/Borugölü), the biggest village is the mixed village of Yenice with a mixed population of around 2000 (Turkish-Muslim Roma and Greek Orthodox). The first tobacco cultivation was done here during the Ottoman Empire. Other villages are Boyacılar , Mizanlı, Misvaklı, Karaköy and Alıççılar, the only homogeneous Turkish-Muslim village.

Kırköy, for example is an old village recorded in 1530 Ottoman registers. Along with Beyköy, and İnhanlı, it harbors African origin Turkish speaking Muslims.[30] It is the final village of Thrace on the eastern side of river Nestos, the natural boundary of Population Exchange. In the Ottoman archives it is stated that the majority of this village's population consists of the descendants of the laborers on the ships of Sultan Murat

[30] Κίνηση "Απελάστε το Ρατσισμό" (Expel Racism), "Στο Άβατο των μαύρων Ελλήνων της Θράκης"(The Black Greeks of Thrace in Avatos), available online at: http://www.kar.org.gr/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/01_grafima-thumb-medium.jpg, 15 February 2014.

Han to carry out the transportation of passengers to each side of the river Karasu. Therefore the villagers were exempted from all taxes except for the tithe. In 1870s, the village consisted of 69 families, of which 4 were Yürüks and 5 Christians, and 21 single men. [31] Likewise, in Beyköy and Bekeobası, alternately also referred as Beyobası, there are families of African origin.[32]

Emirler Tekkesi, or Emirli, for instance, was recorded in an Ottoman archive of late 15th century as a village within the Yenice-Karasu township as part of the Sultan's *has*.[33] In 1530, it was recorded as "arable land"(mezra)[34] and a timariot village (tımarha-i zuama ve sipahiyan köyü) with a population of 11 households.[35] In 1988, a local newspaper reports that there were 40 Muslim Turk households in the village.[36] Today, however, it is a Greek Orthodox village with the exception of three Muslim families. It is claimed to have been evacuated by the massive migration wave during the free migration period in mid to late 1950s. After the migration of Muslims in mid 1950s, the village was merged with the neighborhood of exchanged Greek Orthodox as they bought the houses and lands of those who immigrated to Turkey. [37]

Likewise, Köresten, Otmanören, Horozlu [38]and Bedirli are three of the Ksanthian lowland villages which are entirely evacuated as a result

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31 Başbakanlık Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defteri, nr.167, s.21, cited in *Nokta,* 9 December 1988

32 Koutsoukos, Appendices, 2012, 34; *Nokta* ,December, 1988

33 Başbakanlık Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defteri, No:70, s.3, "Mega Evmiron – Emirli", *Nokta,* 9 December 1988,

34 Başbakanlık Arşivi, Tapu Tahrir Defteri, No:167, s.21,

35 Ibid,22.

36 *Nokta,* 9 December 1988, nr.29.

37 Kemal Şevket Batıbey, *Batı Trakya'da Teneke ile Alarm: Ve Bulgarlar Geldi,* Boğaziçi Yayınları, İstanbul, 1976, 175; Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlu, Mustafa Tahsinoğlu, Hrisa, summer 2012.

38 There is only one minority family in Petrinos (Horozlu), the writer and researcher Aydın Ömeroğlu. He was born in this village but in 1957, he was the only student in the minority primary school of the village because the villagers had migrated to Turkey. As the school closed that year, the family moved to Kireççiler. His sisters moved to Turkey with their

of immigration to Turkey. In the village of Okçular, for instance, there are only 4 Muslim-Turk families today. Bedirli was named Lefki in 1928, and had only 2 Muslim-Turk families in 1960. It was once part of the Emirler Tekkesi. In 1923, it is cited as entirely empty.[39] Bedri Çiftlik was recorded in Edirne Vilayet Salnamesi of 1892[40] and mentioned by Koutsokos as an unknown area of ciftlik cultivated by Muslim sharecropper families.[41]

2.1.4 *Demography: Declining Minority Population*

Depopulation is a general problem in Greece and in the region of Western Thrace.[42] Low birth rates and an ageing population are serious concerns.[43] Mavrommatis calculates the current regional minority population as 80,000.[44] This is a rational estimate given the low birth rate within the minority over the past three decades. Migration and deprivation of Greek citizenship (from 1970s to 1990s) have also contributed to it. There has been a perpetual decline in birthrate since 1960s, particularly in the lowlands. For instance, in his visit to the highland village of Hebilköy in 1996, Belli was surprised to find out that the number of

husbands. He left for Germany in 1980 and returned in 2010. Interview with Aydın Ömeroğlu, summer 2012.

39 Koutsoukos, Appendice, 2012, 27.

40 Edirne Vilayet Salnamesi, 1310, s.470, *Nokta,* "Kendimizi Tanıyalım: Türkçe Yer Adları Kılavuzu", 9 December 1988, nr.29.

41 Koutsoukos, "Appendices",2012, 40.

42 "Veriler ortada: Batı Trakya'da nüfus hızla eriyor", *Azınlıkça,* 7 October, 2021.

43 https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-declining-population, last retrieved 02.05.2022.

44 Giorgos Mavrommatis, "Bektashis in 20th Century Greece", *Turcica*, 40, 2008, 219-251, 238.

households(50) had not changed since 1948.[45] As of 1988, Oran claimed the birthrate of the minority as 3% annually. [46]

In this section, the falling trend in childbirth is evaluated among the rurals via the number of participants' siblings, their children and grandchildren. Although the samples are small and reflect the rural population, the pattern is almost the same among the urbans. In the lowland village of Galini, for instance, between 2020 and 2022 June, twenty-two inhabitants, majority elderly, passed away whereas only three babies were born.

Of sixteen elderly females aged between 66 and 87 in the same village, three are seven siblings; two are five siblings, six are four siblings, two are three siblings, three are two siblings. One is single, a retired teacher, who has never married. On the other hand, only one of them has three children, one has a single child, and all of the rest have two children. Out of eleven who have two children, two have four grandchildren and three have three grandchildren whereas the rest have two grandchildren. It is noteworthy to trace the fall in the rate of childbirth from this tiny sample of females. Given their years of birth, around between 1925 and 1932, they were between three-to seven siblings. Upon marriage at the ages of 16-18, which corresponds to post WWII; 1945- on, all in the sample had two children – except for one who had three.

The fall in childbirth is further underpinned by the lowlander married female middle-age group; between 30 and 35. Of the fifteen married females, eleven are two siblings, two are three siblings, and two are single children. Of those who are three siblings, one has no children and the other one child. Of those two females who are single children themselves, one has two children and the other only one. Of eleven who are two siblings, five of them have two children whereas six have only one child.

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45 Mihri Belli, *Gerilla Anıları: Yunan İç Savaşından***,** Belge Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998, 217.

46 Baskın Oran, 'La minorite turco-musulmane de la Thrace Occidentale (Grece) in S. Vaner ed., Le differend Greco-Turc (Paris, 1988), 145, cited in Meinardus:"Muslims: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies", 81-93, 86. (eds.) Richard Clogg, *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society*, Hurst &Company, London, 2002.

The sample also indicates that childbirth is not associated with education level. Of the nine females with one child, six are university graduates and three are primary school graduates. Of the six university graduates, only three females have worked regularly (doctor, dentist, civil servant). Of the seven females who have two children, three are university graduates whereas the rest are primary school graduates. Of the fourteen young females aged between 16 and 29, only two were married, also university graduates, each had one baby and told me that they weren't planning to have a second child.

Of the thirteen lowlander elderly male participants aged between 62 and 89, two are six siblings, five are two siblings, one is five siblings, two are four siblings and three are three siblings. Three of them have one child each and one grandchild whereas the rest have two children and between three and four grandchildren. In the lowlands, families with more than two children are exceptions. The norm of having "two children" emerged in 1960s and continues to be the norm, with an emerging trend of having one child.

As regards the mixed female and male middle-aged group of highlanders, of three elderly males, one is five siblings whereas two are three siblings. The first has four children, the second has two and the third has three children. The one with two children has four grandchildren. One of his sons has one child whereas the second has three. The one with three children has three grandchildren – each child has a single child. Of the middle-aged group, a 42-year-old male is three siblings but has two children. A 32-year-old male is five siblings but has recently married and has a single child. A 40-year-old female is four siblings and has three children. A 50-year-old male is six siblings but has three children. A 45-year-old male is five siblings but has two children. The highlander sample is very limited which makes it difficult to draw a conclusion. Yet, depending on personal observations and narrations of participants, there has also been a drop in childbirth among the highlanders from three/four to two.

Concerning the reasons of fall in birth rate, parents (both male and female) state that they grew up in poverty and they want to give their children all the means they could for a better life standard. This 'better

life standard' includes a number of criteria; education comes first. Equally important they cite 'a house', usually in the form of a detached house with a garden in the village, and or a flat in the town, and sometimes both. On the other hand, some of the participants with single children stated that they regretted not having a second one stating that they had become like slaves working their entire lives for the welfare of a single child-and (probably) not receiving enough love and respect. They reiterated that the norm should be two- neither less nor more.

§ 2.2 The Urban Community

Many notable families of Gümülcine and İskeçe immigrated to Turkey. Majority of the current urban minority members are previous rural immigrants and their descendants. They were urbanized either by way of marriage, by migration from the highland villages and by opening offices to exercise their professions after graduating from university or technical high schools. Yet, many keep their ties with their villages. In other words, it is difficult to talk about a complete urban group with no links to the village. The type of these links is in the form of kinship relations with an economic aspect. To illustrate, urbans who have houses and land hire the latter, and receive rental income and/or agricultural produce.

Urbanization is a complex and ongoing process. Many rural university graduates, particularly doctors, dentists, lawyers exercise their profession and live in the town where life standards are considered to be better in terms of educational opportunities for their children, independence from the family in the village, better access to social networks and cultural facilities. The wealthy peasants, workers and professionals in Germany who have accumulated enough savings, have preferred to buy

houses in the town for themselves and their children in the past two decades, particularly after the abolition of the ban on the purchase of immovables.

§ 2.3 Diaspora & Transmigrant Communities in Turkey

The Western Thracian diaspora population in Turkey consists of legal and illegal immigrants and their descendants. Their number is considered to be much higher than those who remain in Greece.[47] They are legal Turkish citizens who either denounced their Greek citizenship once they immigrated to Turkey or were deprived of it. For instance, as a requirement of the free migration policy, the immigrants had to liquidate their property in Western Thrace and waive their Greek citizenship in order to settle in Turkey and become Turkish citizens. A number of families and individuals immigrated illegally in 1980s passing through the Meriç river.

There is also a considerable number of transmigrant population in Turkey. In 1964, when free immigration policy ended, it became difficult to obtain Turkish citizenship for the Western Thracian immigrants. A substantial number of subsequent immigrants who waived their Greek nationality had to wait for long years to acquire Turkish citizenship.[48] Those who were able to retain their Greek citizenship lived and worked with residence and work permits in Turkey which they had to renew

47 Samim Akgönül, *The Minority Concept in the Turkish Context: Practices and Perceptions in the Turkey, Greece and France*, Brill, 2013, 109. Although the exact number is unavailable, Akgönül makes a rational estimate of 200,000 Western Thracians including Turkish nationals and Greek nationals.

48 In 1981, Turkish President Kenan Evren granted Turkish citizenship to 3000 Western Thracian immigrants, ibid, 108; Selahattin Yıldız claimed that the Western Thracian Solidarity Association in Istanbul under his leadership visited Evren in his office to demand the naturalization of stateless Western Thracian Turks in Turkey, Interview with Selahattin Yıldız, İstanbul, summer 2012.

every year and every time they had to change jobs and workplaces.[49] This lasted for decades and generations. Thus, generations of transmigrants have emerged, living their lives in between two countries, a condition that prevails today.

Unlike the Turkish citizen Western Thracian diaspora, the transmigrants do not enjoy all the benefits of being legal Turkish citizens. The transmigrant group is mostly composed of Western Thracian students who studied in Turkish high schools and universities and preferred to stay in Turkey either because their diplomas were not recognized in Greece or due to limited job opportunities in the region or other reasons such as independence from the family and the village.

In the recent decade, Turkey relaxed her policy concerning citizenship and granted Turkish citizenship to a number of transmigrants who fulfilled the requirements for eligibility. Consequently, out of pragmatic reasons such as the bureaucratic burden concerning work permits acquisitions of immovable, a number of working, married transmigrants have acquired Turkish citizenship for themselves and their families and become dual citizens. There are also transmigrants who do not apply for Turkish citizenship due to fear of possible deprivation of Greek citizenship, although the notorious Article 19 was abolished more than two decades ago.

The Western Thracian diaspora and transmigrants' preferences of settlement have been the Marmara and the Aegean regions where they usually live in the form of enclaves. They preferred the places where their relatives, neighbors and friends had previously settled which are concentrated in Istanbul, Bursa, İzmir, Adapazarı, İzmit and Balıkesir. The Ksanthian lowlander peasants settled in suburbs of Istanbul such as Gültepe, Seyrantepe, in the outskirts of Levent. The Rhodopean lowlanders, who arrived after 1960s, chose Avcılar, Küçükçekmece and Sefaköy where many other immigrants of Balkans (Bulgaria, Albania, ex-Yugoslavia) also

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49 In 2017, they were given lifelong residence permits by the Turkish state. For more information, see the official website of Presidency For Turks Abroad And Related Communities,https://www.ytb.gov.tr/duyurular/uzun-donem-ikamet-izni-basvurulari-yeniden-basladi, last retrieved 02.03.2021.

lived. The highlanders from Ksanthi chose Gaziosmanpaşa and Zeytinburnu. On the other hand, the wealthy landholder immigrant families of Ksanthi chose to settle down in central and elite districts of Istanbul such as Beşiktaş, Ortaköy, and Arnavutköy.

Similar to their 'unmixing' with the Greek Orthodox in the region, the Western Thracian transmigrants and diaspora in Turkey did not mix with the local Turks of Turkey until 1990s. They usually married either within the group, from Western Thrace often by way of arrangement and with persons from other Balkan migrant groups such as Turks from Bulgarian Thrace and ex-Yugoslavia. Post 1990s, however, the trend has changed as the third-generation descendants were born and raised in Turkey and education and social status acquired more significance over ethno-cultural affinity.

Free riding is a common survival strategy of the dual citizen Western Thracians in Turkey, particularly for university education and military service. Those who are born dual citizens (both Turkish and Greek), opt out of Turkish citizenship at the time of high school graduation in order to be eligible to enter university exams for non-nationals (foreigners) which have been a much easier exam compared to that for the Turkish citizens.[50] Furthermore, when dual citizen males reach the conscription age, they are given the opportunity to choose the country to fulfil their military duty. Ironically, Greece is preferred due to reasons of safety.

50 The entrance exam for foreigners (YÖS) was standard and given once a year in Ankara, usually at the Middle East Technical University. However, it was abolished and replaced by a new system in 2000. Ever since, every university gives its own exam. Some universities accept students with high school graduation scores whereas for the best ones such as Bogazici, ODTÜ, Koç and Sabancı a certain score is required from the international exams of GRE or GMAT. Therefore, few Western Thracian diaspora or locals have entered these universities in the past decade.

§ 2.4 Transmigrant Community in Germany

The transmigrant Western Thracians in Germany comprises the families who immigrated to Germany as guest-workers in late 1960s, and after 1989 upon the signing of the Single European Act which enabled free movement and settlement in the European Community member countries. They usually found labor and settled in towns or villages of their kin or friends who had previously immigrated to Germany. Thus, the 'enclave' pattern of settlement prevailed in Germany as well. The number of Western Thracians in Germany is estimated to be around 30,000.[51]

The first Western Thracian immigrants to Germany were from among the poorest villagers who had very little or no land. Some were highlander settlers in lowlands hired as shepherds by livestock owners. Their purpose was to accumulate enough money to buy land and build houses in their villages. Therefore, initially, the males usually went on their own, without taking their families. Some of them returned after making enough savings and bought land, built houses and continued their lives in the village. Others took their families, lived and worked in Germany until retirement. Some of the first immigrants invested their savings in houses and land in Turkey, thinking that they would end up there. They settled in Turkey either due to the fear that their children might assimilate into the German culture and/or to abandon the exhausting factory labor and open their own businesses.

However, post 1990s, this trend has changed. Some of the early transmigrants in Germany liquidated their property in Turkey and bought houses in Germany instead because their children settled in Germany. They also repaired and built new houses in the village for their children and themselves to live after retirement. Many immigrant children who were born and raised in Germany or settled there at a very young age with their families acquired German citizenship. One motive was that they considered Germany as their homeland where they were

51 Akgönül, *The Minority Concept*, 2013, 109.

determined to live. Another drive was that they did not want to deal with bureaucracy in Greece which was for them a burden as they did not speak Greek. They do not consider Greece as homeland but a holiday destination and a meeting place with the kin once a year.[52]

§ 2.5 Minority Institutions and Cultural Associations

2.5.1 *The Institution of the Mufti*

The Muslims in Western Thrace adhere to the Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence with the exception of a few Bektashi villages in the highlands. However, there is no separate institution or jurisprudence for them. Muslims have their own places of worship to exercise their religion and the right to Islamic jurisprudence in matters concerning family law as a legacy of the Ottoman Empire *millet* system. The Mufti is the legal authority in charge of the implementation of Islamic family law and also the highest-level supervisor on religious issues and practices. His decisions are officially recognized and implemented by the Greek government. The Patriarch, on the other hand, does not have this kind of a judicial power since non-Muslim minorities were asked to renounce it upon the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926.[53]

During the Ottoman era, matters concerning family law were dealt with according to the principles of Sharia by the qadi who corresponds to the current judge. The Mufti had a higher position within the legal system as the highest authority concerning Islamic law, whose opinions, called fatwas, were consulted by the qadi. Upon the retreat of the Ottoman Empire, the Mufti had to take over the functions of the qadi and thus

52 Interview with the transmigrant group aged between 25-35; Çiğdem, Derya, Fatme , Ercüment,Seyide, Yalanca; Ayşe, Yelkenciler; Zafer, Ambarköy, summer 2012.

53 Akgönül, *The Minority Concept,* 2013, 108.

became both the highest religious and judicial authority. From the Treaty of Istanbul (1881) until the signing of the Lausanne in 1924, there were Muftis in the provinces of Macedonia, Thessaly, Epirus, Crete and Thrace with the Head Mufti to check and guide them.

After the Population Exchange, however, only the Muslim population in Greece Thrace remained. Therefore, the Office of the Head Mufti was inevitably abolished.[54] The Mufti was commissioned as a public servant and entitled to a state salary. Consequently, he became the 'judge' in matters related to family law. Today there are three legal Muftis in Thrace in the provinces of Ksanthi, Komotini and Dimothiko (a Deputy Mufti) respectively. However, there are also two 'elected' Muftis; in Ksanthi and Komotini, a political issue which will be elaborated in Chapter 9. The legal Muftis are esteemed as the counterparts of Christian priests and invited to official ceremonies at the town square each year by the Greek authorities.

2.5.2 *The ad hoc Committees*

The ad-hoc committees do not have legal status. They summon in order to discuss and organize action plans against a political situation or problems pertaining to it. There are two ad-hoc committees. The first one is Advisory Board (*Danışma Kurulu*), which was previously called the Supreme Minority Council (*Azınlık Yüksek Kurulu*). It was established as a reaction to the law on waqf administration in 1980 by the then elected Muftis and minority notables. Today, the Supervisory Board is composed of the elected muftis, former and current MPs, journalists, clergymen, minority mayors, members of local administration councils, the President

54 Konstantinos Tsitselikis, "The Legal Status of Islam in Greece", in Rohe, Mathias (ed.) *Sharia in Europe, Die Welt des Islams,* vol.44, n.3, 2004, 402-431, 403.

of the minority political party (DEB)[55] and heads of minority associations.

The second ad hoc committee is that of religious functionaries presided by the Mufti; the Sermon and Guidance Committee (VİH)[56], which was established in 1970. Under the leadership of the Mufti and in cooperation with the village imams, they organize sermons in the village mosque. They issue a religious periodical; *Hakka Davet (Invitation to God)*. The VIH and the Advisory Board meet on a regular basis to discuss problems of the minority, to organize protests, marches, send petitions to related governmental agencies. However, as stated by Oran[57], and elucidated by Aarbakke[58], they have also been arenas of personal whims far from organizational discipline.

2.5.3 *The Ksanthi Turkish Union & Komotini Turkish Youth Union*

Ksanthi Turkish Union (*İskeçe Türk Birliği*) is the first civil association of the minority. It was established in 1927 under the title 'Turkish Youth Hearth' as a sports and culture center by the initiatives of the modernists, the teacher- journalist Mehmet Hilmi, teacher-journalist Osman Nuri, teacher Osman Seyfi and journalist-typesetter Hıfzı Abdurrahman[59]. It was suspended during the Second World War and reopened as 'Ksanthi Turkish Union' in 1946. The purpose was to keep young people

55 For the details, see Sebahattin Abdurrahman, "The Struggle for Effective Representation in the Greek Parliament: Friendship-Equality-Peace Party and the Western Thrace Turks", *History Studies: International Journal of History*, Volume 6 Issue 2, 1-17, February 2014.

56 English translations belong to Vemund Aarbakke.

57 Baskın Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu*, Bilgi Yayınevi, 2.Basım, Ankara,1991, 181-182.

58 Aarbakke,"The Muslim Minority", 2000, 326-345.

59 Ksanthi Turkish Union official website, http://www.iskeceturkbirligi.org/m/tarihce.php, last retrieved 04.05.2021.

away from social ills such as gambling and alcoholism and encourage them to do sports and cultural activities. It had a legal statute, a flag and an anthem. Despite its ethnic title 'Turkish', the association was multi-ethnic. Its national anthem was composed by *Mezrubyan,* a local Armenian. Trainers for the football team were local Greek Orthodox.[60]

During the period of state oppression, in 1984, it was banned along with other associations bearing the title 'Turkish'; the *Komotini Youth Club* and *Western Thracian Turkish Teachers Society*. [61] Despite the ECtHR verdict in 2008 to relegalize the 'Ksanthi Turkish Union", Greece refused to abide by it referring to the non-binding nature of the Court's decisions.[62] Nonetheless, albeit without a title, both the Ksanthi Turkish Union and the Komotini Youth Union have survived and are active agents in the promotion of minority culture.

Both associations have libraries and cafeterias for socialization. They commemorate significant events in the minority history, particularly the 29 January public march against state oppression. They offer sewing and embroidery classes for adult females and painting classes, music, dance and theatre classes for the students. Each year they organize art exhibitions, live concerts, embroidery and fashion shows. The folklore groups exhibit traditional dances in minority festivals and festivals abroad. They also offer counseling and guidance for high school students to want to study at Turkish universities.[63]

Komotini Turkish Union is also a venue for events and for visiting Turkish statesmen and politicians to address the locals. For instance, the ex-President Candidate Muharrem İnce, the ex-Turkish Prime Minister

60 Ibid.

61 Ksanthi Turkish Union, official website; http://www.iskeceturkbirligi.org/ last retrieved 06.05.2019; narrations of locals.

62 Ibid.

63 Komotini Youth Union official website; http://gtgb.gr/, last retrieved 06.05.2019.

Binali Yıldırım[64], and Western Thracian immigrant Turkish politicians Cavit Çağlar and Hakan Çavuşoğlu addressed the locals here.[65]

2.5.4 *The Association of University Graduates*

The University Graduates' Association (*Yüksek Tahsilliler Derneği)*, bearing a slightly snobbish connotation, was established in 1982. It has never been banned because it did not have the adjective 'Turkish' in its title. It offers free sewing and embroidery classes for females, dance and theatre classes for children and teenagers. The theatre club performs their plays every year in certain locations. Three subbranches operate under the association: Young University Students' Society (GAT), Women's Branch and Health Branch.

It is the only association which has tried to reach the rurals directly. It has acquired an active role in children's nursery school education since 2000. They operate nine children's clubs; six in the province of Rhodope (one in Gümülcine and eight in the villages) and three in the İskeçe (one in the town, two in villages). Between 2005 and 2008, they carried out a project to access females in highland villages and offered them seminars on issues such as health, and child-raising and psychological counseling.[66] GAT, established in 1996, has been a platform to uniting university students and bringing them together in events such as seminars, concerts and exhibitions in the region.

64 https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/muharrem-ince-gumulcinede-soydaslara-seslendi, last retrieved 06.05.2019.

65 https://www.olay.com.tr/bati-trakyada-iki-eski-bakanla-kardeslik-ve-kucaklasma-gunu-14384yy.htm, last retrieved 06.05.2019.

66 Official website of the organization: http://www.btaytd.org, last retrieved 08.05.2019; Inteview with Derin, one of the organizers of 'Access to Village' Project, summer 2016.

§ 2.6 Language, Identity and Social Boundaries

2.6.1 *Languages of the Minority*

In all lowland and middle-line villages and some highland villages, Turkish is the native and the vernacular language. Turkish language spoken by Western Thracians is almost the same as Turkish spoken by Turks in Bulgaria and Turkish Thrace. There are slight differences concerning intonation between lowlands and highlands and middle line villages. The most obvious differences between the Turkish spoken by Western Thracians and the mainstream Turkish are the contraction of words, avoiding the letter "h" in spoken language, and intonation.[67]

In the Rhodopean lowlands, for instance, "geliyorum" is shortened as "geliym", whereas in the Ksanthian lowlands it is "geliyem". Elimination of the letter 'h' makes the female name "Hanife" - "Anife". Like in Turkish Thrace, "beya or beyav, bayav" are words of exclamation used in the vernacular language[68]. The verb *yürümek,* (to walk) is spoken 'yörümek', which is considered to have derived from the nomadic Turkish group of *Yörüks*.[69]

The elderly continue to use Ottoman words which are rarely used by the young people today. For instance, '*maşrapa'* for '*bardak*' (metal or plastic container to drink), '*şarpa*' for *eşarp* (headscarf), *'entari'* for *'elbise'*(dress), '*potin*' for '*ayakkabı'(*shoes*),* '*şayka' f*or *'çivi'* (nail), '*mektep*' for *okul* (school), *laase* for *lahza(minute) 'talebe'* for *öğrenci* (student), *ırgat* for işçi (laborer), *angare* for angarya (corvee labor),

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67 For more information about the Turkish spoken in Western Thrace, see: İbrahim Kelağa, "Yunanistan'da Batı Trakya'da Türk Azınlığın Anadili ve Eğitim Dillerinden biri olarak Türkçe", Paper Submitted to the International Symposium on Linguistics, Grammar and Language Teaching, Volume II, 977-992, 981-987, Atatürk Language and History Foundation, 23.07.2019.

68 Tuncay Bilecen, "Misafir misafiri sevmez: Balkan göçmenlerinin Trakya'da yaşadığı sosyo-kültürel çatışmalar", *Trakya'nın Renkli Dünyası,* 2017, 133-144, 134-135.

69 Halil İnalcık, "The Yürüks: Their Origins, Expansion and Economic Role," Cedrus II (2014) 467-495.

güvey for damat (son-in love), *abdestlik* for lavabo (sink), *endaze* for metre (meter). The Turkish for child – çocuk- is for instance, *kızan,* which refers to young boys in the Aegean region in Turkey. However, in Western Thrace, *kızan* is a gender-free word meaning child. To specify gender, *kız* is used for female children and teenagers and *çöcük*, which is a bit altered version of *çocuk* for male children and teenagers.

As a consequence of over six centuries of coexistence in Ottoman Empire, Turkish, Greek and Slavic languages have influenced each other. In lowlands, the exclamations "te, ta" is frequently spoken to refer to an object or person. This is also the article used for denoting neutral words in Greek language. The table, for example, is a neutral object, and in Greek it means 'to trapezi'. In the vernacular language, people use it frequently to refer to the location of something or someone.

Furthermore, words are often contradicted. If the second of two words starts with a vowel, they are combined. If somebody means to say "Oraya gittim" (I went there) in the locality such as a garden or a field, he or she usually says "Toraya gittim". Originally it is 'Te oraya' (I went to that place), but 'e' is dropped end T combined with 'oraya' and thus it becomes 'toraya'. In mainstream Turkish language, "işte" is used to emphasize a specific object, activity or person. Western Thracians contradict it by dropping "iş". This is also the case in spoken Greek. For instance, in the sentence, 'I am coming', 'Tha ertho', the vowel 'a' is dropped to include the vowel 'e' and is spoken 'Tharto'.

Moreover, the use of diminutive suffixes in Turkish (-cık, cik, cağız/ceğiz) express either something or someone smaller than the original form, or sympathy and affection in Western Thrace and in Eastern Thrace of Turkey. Özdarendeli argues that this is the most outstanding difference between the Thracian and the Anatolian dialects and is an impact of Slavic languages spoken in the Balkans.[70] In a similar vein, Greeks use diminutive suffixes in their everyday speech. To refer to a baby, for instance, they add the suffix "ki" to *moro* (μωρό- baby), thus *moraki* acquires connotations of being little and lovely, γατούλα(gatula), to refer to

70 Nursel Özdarendeli, "Trakya Ağızları", *Aşrı memleket,* 2017, 279.

a little lovely cat(γάτα/gata). Furthermore, there are certain vocative words such as "mari" used to address females and "bre" to address males in colloquial Turkish which are also used in Greek and Slavic languages in the form of 'more' and/ or 'mori'.[71]

Greek and Turkish languages have a great deal of common words.[72] There are around 5,000 Turkish words in Greek language such as kefia for 'keyif' (pleasure), 'babas' for baba (father), 'arabatsiz' for 'arabacı' (coachman), 'efendis' for (efendi), (master or Sir , to address a noble person), 'valitsa' for 'valiz' (suitcase), *tempelis* for lazy (*tembel) meraki* for curiosity (*merak)* and many others.[73]

Minority rurals use several words derived from Greek language in the colloquial language for objects, bureaucratic concepts, and others. Among the most common are 'asfalya'(ασφάλεια) for electrical fuse, 'kendrofingo' (κεντρόφιγγο) for centrifugal pump in irrigation, 'andart' (αντάρτες) for guerilla, 'dilosi'(δήλωση) for petition, 'porta'(πόρτα) for gate, frondistirio (φροντιστήριο) for private schools. This is because they learnt these terms after the change of borders as Greek words. For instance, they did not know the Turkish version of guerilla (gerilla) in 1940s and many do not even today. Iron gates were built in the village post 1950s replacing the previous ones made of wires framed with wood or only wood and were called "porta" in Greek. Electricity came to lowland villages in late 1950s and early 1960s. Modern devices in agriculture such as centrifugal pump were introduced in 1960s with their Greek names. Private language schools (frondistirios) spread into the big villages in 1990s.

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71 Anu Vastenius*, Expressive Particles in Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek and Kurdish,* BA Thesis in General Linguistics, Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University 2011; Ilija Casule, "Macedonian Appellative Particles in the Balkan Context", *Balkanistica* 34, 2021, pp:149-174.

72 For more information on Greek words in Turkish language, see Hülya Saygın Akbaşak, *Yunanca'dan Türkçeye Geçmiş Alıntı Sözcüklerde Görülen Ses Olayları Üzerine Bir İnceleme*, unpublished MA Thesis, Trakya University, 2020, pp:45-77.

73 According to Herkül Milas, they are common words. "Katalogos: Common Greek and Turkish Words and Idioms", available online at: http://www.herkulmillas.com/pdf/turkce-yunanca-ortak-kelimeler.pdf, last retrieved, 27.02.2019.

The highlanders are multilingual. Their native tongue - Pomak is considered to be a Bulgarian (Slavic) dialect. Therefore, they can also understand (to an extent) other Slavic languages such as Polish, Russian and Serbo-Croatian. Their second and third languages are Turkish and Greek. Due to the spread of education, urbanization, satellite TV, and internet, improvement of roads connecting to the town and the rise of communication between the urbans and lowlanders, the children and young generation locals can speak Turkish fluently. Children of families who previously studied in Turkey speak Turkish perfectly, almost the same as Istanbul Turkish. The elderly, and some middle-aged locals, particularly females, who have lived their lives in the village, do not speak Turkish at all; only a few words of greetings such as 'hoşgeldiniz', which they pronounce as 'ojgeldiniz.'[74] The substation in the vernacular language of the letter 'ç' to 'j' is also a characteristic of Turkish Thrace.[75]

Unlike Turkey, Greece did not enact a law on surnames. Minority members registered their fathers' names or in certain cases their fathers' ranks in the Ottoman army or their occupations. Consequently, overwhelming majority has names as surnames. The most common surnames are Hüseyin, Hasan, Mehmet, or Çavuş as an Ottoman military rank or albeit less common occupations such as Bıçakçı (knifesmith),Tenekeci (tinsmith). In the highland villages, 'Imam', denoting occupation and religious leadership is a common surname. Other surnames are Peçenek, the name of a group of Turkish clan belonging to Oghuz lineage; Boşnak which in fact refers to Muslims of Bosnia.

2.6.2 *Identity Discourses: being Turk, Pomak, Roma*

In this dissertation, the hyphenated identity- Turkish-Muslim- is used to refer to the minority. 'Turkish' denotes ethnic or voluntarily

74 Participant Observations in the region, summer 1996, summer 2016.

75 Personal Observations in Keşan; Özdaredenli, "Trakya Ağızları", *Aşırı memleket*, 2017,278.

adopted sub-identity whereas 'Muslim' indicates both the religious and the official identity as recognized by Greece.

Referring to Anderson, Karakasidou defines minorities as "imagined ethnic communities."[76] The Muslim population that remained behind the retreating Ottomans were composed of the descendants of local Muslims of various ethnic origins, Turks who were settled in the newly acquired lands, and locals who had converted to Islam. Consequently, in Thrace the Muslim population are likely to be composed of a variety of ethnic origins; Yürük Turks, various other Turkic clans, Kurds[77], Slavs, Albanians, Vlachs, and probably Greeks who had converted to Islam during the Ottoman conquest. The region also received Circassians and Tatar Turks and Muslims following the Crimean War(1853) until 1920s. [78]

Greece recognizes the minority as a 'Muslim minority'. The legal basis of their reference is the Treaty of Lausanne, which designates the minority as 'Muslim'. In fact, Greece did not pursue a consistent attitude towards the identification of the minority until the aggravation of the Cyprus conflict. For instance, Turkish identity was favored and officially promoted within the context of Cold War conditions. In 1954, upon the order of Papagos government (Law No. 3065 of 1954), the minority was implicitly recognized as Turkish as minority primary schools were officially renamed as 'Turkish'.[79] On the other hand, in 1972, during the junta

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76 Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat, hills of blood : passages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990*, University of Chicago Press, 1997.

77 An official divorce announcement in a minority newspaper in 1950s refers to the plaintiff Emine Hanım, as 'Kurd Ali's son Mehmet's wife', who divorced her husband who had fled to Turkey years ago and wasn't heard of ever since "Müftülük İlanı: Boşanma", *Trakya*, 9.10.1953.

78 For a detailed account of migration waves, see Kemal Karpat, "Population Movements in the Ottoman State in the Nineteenth Century", (in) Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914,: demographic and social characteristics,* Univ. Of Wisconsin Press,1985.

79 Louis Whitman, "*Destroying Ethnic Identity- The Turks of Greece"*, *Human Rights Watch*, NY, 1990, p.51.

period, "Turkish" title was removed from minority schools.[80] Rozakis relates this inconsistence to the state of bilateral relations according to which Greece favored the 'Turkish' identification in times of rapprochement but 'Muslim' in tense and conflictual times.[81]

However, ever since the minority opening in 1991, Greece has consistently referred to the minority as 'Muslim', despite the acknowledgement of ethnic Turkish element in the official discourse of the promised equality for all Greek citizens. The use of the term 'Turk' for any organization is still prohibited due to its connotation of the identity to the citizens of Turkey to avert irredentist aspirations. Notwithstanding the official identification, the minority consider themselves Turks[82] and define themselves as Muslim-Turks of Greece or Western Thracian Turks (excluding themselves from Turkish nationals of Turkey). In the past decade, minority members have also declared hyphenated identities such as Pomak-Turks, Greek-Turks.

"Turkish" identity has been a subject of outmost interest in academia. Several scholars have been concerned in how the minority has adopted a Turkish identity or 'Turkified'. They tend to explain this transition as an elite project backed by Turkey through bilateral relations and the minority elite. Accordingly, it is the consequence of Greek concessions to Turkey for the rapprochement of 1930s which led to the ascendance of seculars after the expulsion of some active members of anti-Kemalist 150 fugitives. Modernization of minority education in the rapprochement period of 1950s is considered to be another factor in the institution of Turkish identity. Others relate it to the prohibition of Pomak language as part of the containment policy of communism and changing the name

80 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 180.

81 Christos L. Rozakis,, "The International Protection of Minorities in Greece*", Greece In A Changing Europe,* (ed) Kevin Featherstone & Kostas Ifantis, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1996, pp:95-116, p.105.

82 Giorgos Mavrommatis, *Kalkanca'nın çocukları : Yunanistan'da bir müslüman azınlık toplumunda yoksulluk, sosyal izolasyon ve eğitim* (The Children of Kalkanca: poverty, social isolation and education in a Muslim Minority group), İstanbul, Kitap Yayınevi, 35, 2007.

of Muslim minority primary schools from 'Muslim' to 'Turkish' in 1950s.[83]

They are all noteworthy arguments in explaining the adoption of a secular Turkish identity albeit incomplete. The elite played a significant role in this process but calling it an entirely elite project would ignore the agency of the ordinary people. The question of identity does not have an essential answer. I intentionally avoided the question on identity in interviews because the respondents would either unequivocally declare they were Turks because of my (interviewer's) background or could get offended against such a question assuming that I could have another (secret) agenda. Acknowledging, on the one hand, the fluidity and contextuality of identity, I argue that identity of 'Turk-ness' has been omnipresent in the region of Western Thrace. Therefore, in this section it is discussed through historical, linguistic, religious and political perspectives.

Mavrommatis, a local social scientist, criticizes the official identification of the minority as "Greek Muslims", as ahistorical, illegitimate and illogical. He argues that Greek nationalism has failed to understand the impossibility of this attempt by referring to the region of Balkans that has been drawn to the orbit of nationalism since 19th century and henceforth national belonging has become the most significant component of people's identities. He highlights the nation-making process in Greece and Turkey that assimilated Christians and Muslims of different ethnic origins into 'imagined' Greekness and Turkishness respectively.[84]

Indeed, in the Balkan context "Muslim" identity has been considered equivalent to "Turk"[85], and consequently 'Muslim' and 'Turk' have

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83 Alexis Alexandris ,The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek Turkish Relations 1918-1974, Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Athens, 1992; Anagnostou, "Oppositional and Integrative Ethnicities",1999; Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority ", 2000; Rozakis, Christos L., "The International Protection of Minorities in Greece", Greece in a Changing Europe, (ed) Kevin Featherstone & Kostas Ifantis, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1996, 95-116; Featerstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011.

84 Ibid.

85 Kemal Karpat, *Balkanlarda Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk,* (cev.) Recep Boztemur, Ankara, İmge, 2004.

been traditionally used interchangeably.[86] As stated by Mentzel, 'the national identities of the Balkan peoples grew out of their millet identities', which were primarily based on religion".[87]Consequently, Turk-ness in this context derives from religion (Islam). In the rural public discourse, for instance, especially among the elderly, all Muslims are considered Turks including the Bosniaks, Albanians, and Caucasians. Interestingly, Arabs are the only Muslims that fall out of this categorization. In other words, Arabs are Muslims but not Turks. This might be either due to their skin color or anti-Arab sentiments arising from World War I experiences.

In the practice of religion(Islam) for instance, the vernacular language is Turkish –except for Arabic citations from the Qur'an. The clergymen trained in medreses speak Turkish in their sermons and religious rituals such as mevlids, funerals and Qur'an citing ceremonies. Moreover, some symbols of Islam, such as the crescent, ingrained in the walls of mosques, standing high on the top of minarets, is also one of the symbols of the Turkish flag. These symbols constitute a religious oriented affiliation to the (Turkish) identity in the context where the state and the mainstream society are non-Muslim.

Historically, existence of Turkish consciousness predates the dissemination of Turkish secular reforms and the containment policy against communism. Existence of a Turkish identity dates back to the settlement of Yörüks in the region and the emergence of modern Turkish nationalism in early 20th century. After all, Western Thrace was on the route between the Ottoman capital Istanbul and the headquarters of CUP in Thessaloniki. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other eminent members such as Fuat Balkan and Eşref Kuşçubaşı were accommodated in the region before and during the Balkan Wars.

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86 During my MA studies at the CEU, Budapest, in 2007, my Serbian and Montenegrin classmates told me that Muslims were called "Turks" in ex-Yugoslavia.

87 Peter Mentzel, *Muslim minorities in the Balkans,* New York: Association for the Study of Nationalities; Basingstoke, Hants, UK : Carfax, 2000.

RURALS

By the same token, the historical element of Turkish presence in Ottoman Thrace is an undeniable fact. Yörüks, nomadic Turcomans pastoralists, were settled in current Western Thrace and Greek Macedonia during and after the Ottoman conquest.[88] In the sixteenth century, one-fifth of the population of Yenice-i Karasu, currently the south-western border of Western Thrace, consisted of Yörüks while in Gümülcine, Yörüks constituted almost one-third of the population.[89] These nomadic groups; Tanrıdağı Yörüks, Naldögen Yörüks,Vize Yörüks, Ofçabolu Yörüks and Kocacık Yörüks were from different regions of Anatolia.[90]

Yeni maintains that there were military Yörüks established as auxiliary forces to substitute for the missing military members as opposed to non-military Yörüks who were settled in groups on timariot lands.[91] The majority of the Yörüks settled in these villages did not continue their previous nomadic way of life. They integrated into the village life by engaging in agriculture and paid taxes on their animals. The semi-nomadic and/or nomadic Yörüks were smaller groups as revealed by the taxes they paid for their seasonal accommodation on timariot lands.[92]

In the then Yenice-i Karasu, Yörüks were settled on timariot lands in Mürselli, Çakırlı, Firuzlu, alternatively called Ferezler ciftlik.[93] The rest were settled in districts in current Ksanthi province; Muhammedlü, Danişmend Obası, Yelkenci, Öksüzler, Naraste, Beg Obası Naib Tanrı Virmiş, Niholi Hızır Pîrî ve Eyne Begi ve Halil Pîrî or Yayala, Yeniceler,

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88 Halil İnalcık, "The Yörüks: Their Origins, Expansion and Economic Role", *Cedrus II* (2014) 467-495;Yusuf Halaçoğlu, "Batı Trakya Türkleri", *Türk Kültürü*, nr.XXXI(367), 1993, 673-682, 675.

89 The population of Yenice-i Karasu was made up of 3254 Muslims (732 Yörüks) and 2295 non-Muslims, whereas the population of Gümülcine included 2936 Muslims (1917 Yörüks) and 1838 non-Muslims. Harun Yeni, "The Yörüks of Ottoman Western Thrace In The Sixteenth Century," unpublished PhD, Department of History, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2013, 2.

90 Ibid.,9.

91 Account register dated 1530, BOA. TT.d. 167, cited in Ibid., 5, 60.

92 Ibid.,120-121.

93 Ibid., 73-74.

Evladlı, Mukbil, Aksak Musa, Kutlucalu, Mustafalu, Okçular ,Osmanlu, Çakırlu, Uzunca Halil, Baki Obası, Şahin Obası, Yuvacılar, Kopuzcı Kurd, Armudlu, Emirlü, Has Polad, Begenmiş, Kara Yakub, Koçi Obası, Urgancı, Urgancı, Şahin or Bıyıklu, Güneli, Kenez or Bekice, Koyun Yakublu, Kerevis. [94]

In Gümülcine, the names of settled Yörük cemaats were Cema'ât-i Çatak, Cema'ât -i Salcılar, Cema'ât -i Küçük Elmalu, Cema'ât -i Çakırlu, Cema'ât -i Aydın, Cema'ât -i Dündar, Cema'ât -i Kara Piri, Cema'ât -i Şah Kulu, Cema'ât -i Demürci Murad.[95] They were settled in Bulgar Sarucası, Temurbeglü , Kızılağaç, Mesuni Sarucası, Hacılar, İnceğüz, Denizler, Kara Musa, Yalancılar or Süleymanlu, Özbeglü or Balabanlu, Selmanlu , Sığırlı Hacı, Delü Murad, Kadı Köy or Deli Danişmend, Polad, Tuzcılar , Polad, Köse Mezit, Yardımlı , Değirmenderesi, Çobanlu, Doğancı, Akça Kayrak, Kızılca Kulfal, Bulduklu, Halife Viranı, Habil or Ana, Tekerek Danişmend, Evhad Çiftliği, Eyüceler, Doğancılar, Keremiddin, Karagözlü, Köseler or Karapınarı.[96]

Mavrommatis makes reference to the (Turkish) language factor as a component of Turkish identity; "there is no (ideological) base and condition for the creation of a "Greek Muslim" identity for those whose mother tongue is Turkish and /or Slavic." [97] Turkish has been the vernacular language in the lowlands, the middle-line villages and in certain highland villages. Turkish has also been the language of minority press (in Latin letters after 1930). Furthermore, the sphere of Turkish language enlarged with the entrance of television to villages in late 1960s after the radio, which was available in many households. Turkish language has been embedded in everyday life further by the technological advancements such as the satellite TV and internet since 1990s.

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94 Ibid.,101

95 Ibid., 78.

96 Ibid.,113-114.

97 Mavrommatis, *Kalkanca'nın Çocukları*, 2007,35

Despite the expression of a common (Turkish) identity, existence of an in-group hierarchy within the Western Thracian minority is no secret. Turks are the numerically dominant group, followed by Pomaks and Muslim Roma.[98] However, Turkishness has been adopted by the subgroups as supra-identity. Oran explains the adoption of Turkish consciousness by these subgroups by referring to the dominant position of Turks and Turkey as the only guarantor and therefore the legal kinstate for all. [99] Consequently, if in a country a particular ethnic identity is in a dominant position compared to others, an individual belonging to an ethnic identity may adopt a different ethnic identity as his/her subjective identity.[100]

In a similar vein, Demetriou reiterates the hegemonic status of Turkish identity; 'Turkishness has a hegemonic discourse'.[101] After all, a person's decision to belong to a minority is not only a 'question of fact', but also a 'question of will'. Ethnic identity is a fluid and subjective concept shaped by the social, economic and political circumstances of the host society. Therefore, ethnic identity rests more on self-identification of the persons[102]

The biggest contribution to the emergence of a politicized Turkish identity in the Western Thracian minority is undoubtedly Greek state's decades' long discriminative and suppressive treatment of all segments

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98 According to a 1997 estimate, the minority population is 112,000. Turks constitute 50%, Pomaks 34% and Roma 16%. Ethnic Composition of the Muslim Population in Western Thrace (1997), Thanasis Vakalios (ed.) *To Provlima tis diapolitismikis Ekpaideysis sti Ditiki Thraki,* Athens, 1997, p.23, cited in. A.Antoniou, Dimitri, "Muslim Immigrants in Greece: Religious Organization and Local Responses", *Immigrants&Minorities*, Vol.22, Nos.2&3, July/November 2003, 155-174, 163.

99 Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar* , 2nd Edition, *İletişim Yayıncılık*, İstanbul, 2004, 28.

100 Ibid.,28.

101 Olga Maya Demetriou, *Divisive Visions: A Study of Minority Identities Among Turkish-Speakers in Komotini, Northern Greece*, unpublished PhD dissertation,Social Anhropology, LSE, 2002, 127.

102 Gustave Goldmann, "Defining and Observing Minorities: An Objective Assessment ", *Statistical Journal of the United Nations* ECE 18 (2001),205-216,206.

of the minority. This mistreatment bound all members together around a politicized Turkish identity by the end of 1980s[103] and successfully created a sense of solidarity around Turkishness as was revealed in the demonstrations of 1989 and 1991.

The perception and expression of (ethnic)Turkish identity can be interpreted by constructive[104] discursive[105] and contextual[106] approaches to nationalism. In Thrace, it is produced on a daily basis, by the vernacular language Turkish, and Turkish TV, religious symbols and practices (sermons in the mosque, prayers, funerals in Turkish), the crescent and the star in the mosque and houses, and internet. Referring to Renan, in this context, it is a 'daily plebiscite'.[107] 'The nationalist discourse is […]produced on a daily basis'[108], consequently, in Billig's terms, it is 'banal nationalism'.[109]

Although no direct question on identity was included in the interviews, it was surprising to get primordialist definitions of identity from people in the lowlands and highlands alike. They believe identity as given, determined by birth, by God and relate it to an indefinite past and to ancient ancestors in medieval times.

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103 Antigoni Papanikolau, *The 'Politicization of Rights' in the case of the Muslim-Turkish Minority in Greece*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2007.

104 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, London, Verso, 1991; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism : five roads to modernity*, Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1992; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed : nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

105 Ernst Renan, "What is a nation?", (in)Homi K. Bhabha(ed.) *Nation and Narration*, London, Routledge, 8-22.

106 Frederick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The social organization of cultural difference,* Oslo and London: Allen and Unwin, 1969.

107 Ernst Renan, 'What is a Nation?", cited in Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: a critical introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 5

108 "The nationalist discourse can only be effective if produced on a daily basis", Ibid., 5

109 Michael Billig, *Banal nationalism,* London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif. : Sage, 1995.

> No need to question this… I am a Turk… We are all born Turks… Just as a Bulgarian cannot be a Turk, a Turk cannot be a Bulgarian, a Greek or something else.[110]
> We are descendants of ancient Turkish tribes who came from Asia and settled here.[111]

> The Ottoman Empire was born in Thrace before they captured Anatolia, and this makes us original Turks, more Turk than the peoples of Anatolia.[112]

On the other hand, in their encounters with the mainstream Greek society and public institutions, minority members tend to avoid essentialist definitions of identity in Greece unless they are intimidated.[113] They are more open about declaring themselves Turks (from Greece) in contexts outside of Greece. In other words, many prefer to declare their identities according to the geographical and political circumstances they find themselves in.

This inevitably reflects the contextuality of identity. For instance, "I am a Turk" is unquestionably the response in Turkey. On the other hand, they avoid it in Greece and prefer 'Muslim'. The participants who study at Greek universities for instance, told me that they never say 'I'm (ethnic) Turk but 'I am a Muslim of the Western Thracian minority' in response to questions over identity and place of origin. Otherwise, they

110 Interview with the late Mufti of Komotini, Cemali Meço (originally from Şahin, İskeçe), summer 2012.

111 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

112 Interview with Basri, Domruköy, summer 2015.

113 Mirca Madianou, "Contested Communicative Spaces: Rethinking Identities, Boundaries, and the Role of the Media among Turkish Speakers in Greece", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.31, No.3, May 2005, 521-541.; Interviews with middle-aged and young participants and observations in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, summer 2009.

stated that they do not talk about it at all.[114] They added that they declared their ethnic (Turk) origins only to their close Greek Orthodox friends.[115]

Likewise, in Germany, in 1970s and later, many Western Thracians declared themselves Greek or Greek Muslim due to practical reasons, and to differentiate themselves from Turks of Turkey and Muslims of other nationalities.[116]

> We loved our Turkish neighbors in Germany, we used to have coffee and chat together. But we were different from the Turks of Turkey although we get along with them well.[117]

In regard to the question on difference, they explained:

> In the district we worked and lived, some Turks had a bad reputation. They got involved in fraud for instance, took medical reports to evade work and sometimes to fast at home during the month of Ramadan...Some of them got involved in crime, too. Such things we have never done…It is not in our culture. We just did not want to be associated with them for these and other reasons.[118]

This can be compared to the recently emerging class of German Muslims in Germany who differentiate themselves from Turkish Muslims and avoid identification with them for reasons related to ignorance, low

114 Interview with Seden, Tules,Buse, Cihat, Tarık, summer 2012.

115 Ibid.

116 Narrations in the region, observations in Germany in 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001.

117 Interview with Nefise and Merdan, Palazlı; my maternal grandparents, Yalanca, summer 2012.

118 Ibid.

education level and their persistent attitude towards the inextricable relation between Turkish language and Islam, that conversion to Islam requires the learning and adoption of Turkish language.[119]

The young descendants of Western Thracian immigrants in Germany are more comfortable in expressing their identity as 'Turkish', 'ethnic Turk Greek citizen' or 'from the Turkish minority in Greece'.[120] This owes to the rising level of education, contacts and intermarriages with Turks from Turkey, and the legacy of politicization of Turkish identity in late 1980s.[121]

Nonetheless, contextuality of identity prevails. For instance, a few years ago when bilateral relations between Greece and Germany were strained due to economic crisis,[122] Greeks were, according to narrations, humiliated at school and factories. A neighbor told me that a coworker at the factory insulted him often by saying " hey Greek- do you want some loan?" A university student was similarly intimidated by criticisms against Greek debts. She said during the interview "That is why now I declare at school that I am a Turk."[123]

After two decades following the Greek democratization of minority policy, some also began to express multiple identities, thus relaxing the politicized 'Turkish' identity. Demetriou and Papanikolau claim the emergence of a hyphenated identity: 'Turk-Greek' among the new gener-

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119 Esra Özyürek, *Müslüman Olmak Alman Kalmak: Yeni Avrupa'da Millet, Din ve Din Değiştirme,[Being German, Becoming Muslim: Race, Religion and Conversion in the new Europe]*, (cev) İsmail Ilgar, İletişim Yayınları, 2015.

120 Narrations of transmigrant (Germany) narrators.

121 Cem Şentürk, Batı Trakya Türklerinin Avrupa'ya Göçleri, Bulundukları Ülkelerdeki Yaşam Koşulları ve Kimlik Algılamaları, *The Journal Of International Social Research* Volume 1/2 Winter 2008 , pp: 419-433, p.431; Narrations of immigrants' children, young participants, summer 2012.

122 "Greece to ask Germany for billions in war reparations", *The Guardian*, 21 April 2019, available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/21/greece-to-ask-germany-for-billions-in-war-reparations, last retrieved 05.06.2022.

123 Interview with Melike, Fener, summer 2012.

ation depending on the narrations of some educated middle-aged minority members. [124] Western Thracians also define their identity on a territorial basis "I am Western Thracian" (Batı Trakyalıyım), "I'm a Western Thracian Turk" (Batı Trakya Türklerindenim), "I am Turk from Greece" (Yunanistanlı Türk'üm) to express a Turkish identity different from the Turks of Turkey and the imposed identity of "Muslim Greek" by Greece. After all, they usually declare themselves Muslim, Turk, Greek citizen, Pomak depending on the type of context and the relation between the speaker.[125]

2.6.3 *Internal (In-Group) Boundaries*

As previously mentioned, the minority consists of three groups: Turks, Pomaks and Roma. The Muslim Roma are Turkish speakers whereas the majority of Ksanthian highlanders and some of Rhodopean highlanders speak the Pomak language. Pomakness is the most controversial category. These people have throughout history been abused by Bulgarians on the allegation of being Muslim Bulgarians. Greeks claim they are descendants of an ancient Greek tribe[126] whereas Turkish national discourse claim they are descendants of ancient Turkic tribes of Peçeneks and Kumans.[127]

Turkish historian İlber Ortaylı, contends that they are descendants of ancient Hellenic and Slavic tribes who converted to Islam and

124 Demetriou 2002; Papanikolau 2007

125 For instance, a young lady in a documentary declares herself Muslim, Turk with Pomak origins and Greek citizen also reiterating that despite some prevailing problems she is happy living in Greece where she also wants her children to live their lives. As part of the program "Journey into Europe" prepared by Akbar Ahmed, available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77D3PGKQw5Y, last retrived 15.12.2016.

126 Meinardus, "Muslims, Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies", 2002, 89.

127 Aydınlı, *Batı Trakya faciâsının,* 1971, 33-42;

therefore regard themselves as Turks.[128] De Jong makes a similar argument, that 'Pomaks are Turkified Muslim people of obscure origins mostly speaking a Bulgarian dialect with Turkish as a second language'.[129] They probably got mixed with raiding Turks during the Ottoman colonization of the Balkans. They continue to live in their historical homelands in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and Turkey (eastern Thrace and the Aegean).[130] I prefer to use the hyphenated term Pomak-Turk not due to the allegiance to Turkish (nationalist)historiography but in order to avoid any pejorative reference because many regard the identity "Pomak" – at least those in my surroundings- an insult. Belli describes them as "beautiful, smart and skilled lineage".[131]

In her remarkable anthropological study about the urban Muslim-Turks of Komotini, Demetriou elucidates intra-communal relations and social hierarchies between the town dwellers and other subgroups and concludes that Turks are in a hegemonic position and constitute the core. In the periphery stand the Turks of lowland villages, followed by Pomaks and Roma successively. [132] In a similar vein, the rural lowlander Turks place themselves in the center, Pomaks in the periphery and Muslim Roma at the outermost periphery.

The lowlanders claim to be Turks who settled in the region during and after the conquest of the Ottomans. As native Turkish speakers, they consider themselves descendants of ancient Turkish tribes of *Çıtak, Yoluç,* or *Gacal*. Some of the highland villages where Turkish is spoken as

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128 İlber Ortaylı in a program at Bloomberg TV Channel, 20 May 2012, available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pbZ3xgXHUQ, last retrieved 01.03.2019.

129 Fred de Jong, "The Muslim Minority in Western Thrace", in Georgina Ashworth (ed.) *Muslim Minorities In The Eighties,* Sunbury, Quartermaine House Ltd., 1980, pp:95-99,95.

130 http://pomaknews.com/?p=10546, The Federation of Pomak Associations in Turkey, official website.

131 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları*, 1998, 76.

132 Demetriou, "Divisive Visions", 2002,126

mother tongue are also considered to be Turks[133], whereas Pomak speakers of the Ksanthian and Rhodopean highlands were located in the periphery until 2000. Belli wrote for the period of 1947-1949 that the local Turks disdain Pomaks because their mother tongue is Slavic, Bulgarians and Greeks disdain them because they are Muslim.[134] Nonetheless, many Pomaks identify themselves with Turks.

There used to be a Pomak-Çıtak dichotomy based on mutual biases until 1990s. The main stereotype about Pomaks in the past was that they were *dirty*, *ignorant*, and *stubborn*. A Pomak-Turk journalist narrator explained that the bias of 'dirtiness' was due to the fact that highlander Pomaks smelled like cattle in the past. Due to harsh winters on the highlands, and scarcity of land, they had (and still have) two-storey houses. In the entrance, there used to be a stable for the cattle, sheep and goats. This way, the house upstairs would be naturally heated but the smell would also permeate on the clothes.[135] The Pomaks, on the other hand, considered lowlanders 'not proper Muslims'. A narrator stated that when his sister eloped and married a lowlander Turk, his mother refused to see her for over ten years, because she had married an 'infidel'.[136]

During the Civil War, some of the highlanders who were forced to immigrate to the lowlands by the government either did not return or returned but moved to the lowland villages in later years. For instance, between 1953-1959, when the rich landlords migrated to Turkey, some of their houses were bought by highlanders. In the consecutive migration waves, many lowlanders' houses were usually bought by highlanders. Thus, '[…] in many villages Pomaks have also filled the gap left by ethnic Turks who migrated to Turkey."[137]

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133 Gülecik, Dullu, Beygircili, Dağ Karamusası, and Kuzuobası in Rhodope, within the municipality of Iasmos.

134 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 76.

135 Interview with Abdulhalim Dede, summer 2012.

136 Mehmet, originally from Ilıca, Athens, online interview, summer 2015.

137 Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority of Greece,*2000, 34.

On the other hand, ethnic origins of all lowlanders are not homogeneous (Turkish), because, as revealed in the family histories in the narrations, there are a number of Pomak ancestors who fled the Ottoman-Russo war and Balkan Wars and settled in lowland villages, then Ottoman Empire territory. Only few respondents told me that their great-grandparents were all local Turks of the village and spoke only Turkish.

The highlander settlers in lowlands be them Pomak or Turks have been addressed as '*inme*' (descended) and considered 'unequal and inferior' by the local lowlanders for several reasons. For the case of Pomaks, their ineligibility in Turkish language was a reason, but not the only one. Many were poor. As they had no land, they worked as shepherds for the flocks of large landholders and/or wealthy lowlanders. Thus, their lower socioeconomic status positioned them in a double periphery position. A third reason is related with *eugenics.*

As a primitive survival strategy, prior to 2000, candidate spouses were investigated. The investigation focused on possible ties of kinship. In Western Thrace, it is considered immoral and sinful to marry kin, which in fact is allowed by Islam. The second criterion was the existence of serious health issues, particularly madness and alcoholism in the candidate's lineage, which could be transferred to children. The third was about good morals. Any trace of theft and violence in family would mean bad credits for the candidate.

Within the same village and neighboring lowland villages, it was easy to get access to such information as people were acquainted with each other. However, for the highlanders, this was impossible. This is why the lowlanders were against inter-marriage in the initial years of the highlanders' settlement. Marriages with highlanders were usually second-category marriages; that is to say, the lowlander male or female was either old, poor, very ugly or had low morals.

Aarbakke argues that '[...]many of those (Pomaks) who have moved to the plain(lowlands) and towns have been completely Turkified'[138]. This was natural process because the lowlanders are Turkish

138 Ibid.,35.

speakers. Neither local Turks nor Greeks speak the Pomak language. It is also a manifestation of Pomaks' to integrate into the lowland village community. Moreover, after the Civil war, the Greek authorities supported this kind of a linguistic assimilation as they banned the speaking of Pomak language.[139] Some of the villages abandoned the Pomak language to differentiate themselves from Christian Bulgarians as a reaction to their sufferings during the Bulgarian occupations.[140]

According to narrations, the descendants of highlander settlers could not speak the Pomak language because their parents spoke Turkish with them and spoke Pomak only between themselves on issues which they hid from their children.

> When my parents talked among themselves, I asked what language that was, and they would say 'it is of no concern to you'. They only used it when they talked about something that they did not want us to learn.[141]

Another narrator told me that once when his grandparents were speaking Pomak, his father approached and said, 'Stop using this language...You make me feel ashamed.'[142] Thus the children and grandchildren grew as Turkish speakers. Some went so far as to deny any Pomak roots and object to their children's marriage attempts with relatively recent Pomak settlers. The elderly would react remorsefully, "How come has she/he forgotten that his/her father barely spoke Turkish when they first settled in this village?"[143]

Within time, the highlander settlers in lowlands were fully integrated into Turkish language and lowlanders' way of life. Together they worked on the fields, engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. The

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139 Interview with Berna, Ruşanlar, 2016; Interview with Basri, Domruköy, 2017.

140 In the Ksanthian highlands , Soğucak, Bokluca, Suludere and a number of Rhodopean highlands villages. Interview with Abdülhalim Dede, Ksanhti, summer 2012.

141 Based on narrations of highlander descendants in the town and lowland villages.

142 Interview with Mümün, Susurköy, summer 2015.

143 Personal observations, experiences, and narrations in the lowlands.

poor ones made surpluses either as guestworkers in Germany and later bought land in the village and built nice houses. Like the lowlanders, they sent their children to higher education in Turkey. Consequently, the disparities in between gradually faded away and their origins remained only in their family histories and family names as addressed by the lowlanders such as *Pomak Hasanlar*, *Dağlı Şaban* etc.

For almost four decades, there was little if any contact between the highlanders who remained in their villages and the lowlanders due to geographical remoteness and their encirclement in the "restricted zone", access to which was contingent on an official permit from the local patrol. Therefore, the only contact was in the marketplace or through the village imams, who were usually highlander Pomaks. Apparently, it was a state measure to contain the northern communist neighbor Bulgaria.[144] Greece and Turkey were allies in this period against the common threat of communism. As a joint interest of both Turkey and Greece, therefore, it is claimed that Pomaks were Turkified in this period.[145]

The end of the secular-traditionalist or modern-backward schism in the political arena post 1970s contributed to a partial adoption of secular Turkish reforms by Pomaks. However, this was a troubled time of bilateral relations which was aggravated by the war in Cyprus. As a counter-reaction, Greece embarked on a policy of promoting a separate Pomak identity. After the restoration of democracy in 1974, a program of promoting Pomak language and culture was declared by Kapsis, the then Deputy Minister of PASOK party and the successful executer of the oppressive minority governance.[146] During the junta period, in 1969, there were fascist undertakings to promote a separate Pomak identity. For instance, blood tests of Pomaks were analyzed in Athens and concluded

144 Alexandris , *The Greek Minority of Istanbul,* 1992, 310.

145 Meinardus, "Muslims: Turks, Pomaks..", 2002, 88.

146 Ibid.,89.

that they had absolutely the same blood with the rest of Greek community.[147]

After the abolition of the restricted zone in mid-1980s in Rhodope and 1995 in Ksanthi, and development of better roads binding the highland villages to the town and the lowlands, contacts between the highlanders and lowlanders have burgeoned. This has led to a considerable erosion of previous prejudices and stereotyping between the two groups. For instance, as opposed to two decades ago, several lowland narrators were quite comfortable about the existence of some Pomak ancestors, "There is Pomakness in all of our lineages, my child" (Pomaklık hepimizin soyunda var kızanım) . These distinctions are much less eminent today than they were two decades ago. Socio-economic status markers such as occupation, education, income seem to have replaced the assumed ethnic origins.

The Muslim Roma in Western Thrace are the most discriminated group both by the minority Turks and the mainstream Greek-Orthodox. The common stereotyping against the Roma are about their lifestyle and personal traits such as ignorance, dirtiness, involvement in theft. They are also regarded as unreliable, self-interest seeking peoples who easily switch sides. They live in separate neighborhoods. Intermarriage between the Turks and Pomaks have been an ever-existing phenomenon. Yet, between Turks/Pomaks and Roma, intermarriage is marginal and the exceptional marriages are in Ksanthi and its lowland villages.

Majority of Muslim Roma are settled in lowland and middle-line villages, and none in the highlands. They are Turkish speakers. They usually live in separate neighborhoods in mixed villages. The only homogeneous Roma villages are Kalkanca (İfaistos) in the vicinity of Komotini municipal center and Drosero, a lowland village within the municipality

147 P.Mylonas, Oi Pomaki tis Thrakis (Athens, 1990), p.37, cited in Meinardus, "Muslims: Turks, Pomaks", 2002,89; Baskın Oran, "Religious and National Identity Among the Balkan Muslims: A Comparative Study on Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo", Paper presented to the Conference jointly organized by CERI of Paris and Political Science Faculty of Ankara on "Turkish Areas in the New Regional and International Configuration", Ankara, 2-3 November, 1992.

of Ksanthi. Many are unemployed and work in seasonal jobs, on the fields during the harvest time, and in construction and transportation and as shepherds for Muslim and Christian flock owners. Few are peasants with small to medium land ownership.

Like the rest of the minority, they are fragmented by internal and external migration. A number of urban Muslim Roma work in factories or as street vendors in big cities such as Thessaloniki and Athens and guest-workers in Germany. The guestworkers have managed to achieve a kind of social mobility by moving out of the separate neighborhood through the central Muslim-Turk neighborhoods by purchasing land and houses of local Turks. Their children receive good education in Germany. Many have white collar jobs such as office clerks, entrepreneurs, engineers. Within the Roma community, they have been able to position themselves at the center by way of wealth accumulation and education. When they move towards the center, their neighborly contacts with the local Turks increase. Some transmigrants are married to Turks from Turkey and Germans in Germany.

There are also urban Roma who live in suburban neighborhoods of the towns of Ksanthi, Komotini, predominantly in Alexandropolis, Thessaloniki and Athens as well as the town centers. They are self-employed, own shops, private taxis, and small businesses. Others peddle in the local markets in their vans travelling from village to village, selling fruits, vegetables, textiles, house items. Like the poor highlander Pomaks, a number of Roma males were sent to medreses and became clergymen. A previous minority MP Ahmet Faikoglu, for instance, is a clergyman who comes from a Ksanthian Muslim Roma family.

The boundary between the Turks/Pomaks and Muslim-Roma is extremely sharp. The Roma are in a kind of a "caste position" in the Western Thracian minority. There is a similar perception in the villages (of) of Aegean region of Turkey.[148] Nonetheless, there are

hierarchies within the Muslim-Roma community as well. The ones who have clean and neat houses, polite manners and attend the mosque

148 Paul Stirling, *Turkish Village,* New York, Wiley, 1966.

regularly are considered 'good Roma'. Only such people have access to the Muslim-Turk public sphere; they are invited to the Turks' events such as weddings, mevlits, funerals. The Muslim Roma also invite the local Muslim -Turks to their similar events but inter-group visits at home are rare. Intermarriage is strictly shunned.

In Greece, there has been a trend among the Muslim Roma to declare themselves "Pomaks" in the recent decade. At a Roma wedding in our village, for instance, the bride's uncle told me that the groom was a Pomak from Alexandroupoli (although he was Roma). Likewise, a friend of mine told me that in a restaurant in suburban Athens a young Roma waiter (he understood from his appearance and speech) told him that he was a Pomak from Yenice, which is a predominantly Roma village. This identification is also inscribed on some of the Muslim Roma tombs (i.e Pomak Hasan from Kalkanca) in the graveyard of Poşpoş Tekkesi in Komotini. This seems to be the reflection of a communal desire for more social acceptance and integration.

2.6.4 *External Boundaries & Intercommunal Relations (a Survival Strategy)*

> With these people (the local Greeks) we have been like brothers! We have got on very well, to put it honestly…There have been some unfortunate events though, but it is not easy to survive as a minority, my child…[149]

External boundaries in everyday life concern lowlanders because the mainstream Greek Orthodox rurals are concentrated in lowlands. Despite political disputes and conflicts between the corresponding nation-states, inter-communal relations between the local Muslims and the

149 " Biz bu insanlarla kardaş gibi yaşadık…Bölgede bazı haksızlıklar da olmadı değil…ama ekkaliyet olmak kolay mı be kızım? " Yusuf, 80 year old participant, Melikli, summer 2012

Greek Orthodox have never acquired a hostile character. As stated by Dragostinova, this is peculiar to the Balkan peninsula, where "[...]inter-ethnic relations were neither based on nor shaped by inter-ethnic hostilities."[150] I argue that keeping peaceful inter-ethnic relations has been the strongest survival strategy.

Local Muslims and Greek Orthodox have coexisted peacefully for centuries albeit as parallel societies with external boundaries intact. Communal relations have been neighborly, friendly but with well-established boundaries in terms of socialization. Intermarriages have been marginal. Muslims and the Greek Orthodox have not mixed. However, in mixed villages, inter-communal relations have been more frequent. Family visits usually take place in mixed villages of Greeks and Muslims on a gendered basis. Males usually meet in the coffeehouses and help each other with cultivation. Families celebrate their religious festivals and weddings by exchanging gifts and paying visits to each other. Sometimes women exchange visits for coffee in mixed villages. Muslim and Greek Orthodox children play together. Nevertheless, the frequency of such visits is much lower than those among themselves.[151]

Some narrators stated that despite neighborly relations, there always existed an invisible wall of unreliability because they had different religions.[152] This can be related to the painful historical legacy of wars and to the religious nationalism. Many devout Muslim rurals hold the belief that non-Muslims could never be equivalent with Muslims. Especially the elderly tend to believe, in accordance with the Islamic doctrine, that in this word they might suffer and lead lower standard lives than non-Muslims but they will be rewarded in after-world. On the one hand, they envy the better living standards of local Greek Orthodox, on the other hand, they consider them inferior due to their creed.

Nonetheless, this is not the case with the middle-aged and young, educated minority rurals. Yıldız, for instance, a university graduate civil servant, is from a poor highlander family who descended to a lowland

150 Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands,* 2013,6.

151 Based on interviews, narrations, personal observations in the region.

152 Interview with Melda, Yalanca Latife, Yasiköy, Sakine, Domruköy, summer 2012.

village. She narrates the socio-economic differences in her childhood in early 1980s:

> During the summer months, we used to go to pick tobacco at the small plot we hired from a local Greek Orthodox at dawn and return home at noon. As my father rode the talika[153] back home, we used to pass through the long road in the Greek neighborhood. None of them cultivated tobacco. I used to admire and envy those beautiful houses, and the ladies, clean and neatly dressed, sitting in their gardens, sipping coffee or taking care of their flowers. Every time I saw them, I promised myself that I would not be a peasant like my parents when I grew up. I would go to school and have a white-collar job and live in a house like theirs.[154]

Buket, a middle-aged university graduate from Turkey, is from a lowland village but lives in Ksanthi town center. Because she graduated from the minority high school in Komotini in 1970s, she is fluent in Greek, which has provided her easy access to Greek neighbors. As a modern Muslim, she has friendly but moderate relations with her Greek neighbors. She admires their intellectual level as she says; "Greeks are more civilized than us. They have a good standard of life. They place more significance on education and culture."[155]

Like the Muslim minority, the Greek Orthodox society has subgroups; the native Greek Orthodox at the core, the nomadic highlander Sarakatsans in the periphery and the Christian Roma at the outermost periphery. Post 1950s, the Greek government funded the former to buy Muslim lands and settle in the lowlands in order to increase the Greek Orthodox element in the lowlands. Until 1990s, their relations with Sarakatsans resembles that of Turkish-Muslim lowlanders and highlanders. Although they had neighborly relations, the local Greek Orthodox did not favor intermarriage. I remember in 1983, we were all saddened upon the

153 Small, horse or donkey driven vehicle. See Annex.

154 Interview with Yıldız, Yalanca, summer 2012.

155 Interview with Buket, university graduate, Yalanca, summer 2012.

suicide of a local Greek Orthodox young girl in the neighboring village. Apparently, her father did not allow her to marry her lover because he was a Sarakatsan. Nonetheless, in the past three decades, with the change in the latter's education and socio-economic level, the boundaries have gradually faded away.

In the narrations, Sarakatsans are revealed as more nationalist than Greek Orthodox locals. For instance, a rural narrator in Yalanca mentioned that prior to parliamentary elections, four Sarakatsans from neighboring villages had threatened a group of villagers in the coffeehouse against voting for independent minority MPs in 1989.[156] Three elderly narrators in Yasiköy stated that they had good and sincere relations with Greek Orthodox locals whereas the Sarakatsans and the Greek Orthodox refugee families preferred to keep distant.[157]

During times of friction between Turkey and Greece, however, some local Greek Orthodox neighbors distanced themselves from their minority neighbors. Some males reflected their frustration with Turkey by avoiding even daily greetings with minority males. Western Thracians were scared that the government could mobilize local Greek Orthodox to attack them. By the same token, the Greek Orthodox were scared that Turkey would interfere by reference to Turks as their kin as in Cyprus. At times of crisis between Greece and Turkey, epitomized by the war in Cyprus in 1974, and later due to disputes over the Aegean, inter communal fear was mutual.[158]

Post minority opening, with the rise in the number of university graduate rurals who have professional jobs in the town, inter communal relations have taken a new turn. They began to invite their Greek Orthodox colleagues, customers, employers for dinners to their houses and were also invited by them. They have also had drinks and dinners out in the restaurants. A narrator stated that they talked about everything in general except Turkish-Greek relations. They (as a couple) only had three

156 Interview with Fuat, Yalanca, summer 2012.

157 Interview with Latife, Kaya, Mansur, Yasiköy, summer 2012.

158 Narrations about the Cyprus Conflict, summer 2012.

close Greek Orthodox friends with whom they could also talk about everything including Greek-Turkish relations.[159]

However, some frictions in everyday life manifest themselves in commercial relations. A female return migrant, previously a textile engineer in Turkey, opened a boutique in the town. She sold clothes she imported from Turkey. When a customer noticed the label of Turkey on a dress one day, she hesitated for a while and asked her why she imported from Turkey. She replied to her that Greece was not producing anything and that options were either Turkey or China. In another case, another customer blamed her for importing from Turkey and the dialogue turned into an unnecessary identity debate in the end of which she said, "Look I am a local Turk of this country whether you like it or not".[160]

Nevertheless, the local inter-ethnic relations in the region have been a stronghold against the state discrimination and oppression. Despite a few sporadic cases of intimidation and violence incited by the local Greek Orthodox, inter-ethnic relations have been peaceful. As will be mentioned in the following chapters, there are also a number of cases of solidarity and cooperation in times of chaos and conflicts between Greece and Turkey. Neighborly inter-ethnic relations have played a vital role in the minority's survival. [161]

159 Interview with Yıldız, Yalanca, summer 2012.

160 Interview with Nergis, originally from Bulatköy, Komotini, summer 2012.

161 Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, 2011, p.13.

3

Becoming Minority in Homeland

§ 3.1 The Final Ottoman Retreat from the Balkans

Ottoman Thrace was an arena of violent conflicts between 1877 and 1920. Ottoman retreat from the Caucasus and the Balkans since the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) instigated a substantial destruction and exodus of Muslims and Turks from the Caucasus and the Balkans. The process accelerated with the Greek Revolution of 1821, followed by the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29, the Crimean War of 1854-65, the Ottoman-Russo war of 1877-78 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Subsequently, Ottoman Empire lost its territories as well as a huge Muslim population in the Balkans.[162] Some local Christians were retaliated against

162 Justin McCarthy, *Death and exile : the ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922,* Princeton, N.J, Darwin Press, 1995, 15-19; 23-58.

the murder of Muslim civilians as exemplified by the *Batak* massacre in Bulgaria.[163]

Around 260,000 Balkan Muslims were killed during the 1877-8 Ottoman-Russo war and 515,000 had to migrate to safer zones of the Empire.[164] Bıyıklıoğlu gives the number of immigrants who reached Edirne and Istanbul as 600,000. Out of this number, 100,000 were settled in Anatolia. Around 150,000 refugees remained in Istanbul. Another 150,000 settled in Western Thrace, then Ottoman territory. Others were settled in safer zones of Rumelia.[165]

The Ottoman-Russo war was followed by the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913. In 1912, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece (the Balkan League) backed by Russia declared war against the Ottoman Empire.[166] In a couple of weeks, Manastır was captured by the Serbians, İşkodra by Montenegrins, Epirus, Thessaly, southern Macedonia, including Selanik by the Greeks. Bulgarians captured Edirne to Istanbul-the Çatalca line towards the east, all of western part of Thrace and parts of Macedonia.[167] Edirne was occupied by Bulgaria on 16th March 1913.[168]

The failure and plight of the Ottoman soldiers during the First Balkan War was indication of the ailing empire in terms of the army, logistics, and economy. Hunger and epidemics were widespread. During the Balkan Wars, for example, the troops in Edirne began to starve even in the initial times of the war due to lack of sufficient transportation links to carry food and supplies.[169] Desertion occurred on a large scale during the

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163 Fatme Myuhtar May, *Identity, Nationalism and Cultural Heritage under Siege,* Brill, Balkan Studies Library, 2014, pp: 78-79. May contends that the number of victims could not be thousands as claimed by Bulgarians because the village had a population of a few hundred.

164 McCarthy, *Death and exile***,** 1995, p.90.

165 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele,* 1955, 28

166 Mc Carthy, *Death and Exile*, 136.

167 Ibid., p.138.

168 Bıyıklıoglu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955,64.

169 Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System, 1844-1914", *International Review of Social History*, 1998, 437-449, 448.

Balkan Wars and the First World War, when it reached half a million, almost half of the army.[170] The Ottoman retreat bore tragic consequences for the remaining Turks and Muslims in the Balkans.

During the First Balkan War, seventeen thousand troops, Kırcaali Müfrezesi, under the command of Ali Yaver Paşa were entrusted with the defense of Western Thrace. However, the troops could not resist the Bulgarian forces and kept retreating until they surrendered on 27th November 1912.[171] In eastern Thrace, atrocities were carried out in Edirne, Keşan, İpsala, Havza, Enez, Çorlu, Lüleburgaz, Babaeski.[172] The Bulgarian irregular bands, in collaboration with the Greek irregulars, looters, killed and tortured the local Turks and Muslims and triggered a huge wave of migration to Istanbul. During the escape route to the capital, a substantial number of civilians and soldiers died of malnutrition and cholera.[173]

Forcing the local Muslim-Turks out was a strategy to demand the evacuated lands as theirs at negotiation tables and accumulate wealth for their future aspirations of territorial expansions.[174] This kind of what would be termed today, *ethnic cleansing* was the *leitmotiv* in the Balkans, a strategy embarked on during the Ottoman-Russo War of 1877-1878 and the Balkan Wars. The Montenegrins, Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greek bands and soldiers pillaged, burnt down Muslim villages they passed through, torturing and killing the inhabitants brutally. Once a village was

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170 Erik Jan Zürcher (eds), *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775-1925,* NY, St. Martin's Pres, 1999, 14.

171 Bıyıklıoğlu, Trakya'da Milli Mücadele, 1955, 64.

172 Atakan Sevgi, *Balkan Savaşlarında Trakya ve Edeköy Katliamı,* Ceren Yayınevi, İs-tanbul, 2018, 254-264.

173 Ibid., 80-115

174 H.R.Wilkinson, Maps and Politics- A Review of the Ethnographic Cartography of Macedonia, Liverpool, 1951, 63-91, (in)Vemund Aarbakke, Vasileios Koutsoukos and Georgios Niarchos, "The Independent Republic of Gumuldjina (1913) - A New Test for Young Turks Policymakers", (eds) Dimitris Stamatopoulos, *Balkan Nationalisms and the Ottoman Empire,* Vol. III, *The Young Turk Revolution and Ethnic Groups,* The ISIS Press, 2015, 213-232, 213.

destroyed in this fashion, the fear would create a domino effect on the other villages of the district and trigger immediate runaway.[175]

An outstanding feature of the Balkan Wars was guerilla warfare. Guerilla bands played a key role in the ethnic cleansing of the Balkan Muslims and the seizure of their property. It was a vital instrument in Balkan nation-state formation. The ecclesiastical class was secretly but actively involved in the formation and funding of guerilla bands.[176] These guerilla bands were often led by Bulgarian and Greek servants or neighbors of Turkish-Muslim notables. They also murdered opponent kinsmen in administrative posts. Edeköy Massacre in Eastern Thrace, Durhasanlar, Kırka and Papasköy massacres in Western Thrace are cases in point.

According to the archival sources and oral testimonies, the massacre in Edeköy, in current Turkish Thrace, was carried out after the surrender of Yaver Paşa to Bulgarians and lasted for a whole week in November 1912. Located on the eastern bank of Meriç river, Edeköy was a wealthy village owning vast fertile lands. The inhabitants were Turks, Bulgarians and Greeks. The latter owned grocery stores in the village and worked as laborers for the landlord and tax collector (mültezim) Hacı Mehmet Ağa. At a time when Turkish males were away fighting in the Ottoman army, Edeköy was an easy prey for the bands to loot and massacre the inhabitants.[177]

In a similar vein, a number of atrocities were carried out in Western Thrace; Dimetoka, Dedeağaç, the villages of Durhasanlar and Kırka. The bands usually entered before the regular army to commit atrocities. The surviving Muslims of Dimetoka fled towards the direction of Keşan and Gelibolu. Around 20,000 Muslim refugees were kept in front of Edirne, but not allowed in the city due to the scarcity of food even for the

175 Ibid.

176 Turgut Gürer (eds), *Komitacı-BJK'nın Kurucusu Fuat Balkan'ın Anıları,* Gürer Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008,

177 For details, see Sevgi, *Balkan Savaşlarında Trakya ve Edeköy Katliamı*, 2018.

locals and the soldiers.[178] In Dedeağaç, the biggest mosque was burnt down, a number of villages plundered, and more than 100 Muslims were killed. [179] In Kırka, for instance, when Muslim males were conscripted to the Ottoman army upon the outbreak of the First Balkan War, they entrusted their Greek neighbors with the care and protection of their wives, children and elderly. However, when the Ottoman army was defeated, all were killed by their Greek neighbors.[180]

As opposed to villains, there were also non-Muslim heroes. Among them was a local Greek friend of the unfortunate notable Hacı Mehmet Ağa of Edeköy, who saved his family during the massacre. Likewise, the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Dedeağaç tried his best to prevent the atrocities, and managed to save the governor, some officers and a number of local Turks.[181] The Bishop of Serez saved a number of local Muslims.[182] The priest of Hasköy, Konstantini Efendi, strived to prevent attacks on the mosque, Muslim houses and shops. Some of the Greek inhabitants of the Sarıhıdır (Kyprinos) saved the Muslim inhabitants of the village.[183] They were people who managed to remain 'humans' in the cruel conditions of wars.

The most frequently narrated atrocity in Western Thrace is that of Durhasanlar, a village in the Rhodopean province. Durhasanlar and the Bulgarian village of Sıçanlık were neighboring villages. One night during the Balkan Wars, a group of Bulgarian insurgents entered the village. They were led by a young Bulgarian man from Sıçanlık who used to work

178 Based on the telegram sent by the Ottoman governor Halil informing the situation in Edirne, Osmanlı Belgelerinde Balkan Savaşları II, TC Başbakalnlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, İstanbul, 2013, 21-324, ibid., 242.

179 Mc Carthy, *Death and Exile*, 156

180 Ibid., 74.

181 Stephen Lauzanne*, Balkan Acıları,*Kastaş Yayınevi, Istanbul, 1990, 106.

182 Mc Carthy, *Death and Exile,* 1995,162.

183 Çağla D. Tağmat, Uluslararası Carneige Raporuna Göre İki Balkan Savaşı arası Dönemde Edirne'de Bulgar İşgali, Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi, sayı:60, Bahar 2017, 207-232, 225.

as a shepherd for the landlord Salih Ağa, and Petkof, assistant to the notorious Bulgarian commander Tanev. They plundered wealthy Muslim houses, took eighteen Muslim males and killed them with bayonets. 18 or 20 Muslim women were brought to the mosque and threatened to undress. Apparently, Petkof spoke Turkish. Frustrated over the resistance of a Muslim woman, Petrof took her baby by force and threw it into the burning furnace.[184]

Disputes over the partition of the captured territories soon triggered the Second Balkan War. Taking advantage of the chaos between the allies, the Army Corps Staff Commander Enver Paşa took Edirne, Sofulu and Dimetoka. During the Second Balkan war, according to the Carneige Report, the advancing Ottomans took revenge only from the non-Muslim villages who participated in the massacre of Muslims. When the young Turkish males of Kırka returned, they retaliated by killing the remaining Greek inhabitants and burning down the village.[185]

A group of Turkish-Muslim irregulars led by Eşref Kuşçubaşı captured Petkof, the leader of the Durhasanlar massacre, and executed him after he admitted that he'd taken this order from Commander Tanev.[186] Some of the Bulgarian villages were burn down and pillaged. When Havza was emancipated from Bulgarians, Turks destroyed the houses of the nearby Bulgarian village as retaliation. In Tekirdağ, Malkara and other towns, a number of Christians were raped and killed. Some of the fleeing local Bulgarians were also attacked and killed.[187]

The Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria signed a population exchange agreement in 1913 for the exchange of Bulgarians in the border region.

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184 Narrated by Basri and Seniha, Domruköy, summer 2016; "Durhasanlar Katliamı" , *Şafak,* nr.27, 1992; Donanma Mecmuası, 1912, nr.52-54, cSevgi, *Balkan Savaşlarında Trakya*, 2018, 240.

185 F.O.195-2456,NO.288, O'Reilly to Grey, Sofia, 1 January 1914, enclosure, Heard's "Report on the situation in Western [sic] Thrace", Mc Carthy, *Death and Exile,* 2005, 155.

186 Sevgi, *Balkan Savaşlarında*, 2018,187.

187 Mc Carthy, *Death and Exile,* 2005, 155.

Subsequently, 12 villages with 46,764 Bulgarian inhabitants from Eastern Thrace were exchange with 48,570 Muslims from 12 villages in Bulgaria.[188] Some of the Bulgarians had already left Turkish Thrace before the Istanbul Agreement either because they had involved in the atrocities committed against the Muslims or were scared they could be retaliated against.[189] There were also Bulgarian villagers who were threatened to leave by Muslim guerilla bands. Their property was seized or purchased for much less than the real value.[190]

Likewise, the Greek Orthodox in Eastern Thrace and Western Anatolia were intimidated by the local Turks after the settlement of around 240,000 Macedonian and Western Thracian Muslim refugees who fled from the Balkan wars. As a result, 80,000 Greeks in Eastern Thrace and 250,000 Greeks in Western Anatolia are estimated to have fled to Greece. Consequently, Greek and Ottoman governments made an agreement for the exchange of the remaining Turks in Macedonia and the remaining Greeks in Eastern Thrace and Aydın on 1st of July 1914. However, it was not implemented due to the outbreak of World War I.[191]

The number of Muslim casualties in Balkan wars is given 632,408 whereas the number of Muslims who had to migrate to the safer regions is claimed to exceed the victims.[192] The number of Muslim casualties in the region of entire Thrace is stated to be over 200,000.[193] By the end of the Balkan Wars, Muslims who used to be either the majority or a considerable minority in the Ottoman Balkans became a simple minority in

188 Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin şifresi : İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mühendisliği*, 1913-1918 İletişim, 2008, 68.

189 Ibid.

190 The General Police Administration (Emniyet-I Umumiye Müdürlüğü) eventually sent a telegram to Edirne Governor to send a mobile security force (seyyar kuvvet teşkil edilmesi). BOA.DH.ŞFR.40/64, 1332.C.25, (21/04/1914), Bilecen, "Misafir Misafiri sevmez", *Trakya'nın Renkli Dünyası*, 2017,140.

191 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955,92

192 Mc Carthy, *Death and Exile*, 1995,192

193 Ibid. 152.

number due to change of borders, atrocities and forced migration.[194]Balkan Muslims and Turks had to immigrate en masse to safer zones of the Ottoman Empire for almost a century. This laid the historical foundations of migration as a survival strategy.

§ 3.2 Narratives of Surviving Ancestors: Immigration Stories, Multiethnic Roots

A number of ancestors spent years doing military duty in the Ottoman army and fought in the Ottoman-Russo War, Balkan wars and World War I. Some of them never returned, some returned after long years when they were believed to be dead. The war years were scene to hostilities as well as friendships between local Muslims and Christians. For instance, a paternal great-grandfather of mine, Hüseyin, fought in Edirne during the Balkan wars under the command of Şükrü Paşa and was among the Ottoman prisoners of war detained on the islet in Sarayiçi.

Hundreds of Ottoman prisoners of war died of hunger and diseases there. They gnawed the tree barks out of hunger to such an extent that the trees on the island were peeled off until a man's height could reach.[195] How he survived in the camp was narrated by his wife (my great grandmother) Safiye to my father :

> One day Hüseyin came across an acquaintance, a seasonal laborer in his village, who was a Bulgarian soldier on duty. They immediately recognized each other. He yelled with surprise 'Oh

194 Ibid., 153.

195 Carneige Report,111,Mc Carthy, p.144; http://www.edirneye-nigun.com/print/news/20808.html, last retrieved 09.03.2019; the photo of POWS and gnawed trees in Sarayici available at: https://bosnakhaber.com/bulgarlarin-sarayici-turk-soykirimi-birkac-hatira/, last retrieved 10.03.2019; I visited the site and saw the photos in a museum on a daily tour to Edirne, 2009.

> my God Hüseyin, what are you doing here?' and heard a mere utterance in response 'I am so hungry…' He whispered in his ear to meet him in a specific corner at night. During the rest of his stay, he secretly brought Hüseyin food every night .'Had that momçe[196] not helped me, I'd have died of hunger' he narrated to his wife.

A significant number of my respondents narrated that their great grandparents came from as far as Crimea (1853-1856), Bulgaria and Macedonia during the Ottoman Russo- War and Balkan Wars. The Muslims and Turks who managed to escape the wars were settled in villages and in the outskirts of the towns of Gümülcine and İskeçe where they established their own neighborhoods such as Mastanlı and Kır Mahalle in the former and Sünne Mahalle in the latter, giving their new settlements the names of their previous villages or towns.

The Rhodopean lowland village of Karapınar, for instance, was established for the refugees of Ottoman-Russo war in 1880 upon the order of Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1880.[197] In the conditions of the time, land was plentiful but population scarce. [198] For instance, my maternal grandfather's paternal grandfather fled from Çakalköy in Bulgaria[199] along with two other families in the same village during the Ottoman-Russo war. The story of ancestors are usually vague. An eighty year old Hatice narrated that her grandfather's family fled from Bulgaria during the Ottoman-Russo war:

> My grandfather was 6 years old when they fled their village in Bulgaria and arrived in this village. They set off in an ox-cart with some quilts, loaves of bread and a mattress. They had to stop at

196 Young man in Bulgarian (also Pomak) language. The counterpart of "delikanlı" in Turkish language.

197 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet: Karapınar Köyü", *Trakya* , 26 August 1957

198 Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Küreselleşme, İktisat Politikaları ve Büyüme,* İş Bankası Yayınları, 2007, p.12.

199 Çakalköy, (in Bulgarian Çakalarovo) is within the province of Kırcaali

> some point because the oxen were hungry and not able to move anymore. They set the oxen free, left the cart with quilts, and continued on foot. They were finally taken to a mosque by the Ottoman officials where they were accommodated for a week. In those times the government gave the immigrants land. My grandfather's family was given 50 dönüm[200]land.[201]

Another narrator's paternal ancestors came from Crimea during the war. They first settled in Bulgaria and during the Ottoman-Russo War (1877-8) fled to Ksanthi and settled there. His mother's father's side was the ciftlik owner of a lowland village in İskeçe. He claimed his lineage extended to Karaman Turks of Konya in Anatolia and that they were affiliated with Atatürk's father's family. His paternal Crimean grandfather was *muezzin* in the İskeçe Pazaryeri mosque which was later pulled down by the junta administration.[202]

Hediye's paternal great-grandparents came from current Greek Macedonia, a village called Suluova, or Sülova as her great grandmother called, within the province of Kılkış.

> My great-grandmother used to say that they were from the Yörüks of the highland village of Kölemenli, currently in Northern Macedonia. They spoke Turkish as their native tongue, but my great-grandmother could also speak and write in Greek. During the course of Balkan wars, they escaped from Macedonia by ox-carts and settled in Çorlu in Turkish Thrace, as refugees. Prior to the Population Exchange, they set off back to Macedonia to have their lands and property registered. Yet, the family had to stop at the middle-line village of Müselimköy because my great-

200 A Turkish land measure according to which 1 dönüm is 1,000 square meters. The Greek usage for dönüm is stremma (singular), stremmata (plural)

201 Interview with Hatice, Melikli, summer 2012.

202 Interview with Hikmet Cemiloğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

> grandmother was pregnant and had to deliver the baby. Then they decided to stay there. [203]

Fortunately, I had the chance to know most of my maternal and paternal great-grandparents. In fact, they were my early childhood friends. Two great-grandmothers passed away in their mid-90s when I was 19 years old. They were all devout Muslims and native Turkish speakers. As a matter of fact, they could speak no other language. Most were descendants of refugees who had fled wars from the Balkans, particularly Bulgaria. The furthest lineage I could trace was that of an oil-wrestler great-great grandfather, Süleyman Pehlivan. He was my paternal grandmother's maternal grandfather. He had fled with his two sons, two sisters and two brothers from a village in Plevne during the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russo war. His eldest son, Bekir, fought in the Ottoman army during the First Balkan War and died in the battle in Çatalca and buried there.

My paternal grandmother narrates her maternal grandfather:

> Süleyman was an oil wrestler, a well-built, strong and wise man. He attended Oil Wresting tournaments in Edirne and won gold coins. He was good at agriculture. He turned a swamp into farmland in the village when he settled. Gardening was a family job back in Bulgaria. However, the local villagers, who depended on tobacco cultivation and husbandry, did not know about gardening at that time. They used to regard it as job of the infidels *(gavur işi)* until they learned his gardening methods and began to grow their vegetables.

Upon his wife's death, Süleyman married Feride from a nearby highland village. My great-grandmother once told me that her mother Feride was an Aaren.[204] Her mother's family moved from the highland

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203 Interview with Hediye, Müselimköy, summer 2012.

204 Although Aaren is used interchangeably with Pomak, my great grandmother strictly differentiated it from the latter, stating that they were not blonde like Pomaks.

village Kirezli to Müselimköy in 1950s. They did not speak Turkish well. Ethem narrates about his uncle Mustafa:

> The old Mustafa Dayı, my mother's uncle was a well-built Aaren. He used to wear baggy pants, a waistband and a golden chain watch which I loved to play with whenever we visited him. I barely understood the Turkish he spoke because it was different than the one we spoke at home. I used to ask my mother about what he said.[205]

On the other hand, my paternal grandmother's paternal grandparents were the locals of the middle-line village. Her paternal grandmother was the daughter of the village imam. His paternal grandfather, Mustafa, was narrated to be a local of Turk. Later, he went to Istanbul for higher education and sympathized with the CUP cadres. Likewise, my father's paternal grandmother Safiye was a native in a lowland village. Turkish was the only spoken language in her family. Her husband Hüseyin's parents, on the other hand, were from a Rhodopean highland village and barely spoke Turkish. They were probably Pomaks.

On my mother's side, my grandmother's maternal grandmother was claimed to be a Tatar who escaped from Filibe(Plovdiv) in Bulgaria during the Balkan Wars with her baby. My maternal grandmother narrates:

> My maternal grandmother fled Bulgaria as a widow. Her husband was killed by the Bulgarian insurgents. After days of walking through the mountains at nights, hiding and sheltering in the bushes during the day, she managed to arrive in İskeçe.[206] There she was hired as a nursing mother by a local notable (*Bey*) and

205 Interview with Ethem, summer 2012.

206 Her story resembles that of the Greek Orthodox lady who fled from her house with her baby and daughter in Geyve during the fights between Turkish and Greek irregulars in 1921, *Hediye-Evdoksia,* İsmail Keskin, Hayy Kitab, 2011.

> given accommodation in his *ciftlik*. A few years later, she was arranged to marry an African-origin Muslim Turk in Yalanca. Her eldest daughter she had brought from Filibe who was my mother Fatme, was wed to a local. Her mother-in-law, Elmas Nine, was an Arab slave bought by a Western Thracian couple during their pilgrimage in Mecca. My father used to narrate that she barely spoke Turkish, that she played her goblet drum from time to time and sing in Arabic with watery eyes.

"We have Tatar, Arab and Pomak ancestors... but we are Turks, my dear*"*enunciated my maternal grandmother. This kind of an acknowledgment is similar to the one expressed by Prof Zafer Toprak in a speech he delivered at Bogazici University; "I acknowledge some of my Caucasian ancestors but I am not interested in them. I am content with being a Turk'.[207]

The narrations reveal the awareness of multiethnic ancestors but the acknowledgement and complacence with the Turkish identity.

§ 3.3 State-building efforts: Tamrash Republic & Western Thracian (Turkish) State

As a reaction to the secession of their region to Bulgaria by San Stefano Treaty on 3 March 1878, the local Pomaks under the leadership of Ahmet Ağa of Tamrash and Hidayet Paşa[208], declared an autonomous

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207 Prof Zafer Toprak's speech on 10th November 2011, commemoration day of Atatürk, FDS Building.

208 British-born Stanislas Graham Bower St. Clair. He served in the Ottoman army in Bulgaria in 1877-78 and called himself Hidayet Paşa. Apparently, he was supported by the British government as a countervailing influence to the advance of the Russian Army towards the Aegean', Kevin Featherstone, Dimitris Papadimitri, Argyris Mamarelis,

state in the territory of south of Plovdiv (Filibe) incorporating the Tamrash region.[209] This state is referred to as Temporary Turkish State of Rhodope (Rodop Türk Devlet-i Muvakkatesi) in Turkish historiography, Tamrashka republika or insubordinate villages (nepokorna sela) in Bulgarian historiography.[210]

It had a flag with three horizontal stripes of red, green and black. It comprised a region of 17 villages from the south of Plovdiv down to Smolyan to the Greek border. The head of government was Ahmet Ağa from Tamrash and other Pomak notables with posts of ministers and representatives such as Hacı Hasan Ağa from Trigrad, Hacı Mehmet from Beden and Molla Eyüp from Mugla.[211] They had an army of 8,000 troops and ruled over 19,000 inhabitants. It lasted for eight years; until 1886 when the region of Eastern Rumelia was ceded back to the Ottoman Empire.[212]

It is the first temporary Muslim-Turkish government in Western Thrace . Bıyıklıoğlu describes it as a movement of awakening and rebirth of the Turkish people, yet with no reference to 'Pomak'. This kind of an attitude can be related to the *millet* system as religion was equivalent to ethnic identity. Since Pomaks were Muslims, they were considered inseparable from Turks. After all, in that age of nationalism, regardless of language and ethnic background, Vlachs and Slavs were considered Greek Orthodox due to their affiliation with Christianity.[213] Bıyıklıoğlu contends that this state provided a strong leverage for the Ottoman Empire in taking back the region of Eastern Rumelia in 1886.[214] However,

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Georgios Niarchos, *The Last Ottomans*: *The Muslim Minority of Greece, 1940-1949*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, UK, 26, footnote 18.

209 Ibid., 25. Tamrash region is the current Dospat in Smolyan which later extended to the Rhodopes and Arda valley.

210 Featherstone et.al, 2011, 26, ftn.19.

211 Ibid, 26.

212 Ibid.

213 Harris Mylonas, *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities,* Cambridge University Press, NY, 2012, p.57.

214 Bıyıklığolu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 21

some Pomaks claim that Ottomans abandoned them to the Bulgarians by demanding the dissolution of the state, in other words, 'stabbed them in the back'.[215]

Located in a geographical rectangle bordered by Bulgaria on the north, Ottoman Empire in the east, Greece on the west and the Aegean Sea on the south, Western Thrace has been an arena of clashing Greek, Ottoman and Bulgarian nationalisms during the early twentieth century. It was bribed to Bulgaria by the Ottoman Empire in 1913 prior to the First World War. When the CUP cadres Kuşçubaşı and Askeri refused Ottoman orders for withdrawal and declared the independent state of Western Thrace, Greece supported the independent state in order to contain Bulgaria. Upon the end of World War I, being on the defeated side, Bulgaria supported the Turkish attempts for an independent Western Thracian state to contain Greece. During the National Struggle in Anatolia, Western Thrace was a buffer zone to detain at least part of Greek military forces in the region and prevent their access to Anatolia. Upon the end of Greek-Turkish War in Anatolia, all the guerilla activity in the mountains of Rhodope ended and the status quo affirmed.

The short-lived state of Western Thrace has an undervalued but significant weight in Turkish history. To begin with, after Libya, Western Thrace was the second arena where fighting was carried out by volunteers using guerilla tactics.[216] Kuşçubaşı and a few other volunteers had already fought in Libya before Western Thrace.[217] The term 'Kuvay'ı Milliye' (National Forces) was first used as a military rank by the found-

215 Narrations of two educated Pomaks(declared themselves Pomak-Turks) in Western Thrace; a social media platform named 'Pomakistan' on facebook, 03.05.2019.

216 The first time the CUP used guerilla tactics is stated to be in the Libya in 1911 while fighting against Italian invasion. Mesut Uyar and Edward J.Erickson*, A military History of the Ottomans***,** Santa Barbara 2009, 223, Aarbakke et.al, ""The Independent Republic of Gumuldjina", 2015, 215; Fortna, p.97; Gürer, 2005, 40-42.

217 Mesut Uyar and Edward J.Erickson, A military History of the Ottomans, Santa Barbara 2009, 223, Aarbakke et.al, "The Republic of Gumuldjina..",.2015, 215.

ers of Western Thracian State; Eşref Kuşçubaşı and Süleyman Askeri.[218]Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, the first Central Intelligence Agency, which took on different names later[219], was established by the leaders of the incursion to Western Thrace; Enver Paşa, then Minister of War in Edirne in 1913 and Süleyman Askeri, the first President of Teşkilat-I Mahsusa. When it was dissolved in the end of WWI, the weapons were secretly sent to Anatolia for the independence movement.[220] Therefore, the Western Thracian State is considered a prelude to the Turkish Republic.[221]

During the Second Balkan War, while Bulgarian army was weakened by Romania in the north, Greece and Serbia in the west, the Ottoman Empire took back Edirne on 22nd July 1913 despite the opposition of the great powers. This was an outstanding national success and motivation for CUP and the public.[222] In the meanwhile, peace talks among the Balkan states were finalized by the Treaty of Bucharest which gave Western Thrace to Bulgaria. Ottoman Empire had promised to the great powers not go beyond Midye-Enez line to the west of river Meriç.[223]

As Mahmut Şevket Paşa was assassinated on 11th June, 1913, the previous opposition among the Ottoman cadres against an incursion to the west side of Meriç was broken. Benefiting from an absence of a strong Ottoman opposition and Bulgarian military weakness in Thrace, the CUP

218 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele,* 1955, 81.

219 The Central Intelligence Agency took several other names until on 6th July 1965 it named MIT (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı) by parliamentary legislation. For more information, see the official website, http://www.mit.gov.tr/emuze/tarihboyunca.html, last retrieved 16.03.2019.

220 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 81; Aarbakke et.al, 2015,.215.

221 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli,* 1955, 81.

222 Bıyıklıoğlu argues that this success boosted the self -confidence among İttihat and Terakki members which would later make them consider themselves the highest level of authority and give risky decisions. Ibid.,72

223 Ibid.

leaders Talat, Enver and Cemal convinced the Ottoman Empire for an incursion to Western Thrace.[224] Nonetheless, the Ottoman Empire declared to the Great Powers that the dispatch of a few troops to stop the atrocities against the civilians would not mean trespassing the determined geographical border.[225]

Aarbakke et.al argue that "The Porte found a pretext for intervening in Western Thrace by claiming that the Bulgarian oppression against the population under her control made it impossible for the Ottomans to stand by and wait passively".[226] From a realpolitik perspective, the incursion into Western Thrace was driven by considerations of safeguarding Edirne, and was an attempt to repair the damaged image of Ottoman military during the Balkan wars. However, values of kinship and empathy cannot be ignored considering the origins and motives of CUP's leading figures . Enver was from Kırcaali and Talat had familial ties there. Eşref Kuşçubaşı and his brothers, Çerkes Reşid, İbrahim Cihangiroğlu, Sapancalı Hakkı and Teğmen Sadık (Bulgar Sadık) were descendants of immigrants from the lost territories in Caucasia and Balkans.[227]

After the occupation of Gümülcine, Western Thracian Temporary State was founded. Müderris Salih Hoca, (Hafız Salih Mehmetoğlu) was appointed as the President. Bıyıklıoğlu uses the term 'chosen' (seçilmişti) but not elected by popular vote. Nor does he use the term 'Republic'.[228] Fuat Balkan uses the term 'assigned' for the distribution of positions without making any reference to 'republic'.[229] As organization of a presidential election does not seem feasible in the conditions of the time,

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224 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History,* 3rd edition, London 2004, 109-110; Aarbakke et.al, 2015, 216; Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli,* 68-69.

225 Bıyıklıoglu, *Trakya'da Milli*, 1955, 73.

226 Aarbakke et.al, "The Independent Republic of Gumuldjina", 2015, 231.

227 Benjamin Fortna, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent Agent,* Hurst & Oxford University Press, 2016, p.87.; Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli,* 1955, 74, footnote 103.

228 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Mili Müadele,* 1955, 76.

229 Gürer, *Komitacı*, 2008, 21,43.

Western Thrace was not a republic, but a multi-national state including representatives from ethnic and religious communities or millets.[230]

The military commanders were also tasked with the administration of specific districts.[231]The executive organ was the Garbi Trakya Hükümeti İcraiyesi headed by Süleyman Askeri, also Minister of War, who was vested with all the power and authority. Askeri was succeeded by Eşref Kuşçubaşı and his brother Hacı Sami Bey. His second brother Hüsrev Bey was in charge of administration.[232] It seems that the legislative, executive and judiciary powers were not clearly defined.[233]Çerkez Reşid, who later involved in Çerkez Ethem's revolt, was General National Deputy Commander.[234]

Çerkes Reşid engaged in a number of nefarious actions in Western Thrace. He attacked and engaged in plundering in the Bulgarian villages particularly Sıçanlık where he and his men(regular and irregular) killed unarmed refugees, set fire on the village and raped eight Bulgarian women.[235] They were punished with death penalty and shot by firing squad.[236] The village of Sıçanlı has remained almost empty ever since. [237] It was an unfortunate retaliation of the atrocities in Durhasanlar.

The first government to recognize the newly founded state was Greece. They preferred the Western Thracian State instead of Bulgaria. They withdrew their military forces from the region prior to the arrival

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230 Kevin Featherstone et al., *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 28; Fortna, *The Circassian,* 2016, 108.

231 The governor of Koşukavak was Kamber Ağa, İskeçe's Mehmet Niyazi, Darıdere's Yusuf, Eğridere's Hasan Vehbi, Ortaköy's Panayot and Dedeağaç's, Anastas. (Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli*, 76, footnote 110,)

232 Ibid., 77-78.

233 Eşref Kuşçubaşı had the titles of General National Commander (*Umum Milli Kumandan*), Chief Commander of Guerilla Bands *(Umum Çeteler Kumandanı*), and National Forces General Inspector(*Kuvay-ı Milliye Umum Müfettişi).* His brother Hacı Sami had the title of National Inspector(*Milli Müfettiş*), ibid.

234 Ibid.

235 Fortna, The Circassian, 2016, 116-117.

236 Ibid., 117.

237 Narrations in Dokos, summer 2015.

of Turks and ceded Dedeağaç along with its port to the Western Thracian State.[238]They even promised weapons, money and Greek volunteers to fight along with Turks against the Bulgarians. Bıyıklıoglu describes the then Greek attitude ambivalent as she also declared to the foreign powers that she would annex the Western Thracian territory on the condition that Bulgaria fails to incorporate it.[239]

Esref Kuscubasi and Süleyman Askeri refused the Ottoman calls for return and declared that they cut off their ties with the Ottoman Empire and changed the name of the state as "Independent State of Western Thrace". [240] The declaration of independence was considered a triumph and celebrated with joy in the entire region. The Western Thracian state had a flag, a national anthem[241] published its official stamps and passports. Samuel Karaso, a Jewish Western Thracian was assigned to establish a press agency and issue a newspaper in Turkish (Ottoman script) and French.[242]

The strongest headquarters of Turkish struggle for Western Thrace was established in the northern region of Rhodope Mountains, in Darıdere and Kırcaali. Under the command of Captain Cemil, there were 3,000 troops in Darıdere and 2,300 troops in Kırcaali whereas in Gümülcine and İskeçe there were weaker forces to sustain domestic security. There were also 8 to 10 thousand rifles in the hands of the inhabitants who had protected their territories against the Russians and Bulgarians.[243] Without mentioning the name, Bıyıklıoğlu implies that the rifles

238 Fortna, *The Circassian,* 2016, 111,117; Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli,* 1955, 79.

239 Ibid., 79-80.

240 Ibid., 78

241 https://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya-turk-cumhuriyeti/milli-marsimiz.html,lastretrieved 15.03.2019.

242 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli*, 1955, 81; Aarbakke et.al, "The Independent", 2017, 225.

243 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli*, 1955, 82.

were reminiscent of the previous Tamrash Republic (1878-1886). Eventually, the state managed to establish a strong army,[244] of not only Muslims and Turks but also volunteers from other ethnic groups in the region. [245]

Unfortunately, the first Turkish led multi-national state in Western Thrace lasted only one and a half months (31 August-25 October 1913). According to Bıyıklıoğlu, Ottoman Empire had to terminate the state and forsake Western Thrace due to pressure from foreign powers. However, Aarbakke et.al argue that " [they] used the temporary government as a lever to put pressure on Bulgaria, which was in a weak position diplomatically."[246]

The great powers' joint opinion was reconciliation between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria over Thrace and their expectation was for the Ottomans to keep Edirne and give Western Thrace to Bulgaria.[247] Eventually the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria reconciled with the Treaty of Istanbul signed on September 29th, 1913, according to which they retained Eastern Thrace including Edirne, Kırklareli and Dimetoka, but ceded Western Thrace to Bulgaria. [248]

Ottoman Empire seems to have forsaken Western Thrace due to her balance of power considerations and convinced the CUP cadre of the decision. On the other hand, the founders were reluctant to dissolve the state. Albay Cemal was sent to the region to convince the leaders to abandon their struggle and to ensure peaceful occupation of Western Thrace by Bulgaria. Eşref was upset and outraged to be obliged to terminate the state after all the struggle.[249] Fuat Balkan was authorized to remain in

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244 29,170 troops composed of 10,000 privates, 5,000 of elderly privates (mustahfiz), a gendarmerie of 500, 60 policemen, 100 guards and sentry, 8000 volunteers of Balkan immigrants, and 6,000 deserters of Ottoman army. Ibid., 83.

245 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 28.

246 Aarbakke et.al, "The Independent Republic", 2015, 224; Fortna, "The Circassian,", 2016, 119.

247 Fortna, *The Circassian*, 2016, 11

248 Aarbakke et.al, "The Independent Republic", 2015,224; Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 84.

249 EK2, Scan 286, cited in Fortna, *The Circassian*, 2016, 119.

İskeçe to manage the demobilization of Turkish army and hide the remaining ammunition and weapons.[250] Captain Sadık was to remain in Gümülcine and Captain Ali Rıza in İskeçe to maintain the safety of the local Turks and protect their rights. [251]

Although it is not possible to ask for the opinion of Western Thracians who experienced these times, the grief and remorse are voiced through the elderly narrators. "Ottomans abandoned us"[252], "They pawned us to Bulgaria, who was only a year ago slaughtering us", "We were proud and delighted to have a state… Ottomans sold us out."[253] "Ottomans abandoned us and ironically asked us to protect the region. What are we to protect?[254]"

In fact, the question of "Why did Turkey leave us, why did Atatürk not take Western Thrace?" was much more frequently voiced during the years of overwhelming state oppression. On the other hand, there are those who think that Western Thrace had to be sacrificed for the greater homeland of Anatolia and that it was not possible for Turkey to keep Western Thrace given the conditions of the time. Nonetheless, the deep disappointment over the region's switching from Bulgaria to Greece is natural given the loss of superior millet (millet-i hakime) status they had enjoyed for over six centuries.

Depending on the narrations and stories pertaining to the period, Eşref Kuşçubaşı and other volunteers were welcomed upon their arrival in the region mostly by Muslims but also by Jews and Greeks who also suffered from the occupying Bulgarians. They were accommodated in the harsh mountain villages of Rhodope and Ksanthi by ordinary peasants and volunteer fighters. Selahattin Yıldız, a Western Thracian diaspora member in Istanbul, narrated that his father (from Memkova, Ksanthian

250 Gürer, *Komitacı* 2008, 24; Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele,* 1950, 87

251 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*,1950, 87

252 Interview with Osman, Galini, summer 2012.

253 Interview with Abdülhalim Dede, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

254 Interview with Musa, Komotini, summer 2016.

highlands,) was among the irregulars of Fuat Balkan. When the family escaped to Turkey in 1941 during the Bulgarian occupation, his father was employed by him and they spent years in his farmstead in Karamürsel.[255]

Eşref Kuşçubaşı and his men were accommodated and supported by a local Muslim-Turk insurgent Kaçak Ahmet, a legendary figure in the region. He was born in 1881 in a highland village of Rhodope, and settled in Yasiköy in his later life. The title *kaçak*, meaning outlaw, was given to him because he could never be captured by the Bulgarians during the Balkan Wars and the subsequent Bulgarian occupation. He was also befriended with Debreli Hasan, the Robin Hood of eastern Macedonia.[256]

Kaçak Ahmet was the leader of a local insurgent group who fought against Bulgarians to protect Muslim inhabitants. During the Balkan wars, a group of Bulgarian insurgents broke into his house in search of him, while his sister was heating the furnace in the yard to bake bread. As they could not find him, they pushed his sister into the brick oven in the house yard and burnt her to death.[257]

§ 3.4 Forced Christianization of Pomaks (1912-1913)

The most vulnerable Muslims of the Balkan Wars were the Pomaks. As stated by Fatme Myuhtar-May, herself a Pomak born and raised in Bulgaria, due to linguistic affiliation with Christian Bulgarians, Bulgarians contended that Pomaks were claimed to be forcibly converted to Islam by the Ottomans. Even worse, they were considered as a relic of the previous Ottoman oppressors, and a potential threat against the nascent Bulgarian nation-state.

255 Interview with Selahattin Yıldız, Istanbul, summer 2012.

256 Narrations in the region; Merdan Güven, "Türkiye Sahasındaki Hikayeli Türküler Üzerine bir Araştırma", PhD, Atatürk Üniversitesi, Erzurum, 2005, 355.

257 Narrations of Kaçak Ahmet's grandson's son, Iasmos; narrations of elderly participants in Galini and Iasmos, summer 2012.

Forced conversion of Pomaks was a state project carried out by the Bulgarian priests, under the surveillance of the army and insurgents.[258] Forced Christianization was forged in the newly acquired regions of the Rhodopes, Thrace, Eastern Macedonia with sizeable Pomak populations. Myuhtar-May argues that the Turks were excluded from the forced conversion because "[…] the (Bulgarian) elites perceived Pomaks to be the most closely associated with the national majority by language and ethnicity."[259]

Myuhtar-May argues that Bulgaria's conviction of Pomaks' forcible conversion to Islam is one of the underlying premises of Bulgarian nationalism. On the other hand, this conviction was based on only one source; the diary of Priest Methody Draginov. He is believed to have written about the forced conversion to Islam during the late seventeenth century.[260] May emphasizes that its validity has been questioned even by the renowned nationalist historian Haytov, who stated that the concerned diary was long lost but only some passages that were noted by some patriots were able to survive.[261] On the other hand, a number of other Bulgarian historians acknowledge that conversion to Islam was voluntary, due to reasons of '[…] both personal conviction and socio-political gains'.[262]

After the independence of Bulgaria in 1778, in all censuses of 1880, 1885,1888, Pomaks were registered as 'Turks'. In the census of

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258 Fatme Myuhtar-May, *Identity, Nationalism, and Cultural Heritage under Siege Five Narratives of Pomak Heritage—From Forced Renaming to Weddings*, Brill, Balkan Studies Library, 2014, p.33. The forced Christianization of Pomaks was repeated in 1938-1944, and the forced name changing in 1960-1970s., 39.

259 Ibid.,43. Based on a letter of Maxim, Archbishop of the Plovdiv Diocese, to the Orthodox clergy, entrusted with the forced Christianization of Haskovo, Stanimaka, Pazardzhik, Panagyurishte, and Peshtera,

260 Ibid.,41, 47; In the summer of 2009, while I was attending Greek Language School at the University of Aristotle in Thessaloniki, I met a Bulgarian young man who was also learning Greek who fervently claimed that the Pomaks were Bulgarians who were converted to Islam forcibly by the Ottomans.

261 Ibid., 41.

262 Myuhtar-May, p.41.

1905, for the first time, they were registered as Pomaks. Todorova relates it to an insistent campaign in the press which called public opinion to distinguish between religious and ethnic affiliation and acknowledge Pomaks as part of the Bulgarian nation which was also supported by a small group of educated Pomak elite.[263]

Myuhtar-May makes an estimate of 300,000 Pomaks forced to conversion in the Rhodopes, Thrace, and Macedonia during the Bulgarian occupation between October 1912 and fall of 1913 when forced conversion was carried out.[264] The same number is also given by Balkan.[265] The most intense period of the forced conversion was in the winter months when survival in the harsh geography of highlands was most difficult. The process of conversion took place in the center of the Pomak villages, surrounded by soldiers, where all the inhabitants were gathered. Each family was made to stand in line in front of a priest. They were given a cross and then made to put their heads in a bucket filled with water to get baptized. The children were sprinkled with water. In cases when time was abundant, the males were made to eat a small piece of pork. Afterwards, the people were made to verbally announce that they reject Islam and accept Christianity. Finally, they were given Christian Bulgarian names. The fez (Islamic hats) of the men and the yashmak[266] of the females were taken. The village mosque, if survived the fires set by insurgents, was

263 Maria Todorova, "Identity (Trans) formation among Bulgarian Muslims", 138-139, Myuhtar-May, 45.

264 According to Stoyu Shishkov, who was directly involved in the conversion and later published a book about them, the Pomaks inhabiting European Turkey on the eve of the Balkan Wars (the early fall of 1912) numbered 400,000 people and were distributed in 500 towns and villages. By regions, the distribution was the following: Edirne (Odrin)—131,455 people in 207 towns/villages; Thessalonica (Solun)—98,297 people in 190 towns/villages; Bitolya—36,669 people in 93 towns/villages; Skopje—13,114 people in 23 towns/villages. Stoyu Shishkov, Balgaro-mohamedanite (Pomatsite) (Plovdiv, Bulgaria: 1936), 34], ibid., 48.

265 Gürer, *Komitacı*, 2005, 41.

266 A kind of Muslim female headscarf in rectangular shape and of thin cotton fabric which extends to the waist and covers the upper part of the body, usually worn over long black coat (ferace).

turned into church, and the village school into a Sunday school in order to '[…]indoctrinate Christian virtues and patriotic loyalty.'[267]

Bulgarian administration also offered incentives to encourage Christianization among Pomaks to make it seem voluntary. One method was the distribution of Red Cross aid which could not reach the harsh highland villages in winter. The Bulgarian authorities and the Church distributed the aid in the form of medical supplies, food, clothes and some cash to the deprived Pomaks right after conversion.[268]

Another method was separation of Pomak prisoners of war from the Turkish POWs and their transportation to camps for conversion. They were threatened with death in case of denial to convert to Christianity. Their families were informed of this situation. As a result, the entire family accepted conversion to Christianity and the Pomak prisoners of war were released with new identity papers as Christians with Bulgarian names.[269] In an effort to make this conversion look voluntary, the Pomak prisoners of war were made to send petitions to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church for conversion.[270]

Conversion to Christianity was the only way for physical survival. Pomaks who denied it were either tortured or killed by the Bulgarian insurgents that were either ignored or could not be controlled by the Bulgarian state.[271] These atrocities were barely recorded in the documents of the time because both the state and the Church were concerned about their image in the international arena and the possible reaction of Great Powers.[272] Myuhtar-May reveals the atrocities by reference to renowned Bulgarian historians such as Georgiev and Trifonov, some telegrams of

267 Myuhtar May, 61-63.
268 Ibid., 56
269 Ibid.,82.
270 Ibid., 93.
271 Ibid., 65.
272 Ibid.,64.

the period in the archives and the narrations of the forcibly converted persons' descendants.[273]

Forced Christianization was carried out in Western Thracian highlands as well as in Eastern Thrace of modern Turkey. One such case in mentioned in Pehlivanköy, Kırklareli, where the mosque was burnt down and a huge bell was placed in the center of the village. The villagers were baptized along the river of Ergene. A number of young girls were forcibly collected and taken to Edirne to work in the whorehouses for Bulgarian soldiers.[274] In the Western Thracian highland villages of Hacıviran, Mehrikoz, and Hebilköy Pomaks were also forcibly Christianized.[275]

Myuhtar May states that the process of forced conversion gradually declined in the fall of 1913 as Bulgaria was defeated in the Second Balkan War.[276] It was finally stopped as a result of the Ottoman-Bulgarian alliance. Subsequently, Pomaks began to restore their Islamic faith.[277] Unfortunately, the perpetrators of crimes were rewarded by the Bulgarian church.[278] For instance, the notorious Tanev Nikolov, the chief responsible of Edeköy and Durhasanlar massacres among others, and his comrades, were awarded by the Bulgarian Church as the most successful patriots in the forced Christianization of the southern Rhodopean villages.[279]

The answers given to the question of forced Christianization in the Rhodopean and Ksanthian highland villages was as either 'no', 'we don't

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273 Ibid., 65-72. She recounts the slaughter in four villages, Zhizhevo, her village Vulkossel, Banya and Albanitsa in the province of Blagoevgrad. She mentions a commemorative water fountain in Vulkossel for the 95 men stabbed with bayonets and burnt in the mosque for refusing to convert to Christianity, 68.

274 Sevgi, *Balkan Savaşlarında Trakya,* 2018,23

275 Based on the report of Gelibolu Gendarmerie Commander Mehmet Çolak, BOA.DH.İD.Nu.81/-2 Gömlek No:57, cited in Sevgi, *Balkan Savaşlarında*, 2018, 239.

276 Myuhtar May, 48.

277 Ibid.,90.

278 Ibid., 91.

279 Ibid.

know', or 'our ancestors never accepted it'.[280] I had the feeling that they felt uneasy about it or that the ancestors hid it due to the same reason. On the other hand, Balkan mentions a 300kg bell situated in the center of Şahin, which was later deported to Istanbul. He claims that in order to help victims in Gümülcine, İskeçe, Darıdere, Eğridere, Paşmaklı and Devlen to restore their faith, groups of Muslim clergymen were sent to the region.[281]

The only narration in my research is about a forced Christianization attempt in the village of Şahin:

> Bulgarian soldiers or bands ordered the village men to gather in the mosque. They threatened those who refused to convert to Christianity with death. Hüseyin Hacıdeli refused to convert. When a Bulgarian soldier pointed his gun at him, a man in the khutba (the high platform for imam) fired his gun against the soldier triggering a fight. Among the chaos, the Muslim males managed to escape and hid Hüseyin Hacıbedel in the mountains for a while.[282]

The forced Christianization was a collective trauma which contributed to the strengthening of Islamic faith among Pomaks of Bulgaria and Greece. As Myhutar May concludes;

> '[…] when the Turkish Empire broke down, the Pomaks' Islamic religion became the sole anchor of palpable identity for them. Thus, they adhered to their Muslim-ness (Arab-Turkish names, conservative attire, and Muslim traditions) in the midst of political chaos more than ever before.[283]

280 Narrations of participants from the highland villages of Kendavros, Kechros, Roussa.

281 Gürer, *Komitacı,* 2005, 21.

282 Interview with Hüsmen, Kendavros, summer 2016.

283 Myuhtar May, *Identity, Nationalism,* 2014, 60.

§ 3.5 Western Thracian and Eastern Macedonian Muslim Conscripts in the First World War

During the Bulgarian rule, or, Ottoman-Bulgarian alliance in Western Thrace, 28,000 Muslim males were conscripted to the Ottoman army and dispatched to Turkey.[284] It is ironical that Muslim males were conscripted to fight from a territory that was ceded to Bulgaria at a time when they were needed at home to protect and care for their families. Considering the Muslim population of Thrace at the time, 500,000[285], the conscripts make a considerable percentage. Given the peculiarities, the Western Thracians of the time must have still perceived Ottoman Empire as their legitimate government although in reality they were part of Bulgaria.

The militia forces of Balkan in Eastern Macedonia were sent to fight at the Galician front. Balkan describes his dilemma and feelings in his memoirs upon this demand from the Ottoman government,

> I hesitated a while when I received the order to send three thousand local troops to Galicia, three thousand to Romania.[...] I had no right to ask these young people to do that.[286]

At this point, he wanted to get a general opinion about it by taking up the issue to his young militias. Balkan reveals their responses in a highly nationalist fervor; "They told me they would go anywhere to fight the enemies of Turks."[287]

Even from the desolate highland villages Muslims and Turks were conscripted to fight in the Ottoman army at several fronts. A narrator's

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284 Bıyıklıoğlu, 93. Turkey was not established yet but Bıyıklıoğlu uses Ottoman Empire and Turkey interchangeably.

285 Ibid.

286 Gürer, *Komitacı,* 2008, 79.

287 Ibid.,80.

grandfather from a Ksanthian highland village was a reserve soldier in the Ottoman army for 22 years. He served seven years in the military barracks in Gümülcine. He fought in Çanakkale and Palestine. Mithat, a retired teacher from Mehrikoz, narrated that his grandfather fought in Yemen. In the lowlands, for instance, our eighty year old neighbor Ayşe's grandfather died in Çanakkale when her mother was a baby.[288] For instance, around forty young males from Kireççiler died in the Balkan Wars and in Çanakkale.[289] My late grandfather used to narrate that his uncle Ahmet fought in Yemen, and returned after ten years, when they thought he was dead.

Some of the narrators' grandfathers who were away for a very long time in the Ottoman army lost not only their lives but also their lands. Mansur narrated:

> My grandfather had around 80 stremmata of land before he was conscripted in the Ottoman army. In his absence of twelve years, he was believed to have died and most of his lands were captured by the Ağa of the village. Upon his return, he was not able to prove anything and people were scared to testify for him because they were afraid of the Ağa and his men.[290]

Western Thracian males were not conscripted to the Ottoman Army after the end of World War I. The surviving veterans were sent back to their homes. An interesting story by a colleague of mine from a lowland village[291] is about two Western Thracians, his paternal grandfather with his friend from the neighboring village, who were in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's battalion in Palestine front in September 1918. Apparently, he narrated the events proudly until he died:

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288 Interview with Ayşe, Yalanca, summer 2012.

289 Interview with Mustafa Tahsinoğlu, Kireççiler, summer 2012.

290 Interview with Mansur, Yasiköy, summer 2012.

291 Özcan Hüseyin Nuri, Sirkeli, summer 2015.

I was the caretaker of Atatürk's horse. After days of fighting, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, we witnessed Arabs shooting at Ottoman corps while British warplanes were throwing bombs on us. The Arabs were stabbing us in the back. At that point Atatürk ordered us to stop and to gradually retreat, saying 'I have no soldier to sacrifice for this territory'. We returned to Adana and stayed there for a while. Mustafa Kemal Paşa sent the conscripts from Balkans back to their home saying that we had to be there due to the prevailing chaos. When we arrived in Istanbul, the city was already under British occupation. It was very difficult for us to walk through Istanbul to Thrace because it was under tight control. They were secretly sending weapons to Mustafa Kemal Paşa in Anatolia.

The misery of the Ottoman battalion is palpable in the second part of the narration:

We had so little food…We carried a handmill with which we grinded wheat we collected from the villages we passed through. My friend Şerif knew some gambling tricks although he was not a gambler. In Palestine, he organized gambling games for the Arabs. With the money he made, he fed our battalion for over ten days.

§ 3.6 Allied Occupation and Annexation of Western Thrace to Greece

After the end of World War I, Bulgaria had to retreat from Western Thrace by the Treaty of Neuilly (27 November 1919). The region of Western Thrace was divided into two as north and south. The northern

part was ceded to Bulgaria, but the southern part to the Allied administration. as a result of which she lost her outlet to the Aegean Sea. Ortaköy, Koşukavak, Mastanlı, Darıdere, Paşmaklı and Kırcaali remained in Bulgaria whereas Dedeağaç, Sofulu, Dimetoka, Gümülcine, and İskeçe remained in allied administration of Britain, France and Greece.[292]

Greece reestablished her rule in Eastern Macedonia. The local Turks were concerned that they would be accounted for their acts against the Greek administration during World War I. However, Venizelos government issued a law of general amnesty, a possible strategy to appease the Turks before the annexation of Western Thrace. In early 1920, Greece occupied İskeçe until Kuruçay[293] while the French occupied Gümülcine and Dedeağaç on behalf of Allied powers under Supreme Commander of Eastern Armies General d'Esperey who appointed General Charpy as the regional governor.[294]

However, on 14th May, two months before the signing of the Sevres Agreement, Greece had already entered Gümülcine based on the decisions taken at San Remo Conference of 15-16 April 1920 and completed the occupation by 27th May.[295] The Sevres Agreement, signed on 10 August 1920, but not ratified, ceded to Greece not only Western Thrace but also Eastern Thrace along with İzmir, Manisa and Aydın in Western Anatolia.[296]

Towards the end of World War I when the victory of Allied Powers was palpable, two committees were established for the defense of Thrace by the CUP members. Trakya Paşaeli Müdafai Hukuk Cemiyeti was established on 2nd November 1918[297] to struggle for the entire Thrace to remain in the hands of Turks by referring to the Wilsonian principle of self-

292 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 183.

293 Ibid., 184; Gürer, *Komitacı*, 2008, 105.

294 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 184,189.

295 3 May 1920, İkdam Gazetesi, Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 314.

296 "Sevr Barış Antlaşması Sınırları", in (eds) Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası,* Vol. I, p. 126.

297 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 124

determination.[298] A separate Western Thracian Committee was established in Istanbul on 10th November and represented by the elected members; Hasan Tahsin Argun, Hüseyin Sabri Tüten and İskeçeli Arif.[299] The purpose of the latter was to liberate the region of Western Thrace, including provinces of eastern Macedonia such as Kavala, Drama and Serez which were formerly outside of the region's borders. The two committees worked in cooperation until the Greek occupation of Western Thrace on 27th May 1920 and Eastern Thrace on 25th July 1920. [300]

In October 1919, before the allied occupation, the Western Thracian Committee moved its center and activities to Gümülcine.[301] They planned a non-violent protest against the Greek occupation of İskeçe. On the day of Greek army's march in İskeçe, there was barely any Turk on the streets, the houses' outer walls and the Turkish shops were all covered in black flags. The Turks kept their shops closed for 3 days. The Greek parade was claimed to be so dreary that it was cut short.[302]

Under the guidance of the committee, a small local police force was established from local Turks. It was claimed that the local Turks did not resort to the Greek administration but to this small police force for a while after the occupation. Nonetheless, the Greeks did not respond to this passive resistance with violent means. [303] In order to avoid a possible conflict, they did not proceed to the north of the railway line, to the middle-line and highland villages. They were reportedly friendly to the lowland villagers in the south of the railway line.[304]

The same committee also organized a non-violent protest in Gümülcine. The town was covered with black flags and no Turk could be seen on the streets. They occupied the railway line leading to Dedeağaç

298 Ibid., 132.

299 Ibid.,138

300 Ibid., 139-140.

301 Ibid., 184

302 Bıyıklıoğlu:1955, 185; Gürer, *Komitacı,* 2008,125.

303 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele,* 1955, 186

304 Gürer, *Komitacı*, 2008, 125.

and thus proceeded to Meriç right across the Turkish army. Balkan's task, at this point, was 'to keep the Greek troops entrapped in the region they occupied'. In his own words, '[…]this was the real reason and purpose of my coming here'. [305] He organized militia forces from local Turks in the mountainous villages of Gümülcine, İskeçe and Sarışaban-Drama. His plans failed on the news of a private who deserted the militia forces with his gun.[306]

After the Greek occupation of Gümülcine, the Western Thracian Committee moved to the north, to the district of Hemetli and declared the second Western Thracian state there. The head of government was Tevfik Bey from Peştere, Mahmud Nedim the Foreign Affairs Minister, Hasan Tahsin Argun the Minister of Interior, Sabri Tüten the Minister of Finance**,** Fuat Balkan the Minister of War, Lieutenant Fahri and the previous Müftü of Gümülcine, Bekir Sıtkı the Minister of Justice, Mustafa Efendi of Gümülcine the Minister of Pious Foundations and two Bulgarians; Vangel Georgiyef and Dr Doçkof.[307] The previous alliance with Greeks against Bulgaria had now reversed to alliance with Bulgarians against Greek annexation of the region. However, upon the failed plans of raid into the Gümülcine- Dedeağaç railway line, it seems that the state project was dissolved. [308]

§ 3.7 The Controversial Issue of Plebiscite

In the collective memory, there is a discourse of plebiscite although a plebiscite for the future of Western Thrace was never held. This discourse spread from the elite circle of Gümülcine by a group of notables

305 Ibid., 117.

306 Ibid.

307 Bıyıklıoğlu, Trakya'da Milli Mücadele, 1955, 140; Balkan, *Komitac*ı, 2008, 118.

308 Ibid.

who were opponents of Hafız Galip, the then Governor of Rhodope. Among the opponent group was the teacher Mehmet Arif (pseudo name Kemal Şevket Batıbey) who made the claim of a plebiscite and that Hafız Galip and his circle sold out Western Thrace by voting in favor of annexation to Greece.[309]

Batıbey alleged that ballot boxes were brought to villages to vote in order to elect a representative committee. 5 Turks, 1 Jew, 1 Bulgarian and 1 Greek were elected who were in favor of annexation to Greece instead of a French mandate. The elected Muslims were the then MP Hafız Galip Efendi, an urban merchant, Tabak Halil Ağa, a civil servant, Hacı Yusuf and two ciftlik owners, Ali Bey from Ortacı and Osman Ağa from Karamusa. Apparently, four Muslim representatives (except Hacı Yusuf), and the Greek representative voted for the option of annexation to Greece whereas the Bulgarian, Armenian and Jewish representatives voted for French mandate. They were accused of treason and were alleged to be bribed by the Greek representative Vamvakas who carried out extensive propaganda in the region. The ciftlik owners were assured that their lands would not be seized by Greece. [310]

On the other hand, the counter-argument claims that no plebiscite was held and that the story was invented by the political rivals of Hafız Ali Galip to slander him. According to Hafız Ali Galip's grandson Galip Galip, a former MP to the Greek Parliament, Batıbey later apologized the Galip family.[311] Hafız Ali Galip (born:1880) was Hafız Salih's(born:;1869) student in Kayalı Medresesi in Gümülcine. Hafız Galip was also in the administrative cadre of the Western Thracian State of 1913. He was the mayor of Gümülcine during the allied administration and was supporting the idea of French mandate in Western Thrace. Apparently, he refused to participate in the ceremony for Greek occupation of Gümülcine in May

309 Kemal Şevket Batıbey, *Batı Trakya Türk Devleti (1919-1920),* İstanbul Bogazici Yayınları, 1979.

310 The Jewish represenatative was Muis Karasu ,Petro Daçef was the Bulgarian Representative and Nikolaos Zoidis, the Greek Representative,ibid, 40-58.

311 Personal Communications with Ali Galip, March, 2019.

1920 and was therefore punished by imprisonment for 5 days.[312] He was elected for five times as minority MP to the Greek Parliament until his death in 1948. He was even charged with treason allegedly for his secret activities in favor of Turkey, sent to exile and spent years in prison in Greece. [313]

It could be that the pro-Greece preference of Western Thracian Muslim MPs in the previous Bulgarian Parliament was distorted, and this made-up story was successfully disseminated among the public. However, there is also an opinion that it was a proper decision to vote for annexation to Greece because Turks and Greeks had centuries of co-existence and that both communities knew each other well whereas the French were totally alien. On the other hand, a few hard-liner nationalist participants claimed that Atatürk wanted French mandate in Western Thrace. Thus, like Hatay, Turkey could later annex the region. However, Atatürk was evidently against a French mandate in the region.[314]

The persistence of the 'Western Thrace sold out' discourse can also be explained by the absence of reading habits and predominance of rumors within the community itself. Unfortunately, this story created a political schism in the region and was partially influential in voting decisions during elections until as late as 1980s.[315] The correct version of events is eloquently accounted by Aarbakke based on Bulgarian, Greek and Turkish sources:

> The Greek diplomat H. Vamvakas, who had previously served as a deputy in the Ottoman Parliament, was sent to Komotini on Venizelos' advice to assist Charpy. He was able to influence the

312 Osman N. Fettahoğlu, "Bir Yıldız Söndü", cited in Ozer Chatip, "Yunan Parlamentosunda Görev Yapmış Batı Trakya Türk Milletvekilleri ve Siyasi Faaliyetleri"**,** Ege Üniversitesi, Türk Tarihi Anabilim Dalı, İzmir, 2014,42

313 For more information see 38-47.

314 Nutuk, Kemal Atatürk, vesika 3. II.36/20, vesika 256, cited in Bıyıklıoglu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1950, 192; Atatürk's telegram to Trakya paşaeli Müdafai Hukuk Cemiyeti, Nutuk, s.300, ibid., 316-317.

315 Narrations in the region.

formation of the administrative Council in Komotini which advised Charpy, and secured the appointment of four Greeks, four Turks, one Jew, and one Armenian (the last two Greek speaking) to the administrative council, defeating the plan of the Western Thrace Committee to appoint six Muslims and only two Greeks. Later a 'Supreme Administrative Council' was created, functioning as an advisory board. It consisted of 5 Greeks, 5 Turks, 2 Bulgarians, 1 Armenian, 1 Jew, and 1 Levantine. When the Council first assembled on 4 April 1920 it elected the Greek Emmanuil Dulas as chairman, against 3 Turkish and the 2 Bulgarian votes. The fact that 2 Turks, Hafız Salih and Osman Ağa, voted for the Greek chairman displays the internal tension among the Muslims. The 'defectors' immediately received death threats from the Western Thrace Committee.[316]

§ 3.8 Western Thracians: Muslim Minority in Greece

In a memorandum, Garbi Trakya Müdafaai Hukuk Cemiyeti (Western Thracian Defense Committee) sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara on 15th May 1922, it was stated that the overwhelming majority, at least 80% of the inhabitants of this region are Turks and the 85% of the land belongs to the Turks and that Ankara should urge for a plebiscite to determine the future of the region. With the support of the Ministry of War and Foreign Affairs of the Ankara government, both the Western Thracian Committee and the Western Thracian Defense Committee engaged in intense lobbying. They presented the national and international press and statesmen documents, booklets, graphics, charts,

316 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority of Greece", 2000, 23.

sketches showing that Eastern and Western Thrace had a Turkish demographic majority.[317]

Upon the rejection of a proposal for a plebiscite at Lausanne, the Western Thracian Defense committee convened and decided to resort to revolutionary means and prepared a secret agenda. The leaders of the Committee contacted the Soviet Consulate in Istanbul and gave him a memorandum asking for Soviet aid to establish a 10-15 thousand revolutionary force to liberate Western Thrace from Greece and Bulgaria. The revolutionary force would be established by a mixed committee in the provinces of Koşukavak, Mestanlı, Darıdere, Paşmaklı, Ropçoz within the border of Bulgaria. The Soviet representatives who received the memorandum cut their contact with the Committee Representatives .[318] Thus, the idea of taking Western Thrace back with revolutionary means failed.[319]

As a matter of fact, Western Thrace was never included within the territorial borders of the new Turkish state in "National Pact" (Misak-ı Milli) articulated at Erzurum and Sivas Congresses in 1920, because it was already left outside of national borders in 1913 by the Treaty of Istanbul. Article 3 of the National Pact stated that the future of the Western Thrace inhabitants should be determined by a plebiscite according to the Wilsonian principle of self-determination.[320] After 16 March 1920, when Istanbul was occupied, Ankara government cut ties with Trakya Müdafai Hukuk Cemiyeti, stating that "Anatolia is occupied with its own grievance, it is not possible to deal with Thrace now"[321]

Mustafa Kemal was supporting the idea of a plebiscite for the region to determine its own fate and emphasized very clearly that it would

317 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele,* 1955, 159.

318 Ibid., 142-3.

319 Ibid., 143.

320 Ibid.,170, 192; Toktamış Ateş, *Türk Devrim Tarihi,* Der Yayınları, 10. Basım, İstanbul, 2003, 209; Cengiz Orhonlu,"Batı Trakya Türkleri", *Türk Kültürü Dergisi*, s.17, 1964, 5-8.

321 "Anadolu kendi derdine düşmüştür, şimdilik Trakya ile uğraşamaz", decision at Lüleburgaz Congress, 31 March 1920, cited in Bıyıklıoglu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 178.

not be proper to think of a unified Eastern and Western Thrace; that Eastern Thrace was an indisputable part of Turkey but Western Thrace had been officially ceded to another country.[322] Later in a speech in Izmir (1923), he stated that efforts to acquire Western Thrace would not be worth the benefit of keeping it and that for the well-being of the motherland Turkey, Western Thrace should be renounced. He added that the region would in the future be a matter of conflict between Greeks and Bulgarians.[323] He had foreseen the Bulgarian occupation of the region during the Second World War (1941-1944).

Prior to the allied administration and even after the occupation of Western Thrace by Greece, until the final settlement of borders at Lausanne, both the Turks and the Bulgarians struggled for the implementation of the Wilsonian principle of self-determination in Western Thrace.[324] During the negotiations in Lausanne, Turkish side demanded a plebiscite to determine the fate of the Western Thrace inhabitants arguing that an overwhelming majority of the region was Turkish. The Bulgarian representative Stanbuliski made a similar argument by stating that Western Thrace should be ruled by a mandate so that Bulgaria could have a passage to the Aegean Sea.[325]

These demands were rejected by Venizelos, Lord Curzon, the British Parliamentarian heading the Conference, the Serb Croat-Slovenian representative Nintchitch and the Rumenian Representative Duca.[326] Venizelos, Nintchitch, Lord Curzon stated that the region of Western Thrace was left to Bulgaria by Turkey upon agreement.[327] Venizelos argued that the region of Western Thrace is not clearly defined by Turkey; that in the northern part left to Bulgaria by the Treaty of Neuilly, Turks

322 Ibid., 192.

323 Baskın Oran, *Türk Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu*, Bilgi Yayınevi,1991,300-301.

324 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 146.

325 Ibid., 483.

326 Seha L.Meray (cev), *Lozan Barış Konferansı Tutanaklar-Belgeler,* Cilt I, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993, 25-26.

327 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele,* 1955: 480,482,485.

are the majority; however, in the southern part left to Greece, Turks constitute half of the population adding that a significant number of the fleeing Greek Orthodox locals of Eastern Thrace were settled there and changed the regional demography. [328]

The Serb-Croat-Slovenian representative Ninntinch rejected the proposal of a plebiscite stating that it was unsuitable in the Balkan region.[329] In a similar vein, Lord Curzon stated that if plebiscite was to be conducted in Western Thrace, it should also be conducted in several regions of Turkey where the majority was non-Turkish.[330]

İnönü, in his response, stated that Turkey had to leave this region under the pressure of an extremely dangerous situation and not by her will, and that the agreement (Turkish-Bulgarian) was never ratified in the Turkish Parliament and that after the armistice the allied powers did not abide by the Turkish-Bulgarian Agreement. [331]Based on the 1914 census, İnönü argued that in the region including İskeçe, Gümülcine, Dedeağaç, Sofulu, the population of Turks was 129,188 as opposed to 33,904 Greeks and 26,266 Bulgarians.[332] He supported his argument by referring to the memorandum given to the allied administration by Venizelos himself on 30th December 1918 according to which the number of Turks was 114,810, Greeks 44,686, and Bulgarians 28,983.[333]

The prospect of a population exchange was a much more significant issue on the agenda. About one million refugees from Izmir, Eastern Thrace and other parts of Anatolia had already fled to Greece with the

328 Ibid., 480-481.

329 Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı*, 1993: 87

330 Bıyıklıoğlu, *Trakya'da Milli Mücadele*, 1955, 495; Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı* ,1993: 87.

331 Bıyıklıoğlu, Trakya'da Milli Mücadele, 1955: 486-7.

332 Ibid, 487.

333 Ibid., 492. The figures for the same period are given as 132.666 Turks; 35.271 Greeks and 26.266 Bulgarians, Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı, 1993*, 54.

retreating Greek Army.[334] Compulsory population exchange is considered to have been proposed by Dr Nansen, the League of Nations Representative responsible for refugee settlement. Venizelos proposed that the population exchange should be voluntary, but it did not receive enough support in the negotiations.[335]

Turkish side demanded complete exchange of Greek Orthodox from Turkey and of Muslims in Greece. However, Lord Curzon, representing the great powers, opposed the exchange of Greek Orthodox in Istanbul on the grounds that industry and commerce were predominantly in their hands and therefore losing those people would be detrimental to the domestic economy. Venizelos opposed it due to the incapacity of Greece to receive additional refugees.[336] The *Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek–Turkish Populations* was signed by Greece and Turkey at Lausanne on 30 January 1923 and annexed to the general peace treaty of Lausanne of 20 July 1923.

334 Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı,* 125. The number is given by Venizelos. Dr Nansen gives the number as 850,000 based on a report prepared 3 weeks before the start of Lausanne Talks.,ibid.,52.

335 Ibid, 125.

336 Ibid.,25-7, 336.

4

Social and Spatial Reordering of Western Thrace

The interwar period featured two significant changes for the Western Thracian minority; settlement of a considerable number of Greek Orthodox refugees from Anatolia and dissemination of secular Turkish reforms. Western Thrace was a multi-ethnic society consisting of Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Jews and Armenians. In 1920, (ethnic) Bulgarians migrated to Bulgaria as a result of the *de jure* voluntary but *de facto* obligatory Population Exchange between Greece and Bulgaria. As a result, 100,000 Bulgarians in Greece left to Bulgaria and 50,000 Greeks from Bulgaria settled in Greece.[1] Controversies over the confiscation of public lands to build settlements for the Greek Orthodox refugees from Anatolia was the main agenda of the period.[2]

In 1930 and 1931, Greece and Turkey established political, economic and military alliances. Disputes concerning the settlement of exchanged peoples and their remaining properties in Turkey and Greece were finally settled with the Ankara Convention of 1930. The Treaty of

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1 League of Nations, Treaty Series (1) 1920, No:9 , Dimitrios I.Loizos, "Land, Peasants and State Policy in Inter-War Greec, (1924-1928)", MA Thesis submitted to the Kent State University , December, 1983, 18.

2 Land issues are widely covered in the minority newspaper *Yeni Adım,* nr.58, 08.08.1927; nr.81, 16.11.1927; nr.167, 10.11.1928; 01.01.1930; 11.01.1930.

Athens (1926) had ensured the return of confiscated property for refugee settlement in Western Thrace and the abandoned property in Istanbul confiscated by Turkey. However, the 1930 Ankara Convention was legalizing the *fait accompli*. No property that previously belonged to peoples exempted from the Population Exchange and were confiscated by the state for the settlement of the refugees would be returned.[3]

Bilateral treaties between Greece and Turkey signed in the interwar period were meant to establish political and economic alliances between Greece and Turkey. *The Convention on Residence, Commerce and Navigation*, for instance, allowed residence for Greek citizens in Turkey and Turkish citizens in Greece. The *Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality* ensured neutrality in the case of an attack to the other party, refraining from any alliance against the interests of the other party and friendly settlement of disputes. The *Protocol of Naval Armaments* required both parties to inform each other six months before import or production of arms. This protocol was of crucial importance because it put restrictions on armament. Hence, the money on armament would be used for economic development during the period of Great Depression.[4]

The rapprochement between Greece and Turkey established in 1930 prevailed even after the resignation of Venizelos from the government in 1932. The two countries exchanged official visits. In October 1933, Turkish Prime Minister İnönü and Greek Prime Minister Caldaris signed another *Friendship Agreement* against a possible threat from Bulgaria. Both sides agreed on the defense of mutual borders in the case of an attack and the defense of common interests in international meetings. Furthermore, two other agreements were signed in December 1933 and November 1934 establishing alliance on economic and commercial is-

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3 Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact on Greece*, London, 1962,118; Stephen Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, Mac Millan, NY, 1932, 583.

4 Melek Fırat, "Yunanistanla İlişkiler", Baskın Oran (eds), *Türk Dış Politikası,* İletişim Yayınları, Volume I, 6th edition, İstanbul, 2001, 349.

sues. The signing of the *Balkan Pact* in 1934 (by Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania) was the most significant outcome of rapprochement at the regional level. [5]

The rapprochement between the two countries facilitated change of behavior towards minority issues . Upon Turkey's demand, Greece expelled some of the notorious 150 fugitives in Western Thrace and allowed the replacement of the Arabic alphabet with the modern Turkish alphabet upon request in several minority primary schools. In return, Turkey lifted the support given to Papa Eftim, avoided interference in Patriarchate elections and in Greek Orthodox minority education.[6] The 1930 Residence Agreement granted almost equal rights to Greek national Greek Orthodox as Turkish nationals in terms of employment and the right to property.[7] On the other hand, the *Convention on Residence and Commerce* paved the way for immigration of some Muslim-Turk rich landlords to Turkey. Some of the former Istanbulian Greek Orthodox who had settled in Greece moved back to Istanbul as well.

§ 4.1 Refugee Settlement in Western Thrace

The 1924 Population Exchange marks a central episode in the consolidation of the nation-state building processes in Turkey and Greece. Ultimately, it resulted in the forced uprooting of approximately two million people from lands they were born and lived for centuries. Over one million Greek Orthodox from Anatolia and a half million Muslims from Greece were exchanged. The people who had emigrated before the signing of the Treaty were considered as included in the population exchange.

5 Ibid., 351-3.

6 Ibid., 356.

7 Samim Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları,* 2007, 87.

Consequently, Turkey received 354,647 Muslims and Greece the remaining 200,000 Greek Orthodox in Anatolia.[8] The Population Exchange was based on religious criteria. Catholic and Protestant Greeks and Albanian Muslims in Epirus were excluded from the exchange.[9] Muslims of Western Thrace and the Greek Orthodox of Istanbul, the islands of Imbros and Tenedos thus became minorities.

Refugee settlement was a serious undertaking for both Turkey and Greece which took almost a decade to complete.[10] A Mixed Committee was established to supervise and facilitate the emigration and to carry out the liquidation of the movable and immovable property left behind by the exchanged Rums and the Muslims.[11] Refugee settlement was more difficult to deal with for Greece due to its geographical capacity and the relatively higher number of refugees she received in a much smaller territory. On the other hand, Greece benefited from foreign loans in the settlement of refugees[12], while Turkey had a much greater space to accommodate and dealt with the situation with entirely domestic funds, despite the economic destitution following an almost decade long wars.[13]

Contrary to the Lausanne Treaty, a substantial number of Greek Orthodox refugees from Anatolia were settled in Western Thrace. The incongruity between the geographical size of Greece and the greater number of exchanged peoples she received might have rendered it a necessary measure. Nonetheless, nation-state mentality required

8 Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange,*1962, 68-9.

9 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000*,* 52.

10 For more details, see Vassilis Koutsoukos, "Από την Αυτοκρατορία στο Εθνικό Κράτος: Χωρικές Όψεις της Ενσωμάτωσης της Θράκης",[From Autocracy (Ottoman Empire) to National State: Spatial Aspects of the Integration of Thrace, Rethimno, March, 2012, 279-310.

11 The eleven-member Mixed Commission consisted of 4 Greeks, 4 Turks and 3 neutrals, Pentzopulos, *The Balkan Exchange*, 68.

12 Loizos, "Land, Peasants", 1983, 62.

13 Kemal Arı, *Büyük Mübadele: Türkiye'ye Zorunlu Göç (1923-1925),* Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul, 1995.

Greekification of Western Thrace. In other words, the Greek state's settlement of the refugees in Thrace was part and parcel of Focauldian "biopolitics"[14] as well as national security concerns.[15] Consequently, a substantial number of pastures- public land- and parts of some ciftliks were confiscated for the construction of settlements and distribution of land to the refugees.

As a temporary measure, Muslim houses, schools, mosques were used to settle refugees until their settlements were prepared. In 1923-4, 13,835 rooms in Muslim houses were occupied, together with 127 schools and mosques and an area of 100,153 stremmata.[16] Use of Muslim homes and properties and expropriations of land for the accommodation of Greek Orthodox refugees raised complaints by Turkey to the League Council.[17] In return, Greece complained Turkey to the League for not giving *etabli* certificates to the Istanbulian Rums. [18]

Following the Mixed Commission's inspection in Western Thrace, 20,500 refugees were removed from the region by the end of 1924.[19] The official report of the League Council, dated November 29, 1925, revealed restrictions only on the right to free enjoyment of property by Muslim minority due to refugee settlement. These restrictions comprised seizures, requisitions, expropriations, and forced sharing of habitations. The official policy for expropriations targeted abandoned properties and large rural estates *(çiftlikler)* comprising an area of above 300 stremmata.[20]

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14 Olga Maya Demetriou,"Divisive Visions", 2002, 297.

15 Pentzopoulos , *The Balkan Exchange,* 1962, 136.

16 Ladas, *The Exchange,* 1932, p.479. The stremma is a Greek unit of land area equal to 1,000 square metres.

17 Ibid., 481.

18 According to the official report released by the League Council in 1925, only a few thousands of the nearly 100,000 Greeks in Istanbul were given certificates of non-exchangeability (etabli documents) until the end of 1925., ibid., 488

19 Ibid.,480.

20 Ibid., 485.

An area of 204,331 stremmata from a total of 467,191 classified as large rural properties was occupied. However, 123,640 stremmata belonged to the landlords present in Western Thrace, and only 80,691 stremmata were considered to be abandoned property. An additional 83,392 stremmata of small properties was also seized as abandoned property. For the payment of indemnities, a special law was enacted on January 10, 1925, according to which special committees were entrusted to determine indemnities due for Muslim properties seized or occupied in Western Thrace since 1922 for the shelter of refugees. Muslims were represented in these committees. [21]

Problems arising from the settlement of refugees were dealt with by the 1930 Ankara, and 1933 Athens Conventions between Turkey and Greece. The period of 1928-1932 is considered the first friendly period in Greek-Turkish relations. According to the first of Ankara Conventions (10 June 1930), all the Greek Orthodox population, regardless of their birth of date and place in Istanbul, and all the Muslims who had settled in Western Thrace regardless of their date of birth and place were recognized as etablis. [22] The evacuated property by the exchanged Muslims and Greek Orthodox populations became the property of state.

While they sympathized with and helped the refugees, local Muslims did not want the refugees to be permanently settled in their villages. They were anxious about their settlement because they did not want to share the village public space with non-Muslims as many villages were homogeneous; either Muslim or Christian. Given the fact that they came from Turkey, there was also the concerns of potential hostility against Turks.[23] A refugee family was temporarily settled in a room of every Muslim household who owned more than three rooms. Apparently in some

21 Ibid.

22 Fırat, "Yunanistanla İlişkiler", 2002, 349. The word etabli is French and means 'established or settled', Collins online dictionary, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/french-english/établi, last retrieved 20.06.2019.

23 Interview with my paternal grandmother; Interview with Hatice, Meleti, ; Osman, Galini, summer 2012.

villages, they stayed for years until the construction of their houses was completed. In 1926, for example, Muslim-Turk natives of the Ksanthian lowland villages of Hamitli and Horozlu were complaining about hosting refugees for over 3 years.[24]

In some Muslim villages, construction of houses for refugee settlement was prevented thanks to clientelistic relations, a common survival strategy of rurals. In the Rhodopean lowland village of Melikli, for instance, village notables invited the local official to a barbecue party to convince him of the inappropriateness of the village for refuge settlement. A witness of those times, Yusuf narrates:

> The village folks led by a prominent figure and big landowner, Hüseyin Ağa, invited the local Greek official in charge to a specially organized dinner with lamb barbecue, alcohol (rakı) and music. The next day the official submitted a report stating that the village was not suitable for the refugees because there was a swamp and too many mosquitoes.[25]

In fact, thousands of refugees had arrived in Greece already before the Population Exchange. [26] For instance, a refugee group from Eastern Thrace had already arrived in Yahyabeyli, a Rhodopean lowland village, in 1922 where they were settled in Muslim houses for three years until a separate permanent settlement was constru for them. The refugees, who had arrived with their flocks, were gathered in the village under the supervision of a Greek officer. The Greek officer gave a short speech to the

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24 *Yeni Adım*, 30 Kasım 1926, sayı:5, cited in Nokta "Kendimizi Tanıyalım Hamitli", 3 March 1991

25 Interview with Yusuf, Melikli, summer 2012.

26 One milllion Greek Orthodox had already fled Turkey with the retreating Greek army, so the Convention affirmed expulsion of the remaining 200,000 Greek Orthodox from Anatolia and 354,647 Muslims from Greece. Seha L.Meray (cev), *Lozan Barış Konferansı Tutanaklar-Belgeler*, Cilt I, Kitap I, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993, 125-7, 336; Renee Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean : an appraisal of the 1923 compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey,*New York : Berghahn Books, 2003; Bruce Clark,*Twice a stranger : how mass expulsion forged modern Greece and Turkey*, London : Granta Books, 2006.

villagers, ironically in Turkish language, where he obviously set the boundary between native Muslim Turks and the refugee Rums by calling the latter "pure blooded nationals".

> "Neighbors, friends, this brave community of ours who have suffered a lot until they arrived here are your guests from today on. You must agree within your community and gather together in each other's house and give the remaining houses to these people until we construct a village for them. Any volunteer among you can help in the construction if you want it to finish soon. These pure blooded nationals of ours are entrusted to you"[27]

Refugee houses were built on public lands separate from Muslim settlements in the village. However, within time, as population increased, the separate neighborhoods approached each other. Thus, a number of homogenous Muslim lowland villages became mixed.[28] Confiscation of pastures and grazing lands belonging to Muslims was the main subject of complaints concerning refugee settlement in Greek Thrace.

A second issue was the acquisition of abandoned Muslims lands for refugee settlement. A refugee village, for example, was built on the abandoned land between the Ksanthian middle line villages of Gökçeler and Dinkler. It was a 400 stremma of land previously owned and abandoned by Rıza Efendi, who had migrated to Turkey and was already a Turkish citizen.[29] In fact this was based on law the Codified Agrarian Law of 1926 which made the land of absentee landowners subject to confiscation and banned ownership of more than 25 acres of cultivated land in

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27 Narrated (Turkish) by Dr. Ahmet Köse, a Western Thracian immigrant in İzmir, Yahyabelli village website, http://yahyabeyli.blogspot.com.tr, last retrieved 01.06.2017.

28 For instance, the lowland village of Bayatlı (Pagouria) became a mixed village after the refugee settlement in 1922, "Pagurya: Bayatlı", *Nokta,* nr.21, 7 October 1988; Polianthos (Narlıköy) was also a homogenous Muslim-Turk lowland village before the construction of a new neighborhood in the village's pasture land in 1924.

29 *Yeni Adım*, 18 Ocak 1928, sayı:92, cited in *Nokta*, "Gökçeler", Kasım 1988.

Thessaly, Macedonia, Epirus, and Western Thrace, or 75 acres in the rest of Greece.[30]

Land issues in Western Thrace during the refugee settlement period dominate the then minority weekly newspaper Yeni Adım.[31] As agriculture was primitive and depended more on climatic conditions, shrinking grazing lands meant a subsequent reduction in the number of cattle and sheep and a subsequent loss of income or the rurals. For instance, in 1929, the villagers of Gökçeler were complaining that they suffered huge income loss after the dissolution of ciftlik lands which they cultivated as sharecroppers, and the reduction of grazing lands necessary for their cattle and sheep. It was reported that seven villagers were on a list pending to rent seven stremmata of land whose owner lived in Ksanthi.[32] Mehmet Hilmi was claiming that the Mixed Commission was not being fair to the minority.[33]

In the Ksanthian village of Sünnetçiköy, 25 households used to work as sharecroppers on the lands of ciftlik owners in the neighborhood. After their confiscation, however, on the average each household was bound to 3 stremmata which fell short of meeting income for survival. Between Sünnetçiköy and Köseler, on the land probably belonging

30 The law exempted land owned by large industrial establishments, and model plots. Loizos, "Land, Peasants", 1983, 36.

31 In this section, the cited editions of *Yeni Adım* was given to me by the late minority journalist Selahattin Yıldız and the Turkish translations belong to him.

32 *Yeni Adım*, 7 Ocak 1929, nr.128, cited in *Nokta*, "Gökçeler", Kasım 1988, nr.16.

33 Ibid; *Yeni Adım*, "Muhtelit Mübadele Komisyonu'na Açık Mektup", 16 November 1927, nr.81; "Vaziyetimiz Salaha Muhtaçtır", 8 August 1928, nr.58; " Vaziyetimizin İcmali", 10 November 1928, nr.167; "Ne oluyoruz acaba?", 18 January 1930, nr.236; "The Statistics Published by the Mixed Commission and Our Duty", 11 January 1930, nr 235; "İstikbal Çok Karanlıktır", 25 January 1930, nr.237; "Batı Trakya Türkleri Hakkında Ne Düşünüyorlar?",17 May 1930, nr.253

partly to ciftlik and pasture, a new village for 60 households was established for the refugees.[34] Over 90 stremmata of land belonging to six minority inhabitants of Sünnetçiköy were claimed to be confiscated.[35]

In the village of Hamitli, where few minority members remain today, the ciftliks of Kütüklü and Koca Mahmutlu were confiscated together with the pasture land.[36]A refugee village was established in the south of Hamitli. Additional refugee villages were built on the west and east, apparently on 2,300 stremmata of land belonging to Hamitli villagers for which they demanded 3,6 million drahmas of compensation.[37] Likewise, in the village of Horozlu, which consisted of 30 Muslim-Turk households, of the 1200 stremmata pasture land, 400 was ploughed by the exchanged Greek Orthodox settlers. Furthermore, the 50-household refugee village in the vicinity of Horozlu was established on the piece of land half of which belonged to Niyazi Bey's ciftlik and the other half to Horozlu pastureland. All the trees in the Muslim graveyard of 25 stremmata were cut down by the refugees for personal use.[38]

The 150 stremmata of pasture land beloning to Boyacılar village was partly confiscated for the refugee village of Kozlar (Pigadia) and the rest was usurped by the exchanged Greek Orthodox of Misvaklı.[39] The already cultivated lands of Seyeoğlu Mümin in Göynüklü and his brother in law's in Taraşmanlı were ploughed based on the claim that they were required for the passage of herds. The author urged the then minority MP Niyazi Bey to deal with the problem.[40] Problems concerning the reduction in grazing lands and lands for cultivation due to refugee settlements in the vicinity of the Ksanthian lowland villages of Davutlu, Okşular, Celepli, Fıçıllı, Alıççılar are covered in another edition of the newspaper.[41]

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34 Yeni Adım, 24 Ocak 1929, nr.181, cited in"Sunion Sünnetçiköy Tarihi", Nokta, nr.31, 30 Aralık 1988.

35 Ibid.

36 Koutsoukos, "Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, Appendices, p.34.

37 *Yeni Adım*, 10 Kasım 1928, nr.167, Nokta, nr.31,30 Aralık 1988,

38 Yeni Adım, 24 Kasım 1926, nr.270, cited in Nokta, 24 April 1991.

39 Yeni Adım , 1928, Kasım, nr. 166, cited in Nokta, "Boyacılar Vafeyka", 23 Kasım 1989, nr.33

40 Yeni Adım, 28.12.1929, nr.233, cited in Nokta, ibid.

41 Yeni Adım, "Davutlu Karyesini de Görelim", , nr.165, 3 Nov.1928.

RURALS

Refugee settlement in Western Thrace did not trigger region-wide ethnic tensions. Nonetheless, there were reports of sporadic incidents of violence. For instance, on the eve of 24th December 1928, it was reported that while two young men and a boy travelling in a car had a flat tyre on their way to Horozlu. They stopped and hitchhiked a lorry approaching. As the lorry approached the ciftlik of Niyazi Bey in Horozlu, around ten exchanged Greek Orthodox males in the lorry started yelling at the local Turks saying "Do you think we will let you live here?" and started beating them. They kicked the boy off the lorry. A refugee Greek lady passing nearby took care of him.[42] In the village of Hamitli , a certain Refik Ağa had an argument with the refugee Greek Orthodox grocery store owner over an issue of debt. In the afternoon, five refugee Greeks broke into his house and hit his head with heavy rocks, injuring him seriously. [43]

Mehmet Hilmi was a young Turkish nationalist teacher, father of the minority press and among the founders of the Ksanthi Turkish Union. However, he is stated to have exaggerated, distorted and interpreted the minority's issues from a strict nationalist viewpoint. He was accused of spreading false information and slander against the government and punished by exile on several Greek islands for almost ten years.[44] The then MP Hafız Ali Galip made a declaration condemning Mehmet Hilmi's newspaper for deliberately defaming the Greek authorities.[45] He declared that the minority received the compensation for the confiscation of their lands, the Greek refugees left Muslims' houses, and overall, the minority lived in peace, justice and freedom.[46]

According to the narrations, many exchanged peoples were Turkish-speaking. To their surprise, some did not speak Greek at all. There

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42 Yeni Adım , 1 Ocak 1928, sayı:90, cited in Nokta, 24 April 1991.

43 *Yeni Adım,* 14 Nisan 1928, sayı:109, cited in Nokta, ibid.

44 Chousein Mechmet, "Mehmet Hilmi'nin Batı Trakya'da Yayımlanan Gazete Yazılarının Yansımaları", *Journal of Balkanistic Language and Literature*, 2020; 2(1): 80-98 ,83.

45 Fotiadis, K. (1995). "I engatástasi ton prosfígon sti Ditikí Thráki ke i simvíosi ton hristianón ke musulmánon Ellínon, 1919–1930." Endohóra (Special issue 2, February): 63–74., Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 65.

46 Ibid.

were even cases when some local Western Thracian Turks were translators (from Turkish to Greek) for them in local courts even two decades later.[47] A number of elderly narrated that they had good dialogues with the incoming Greek Orthodox refugees because they spoke Turkish. "We used to have friendly conversations. We spoke Turkish with them because they did not know Greek either".[48]

As a matter of fact, not only the incoming refugees but also the local authorities could speak Turkish and spoke Turkish with the local minority members in everyday bureaucracy. "The exchanged and local Greek Orthodox clerks at the municipality spoke Turkish so well that we did not feel the need to learn Greek", some elderly revealed.[49] Even in 1980s, Turkish was spoken as native language in some villages of Greek Macedonia. A Western Thracian female doctor who completed her obligatory medical service in a village of Drama in early 1990s was first very anxious because her Greek was poor. To her surprise, it turned out to be an exchanged Greek Orthodox village, where the locals, especially the elderly, spoke Turkish.[50]

In one narration pertaining to 1940, for instance, a refugee family from Adapazarı in Turkey had bought the land (250 stremmata) and house of a certain Sadık Ağa in the village of Melikli and settled there. Hatice, who was then 9 years old, stated that they were close neighbors-like any other Muslim neighbor in the village. Hatice remembers her as 'Hariton's wife' as she narrates that she used to advise them to invest their agricultural gains in gold instead of land or property:

> Now that you are in a foreign country (Greece), you can experience what we did (in Turkey) and without gold, you can perish on the way to your new lands, just as our people did. Those who had no gold coins were refused in the ships by the British and drowned in the port of İzmir.[51]

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47 *Trakya*, 12.11.1956

48 Narrations of elderly in Yalanca, Yasiköy, Narlıköy.

49 Narration of Ali,Susurköy; Sebahattin, Narlıköy, summer 2012.

50 In a conference in Komotini by the female medical doctor N.C, 2010.

51 Interview with Hatice, Melikli, summer 2012.

Incidents of intimidation, verbal and physical attacks seem to have taken place more often in the land- rich Ksanthian lowlands, close proximity to the river Nestos, the western part of which was emptied from Muslim -Turks by population exchange. A few years after the refugee settlement was completed, Greece was drawn into World War II. Land expropriations and disputes over land ownership, usually over pastures, which involved the exchanged Greek Orthodox and the Sarakatsans, would resurface in 1950s, aggravate during the junta period, and peak during the 1980s.

Refugee settlements were constructed in the fertile and land-rich lowlands. No refugee settlement was constructed in the highlands. By 1928, 17,000 refugee families were settled in Western Thrace in 208 villages.[52] 52 of these villages were former Bulgarian villages. 53 villages were built upon pastureland previously belonging to Muslim villages. 103 villages were established on state land or those confiscated by the government.[53] According to Pentzopoulos, 189,000 refugees were settled in Thrace, as a result of which 62.1% of the region became Greek. [54] By the end of 1931, 2 ciftliks were expropriated in Thrace, and 190 in Macedonia, 481 in Thessaly and Arta, 242 in Epirus and 120 in the rest of Greece.[55]

The confiscated lands from ciftliks were not distributed to refugees and the landless free of charge but with low prices to be paid in a number of installments. However, the fall in agricultural prices due to the Global Depression made it very difficult for them to pay it back and the devaluation in the national currency of drachma also reduced the amount of compensations received by former owners.[56] The devaluation of drachma and the increase in inflation led to an increase in prices and poverty.[57]

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52 Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange,* 1962,136.

53 Ladas, *The Exchange,* 1932, 494.

54 Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange,* 1962, 136.

55 Loizos, "Land, Peasants", 1983, 41.

56 Ibid., 66.

57 Ibid., 67.

The region of Western Thrace and Greece were economic-wise negatively affected by the consequences of wars and the Great Depression. Nonetheless, significant improvements were made in regional agriculture. Funded by the National Bank of Greece and loans and aids from abroad, both the size of cultivated land and the agricultural produce had increased by 1931. The cultivated area in Western Thrace, for example, increased from 721,959 streammas to 1,478,956 stremmas, whereas in Macedonia from 2,749,129 stremmas in 1922 to 5,504,622 stremmas in 1931. Furthermore, the estimated increase in wheat production in Western Thrace was 30% and 70% in Macedonia.[58]

Refugee settlement in Western Thrace changed the demography to the favor of the Greek Orthodox element. The refugees were settled in villages previously abandoned by the local Bulgarians as well as lands either used, owned, or abandoned by Muslims. Two cifltik lands and other confiscated lands were paid compensations. Nonetheless, as agriculture was primitive and majority of the rurals were pastoralists, reduction in grazing lands resulted in a loss of income from husbandry. A similar problem occurred in some villages for sharecropper families who used to rent plots of land from ciftliks.

§ 4.2 Implications of Turkish Reforms in Western Thrace

Featherstone et.al argue that "The secularist, modernist ideology of Kemalism seemed alien to traditionalist 'Ottomans'[59] and that it was propagated by Turkey; "The minority experienced modernity largely as an import-or as a social manifestation of 'backwardness' of its poorer strata".[60]

58 Ibid., 70.

59 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 52.

60 Ibid.

RURALS

Designation of the entire minority as 'traditionalist Ottomans' is a bit too reductionist in the sense that within the minority there have always been secular-minded rurals and urbans regardless of their education level along with educated intellectuals who were fervent supporters of the modernist tendencies in 19th century Ottoman Empire. The enthusiasm for modernization in Western Thrace and the consequent social split between the modernists and conservatives dates back to Ottoman Empire's final decades,[61]much earlier than the introduction of secular Republican reforms in young Turkey.

Above all, the route from Istanbul to Selanik, the headquarters of CUP, passed through Western Thrace. Among the clergy and ordinary rurals, there were supporters of CUP and their ideology. My father's maternal great-grandfather, for instance, received higher education in Istanbul during the late Ottoman Empire and was an advocate of the CUP, who named all his sons after the leading founders. His sons wore the hat and supported the Turkish reforms. He taught his grandchildren both the Ottoman script and modern Turkish alphabet.

A respondent stated that his grandfather, a large landowner in his village, was the first male to wear the hat in the village despite the locals' reactions.[62] Another large landowner and clergyman in Yasiköy, used to host Mustafa Kemal on his journeys between Istanbul and Thessaloniki. His son Ali Efendi was a secular Muslim and voluntarily adopted the Turkish reforms. In order to set an example to the villagers, he sent his daughter to a Greek high school (there were no minority high schools at the time).[63]

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61 For the emergence of Westernization in late Ottoman Empire, see Erik Zürcher, *Turkey : a modern history,* London ; New York : I.B. Tauris, 1993.

62 Interview with Aslan, Komotini, summer 2012.

63 Narrations of Ali Efendi's grandson, Zafer Bey, Istanbul, 2012.

The adoption of secular Turkish reforms started in İskeçe by the initiatives of Mehmet Hilmi and a group of Kemalist teachers in his circle.[64] Ömeroğlu, himself born and raised in İskeçe, claims that the ciftlik owners and the educated, wealthy families of İskeçe were the second group to voluntarily adopt Kemalist reforms. Through their relations with the villagers, many rurals adopted the reforms by emulating them.[65]

My great-grandparents and grandparents, ordinary rurals, all were fond of Atatürk. While the great-grandmothers wore the traditional Muslim attire, the great-grandfathers wore hats and suits and trousers instead of baggy pants and fez. They used to pray for Atatürk and revere him occasionally. His portrait has been in many houses.[66] Unlike in Turkey, Kemalist reforms were not imposed by law but pioneered by the notables and adopted voluntarily by rurals in Western Thrace albeit in the lowlands.[67] Hence, the argument that the 'minority experienced modernity as an import or as a social manifestation of backwardness of its poorer strata', deprives the minority rurals of agency concerning the adoption of secular Turkish reforms.

Osman, an elderly rural informant, narrates a Friday prayer in the Old Mosque in Komotini in 1957.

> While the Hodja was preaching, he said "Those who read the Book (Qur'an) in Latin script cannot be Muslims, they are Christians". Suddenly I raised my voice from among the congregation and said "I read and write Turkish in Latin script. This is how I read the Qur'an and cite the prayers by heart. Who can decide who is a proper Muslim other than Allah? Aren't you a Turk?

64 Aydın Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin Batı Trakya Türklerinin Azınlık Yaşamına Etkisi,* Analiz Basım,İstanbul, 2012, 255; Interview with Mustafa Tahsinoğlu, retired minority teacher, Hrisa, summer 2012.

65 Ibid., 2012, 261.

66 Personal observations in a number of households in the lowland villages, including mine as Atatürk's portrait was hung on the wall in the room where I was born.

67 The situation was different in the highlands because in the summer of 2016, to my surprise I saw two or three men with traditional sarık on their heads in a highland village.

> Why do you read the Qur'an in Arabic then?" Some males started laughing, other started saying that I was right. The Hodja apologized the congregation.[68]

These people did not take religion (Islam) and secularism as oppositional to each other but synthesized them in such a way that like sides of a coin they became inseparable components of Turkish identity. Like in young Turkish Republic, despite some oppositional aspects, secularism was merged with Islam.[69] In the Turkish-speaking lowlands, particularly, Turkish language was associated with Turkish identity, or being Turk.

As young Turkey was the only Muslim-Turk state born out of the Ottoman Empire, and the legal guarantor of the minority, the secular Turkish reforms, especially the Latin alphabet, was voluntarily adopted. Nonetheless, the ever-present anti-secular segment within the society developed a counter reaction to Turkish reforms declaring them anti-Islamic and won themselves a rural circle, particularly in the Pomak speaking highlands and suburban neighborhoods of Komotini and Ksanthi.

Undoubtedly, Turkey backed the dissemination of Atatürk's reforms via her representatives in Greek Thrace due to security reasons as well as value-based considerations of reform. In early 1930s, reforms were adopted and disseminated via secular intellectuals such as teachers and journalists, such as Mehmet Hilmi , later Osman Nuri, teacher, minority MP and owner of Trakya newspaper, descendants of upper level bureaucrats of the late Ottoman Empire in the towns as well as some of the notables in lowland villages.

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68 Interview with Osman, Galini, summer 2012.

69 Gökhan Ak, "Kemalizm'de Laiklik-İslam Birlikteliğinin Milliyetçilik Üzerinden Düalist Akdi", *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi,* Cilt 70, No:3, 2015, 571-606.

The new Turkish alphabet, for instance, was first introduced in the Ksanthian lowland village of Kireççiler in 1930.[70] It was introduced and taught by three secular minority teachers; Osman Seyfi, Mustafa Efendi and Baytar Mehmet Efendi. Concomitantly, the ban on the teaching of the Latin alphabet was lifted by the Greek government.[71] Subsequently, it spread to other lowland villages. Due to their geographical vicinity to the town, the lowlanders have been more receptive to novelties. The lowland villages of İskeçe were pioneers in the adoption of Turkish alphabet and other reforms compared to the highlands, to the town of Gümülcine and the surrounding villages.

Ultimately, Turkish or Kemalist reforms triggered a division among the notables and their followers as traditional versus modern. The traditionalist faction was defined as such after the settlement in Western Thrace of thirteen of the 150 fugitives, opponents of the Republican regime expelled from Turkey. Greece offered refuge to ten of the regime opponents including the ex- Seyhülislam Mustafa Sabri. Moreover, they were employed for teaching and clergymen positions and funded to disseminate their anti-secular propaganda through their publications and associations.[72]

Aarbakke argues that the Greek state had to accommodate them because they had collaborated with Greece during their occupation of Anatolia. In this regard, Western Thrace was a suitable place concerning their expertise.[73] Their collaboration with the Greek state and the anti-modernist local notables triggered a vehement polarization in society as

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70 Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devrimi*, 2012, 35; Interview with Mustafa Tahsinoğlu; Vemund Aarbakke, "The Political Framework of the Kemalist Educational Reforms in Western Thrace during the Interwar Period-Greek State Policies with a Comparison to the Bulgarian Case", *Dünden Bugüne Batı Trakya Uluslararası Sempozyumu,* 23-24 Ekim 2014, Istanbul, 362-376, 370.

71 Ibid.

72 Adil Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* Kutluğ Yayınları, İstanbul, 1974, 56; Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek Turkish Relations 1918-1974*, Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Athens, 1992,92-93.

73 Aarbakke, "The Political Framework", 2014, 365.

traditionalists and *modernists* or alternatively, *Cumacılar* versus *Pazarcılar*[74]. The Greek state would capitalize on this polarization by supporting the traditionalists against the modernists, as part of a probable divide-and-rule policy.

Özgüç criticized the fugitives for the polarization as well as the attitude of the then Turkish Consulate for trying to disseminate the reforms in Gümülcine in the 1930s without taking into consideration the *sui generis* circumstances of the Western Thracian region and people. The oppositional camps were created between Mustafa Sabri, the ex-Sheikh-ul-Islam and the traditionalist circle around him and secular circle around the Consulate.[75]

The minority schools and institutions came to be dominated by either modernists or traditionalists. As a result, some schools adopted Saturday and Sunday as the weekend holiday, while the others insisted on Friday. The modernist group males adopted the Western style dress with males wearing hats instead of *fez* and the females long coats (manto) and smaller headscarves instead of the *ferace* and the big headscarf (yashmak) covering the entire upper body.[76]

The Muftis had different attitudes to the modernization. The then Ksanthian Mufti had a more rational and moderate approach towards the secular reforms. For instance, he declared that according to the Koran the male hat cannot be considered a sin. Nor did he oppose the use of Latin alphabet. On the other hand, the Mufti of Komotini between 1924 and 1935, Samakoflu Nevzat Efendi, declared the use of hat and the Latin alphabet against Islamic rules and those who used them as infidels. He declared the marriage of women whose husbands wore the hat void, denied

74 Cuma means Friday in Turkish, the holy day of Muslims whereas Pazar, Sunday is the holy day of Christians. Cumacılar- the Fridayers meant supporters of Friday as holiday connoting the conservative faction whereas Pazarcılar- Sundayers referred to modernists, or supporters of Christians and their holidays.

75 Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* 1974, 57-58.

76 Ibid., 58; Narrations in the region.

males who wore hats their right of inheritance and even refused the burial of a local man who used to wear hat.[77]

The traditionalist-modernist schism was not always that clear-cut among the ordinary peoples, neighbors and friends alike. The funeral of the man who wore the hat was narrated by Mithat:

> The deceased's relatives and neighbors did not accept the Mufti's decision. When the mufti ordered the imam of the Yeni Cami not to sing the 'salah', he refused it saying that the deceased was his relative. When the Mufti ordered the imams not to wash his body, the neighbor males washed him saying that he was a neighbor. When the Mufti finally called the police to stop the funeral crowd on their way to the graveyard, the police encountered the Christian Mayor who had attended the funeral. Even in the graveyard the Mufti told the crowd not to bury him in the grave previously prepared one but in another spot adjacent to the fence, the people altogether disregarded him .[78]

In 1935, Mufti Nevzat Efendi was appointed Mufti to Didymothiko where he died. Apparently in his later years in Didymothiko, he regretted his previous stance against the secular Turkish reforms and his conducts during his service in Gümülcine.[79] The successor Mufti did not have such a strict attitude towards wearing the hat or the adoption of modern Turkish alphabet.

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77 Interview with Mithat, Komotini, 2012; "Acayip bir Fetva", *Yeni Adım*, 30 Eylül 1926**,** Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin,* 2012, 261.

78 Narrated by Mithat, Komotini, summer 2012.

79 Then when he was sent to Dimothiko as a Mufti, noone wanted to speak to him or enter his office. One day he told Mehmet Arif (Western Thracian author) that he understands his previous decisions were mistake, but contends that he made them by consulting by a group of ulema. He is so bored of loneliness that he invited Mehmet Arif to converse in his office whenever he wants. "Bir Hatıra", Mehmet Arif, Akın Gazetesi, Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin*, 2012, 261.

On the other hand, the profiles of some of the fugitives in Western Thrace challenge the categories of traditionalist and modernists, because despite their stance against the secular Turkish reforms, some of them were well-educated professionals. Furthermore, not all were backward concerning scientific progress. Mithat, retired teacher of Religion, stated that the polarization in this period was more over dresses, the alphabet, and determination of holidays. "All modernists in appearance," he said "may not be as progressive as the traditionalists in terms of the value they attach to science and education".[80]

Originally from Samsun, Hafız Reşat, for example, opened a school for minority children in the Ksanhtian highland village Yassıören in 1928. He married to a local woman and settled there. He educated many students among whom are prominent figures such as the previous elected Mufti Mehmet Emin Aga and the late Komotinian Mufti Meço Cemali. Mufti Cemali enunciated that he was a great teacher. When I asked "one of the 150 fugitives?" He said "well, that is how they call them… but, Hafız Reşat taught us Turkish and other courses perfectly. He could speak six languages and write poetry in French."[81] Hafız Reşat's significant role in teaching Turkish to the locals is also affirmed by Ömeroglu.[82]

The implications of the modernist-traditionalist polarization lasted well after the expulsion of the 13 of the *150 fugitives group.* They had settled in Western Thrace in 1924 where they lived until 1931 and then expelled upon Turkey's demand in 1931.[83] Nevertheless, Hafız Reşat was allowed to stay as he was married to a local Muslim lady. He published the religious-conservative newspaper *Muhafazakar* and the periodical *Peygamber Binası* regularly between 1957-1970. He was a student

80 Interview with Mithat, Komotini, 2012.

81 Interview with the Mufti Cemali Meço, 2012.

82 Aydın Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin,* 2012, 233.

83 Evren Dede, "Şeyhülislam Mustafa Sabri ve Batı Trakya'da 150'likler", *Azınlıkça*, s.44, Şubat 2009.

of Saidi Nursi and is considered to be the most influential figure in dissemination of *Nurculuk* in Western Thrace. [84] Alexandris interprets Greece's decision to expel the anti-Kemalist fugitives in 1931 as the triumph of Kemalists and a shift in Greek policy from promotion of Islam to promotion of Kemalist reforms.[85]

Nonetheless, the polarization, particularly over the use of modern Turkish alphabet and weekend holidays lasted for many more years. There were schools in Komotini as late as 1967 who were using Arabic script and Friday as weekend holiday. [86] In early 1960s in the Rhodopean village of Kalfa, for instance primary schools were separated. One of them offered education in Latin letters and the other in Arabic letters. The rurals were so deeply divided that the two adversary camps had stopped marriage between themselves.[87]

Until recently there were two primary schools which still adhered to Friday and Saturday as weekend holiday. The one in Domruköy has recently switched to Saturday and Sunday. The second one in Rhodopean highland, Işıklar, continues the traditional system of weekend holiday (Friday and Saturday). Likewise, at the medreses in Gümülcine and Şahin, Friday is the weekend holiday. In some traditional schools, the weekend holiday was later accepted as Saturday and Sunday because the Christian Greek teachers of the school curriculum wanted to go to the church on Sunday. Nevertheless, the time of prayer has always been observed in Muslim schools and classes end before noon prayer time on Fridays.

The modernist faction, backed by Turkey through the Turkish Consulate in Gümülcine, established their associations and newspapers.[88] The leading Kemalists were graduates of teaching colleges in

84 Ibid.

85 Alexandres, The Greek Minority, 1992, 309.

86 Demetriou, "Divisive Visions", 2004, 154 ; Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* 1974, 90.

87 Interview with Mithat and Mümtaz, retired teachers, Komotini, 2012.

88 Vemund Aarbakke, "The Political Framework of the Kemalist Educational Reforms in Western Thrace during the Interwar Period-Greek State Policies with a Comparison to

Edirne and associated with the then progressive Young Turks; Mehmet Hilmi, Osman Nuri and Osman Seyfi.[89]

Mehmet Hilmi was the first minority journalist. He published the first minority newspaper *Yeni Ziya*, later renamed as *Yeni Adım,* and is therefore considered to be the father of minority press. He regularly and fervently defended the adoption of the modern Turkish alphabet, election of the Mufti and the managers of pious foundations by the (minority) popular vote, and reduction of the Mufti's authority on the managers of pious foundations.[90] He was among the founders of the first secular minority association; the Ksanthi Turkish Union in 1927 and he pioneered the establishment of Komotini Turkish Youth in 1928.[91] Yet, its impact was confined to the city and the villages in the vicinity. In 1970s, Ksanthi Turkish Union was not allowed to open branches in villages[92]. This is another indication of Greece's stance to modernists.

The second secular association was the Turkish Primary Teachers' Union established in İskeçe in 1933. In an effort to teach the new Turkish alphabet, they reproduced a Turkish publication without license from the publisher in Turkey. The publisher in Istanbul sued the association. Unable to pay the fine, the association was dissolved. In 1936, a similar association of minority teachers was established in Gümülcine but dissolved in a while due to internal disputes.[93] Finally, Western Thracian Turkish

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the Bulgarian Case", *Dünden Bugüne Batı Trakya Uluslararası Sempozyumu[Western Thrace from Yesterday to Tomorrow International Symposium],* 23-24 Ekim 2014, Istanbul.

89 Ibid., 366

90 Nilüfer Erdem, "Mehmet Hilmi'ye Göre Batı Trakya Türklerinin 1930 Türk-Yunan Dostluğundan Beklentileri", *Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları Dergisi,* İstanbul Üniversitesi Atatürk İlke ve İnkılapları Enstitüsü, Sayı 15-16, 2012 ,17-26.

91 Aydın Ömeroğlu*, Türk Devriminin Batı Trakya Türklerinin Azınlık Yaşamına Etkisi*, İskeçe, 2012, p.255.

92 Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* 1974, 65; Interview with Hikmet Cemiloğlu, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

93 Ibid., 73-74; Ömeroğlu *Türk Devriminin*, 2012, 236; Öğretmenin Sesi, monthly periodical, official website, http://www.ogretmeninsesi.gr/ogretmenlerbirligi, last retrieved 02.05.2021

Primary Teachers Association was established in Gümülcine in 1952 but banned in 1983 due to the adjective "Turkish" in its title. [94] Nonetheless, they are de facto active.

The first association of traditionalists, or anti-Kemalists, on the other hand was the Ittihad-I İslam Cemiyeti founded in Gümülcine in 1933 by the remaining fugitives after the expulsion of Mustafa Sabri from the region. Alexander Mimoglu, a Greek Orthodox immigrant from Anatolia, was also a founding member of the association and in a speech he addressed to the minority he provocatively defined the identities of Muslim and Turk as oppositional to each other:

> Muslims! We have come here on order from the government. We will determine whether the public prefers being Muslim or being Turk and register those Muslims in our Union. From now on, Muslims and Turks will be separated in Greece.[95]

A second association, Intibah-I İslam Cemiyeti was established in 1948 by Molla Yusuf, Hüsnü Yusuf and Hafız Yaşar. Molla Yusuf was elected MP at 1950 elections. Hüsnü Yusuf wrote in *Hak-Yol* published by the same association. In early 1970s, the association was in charge of pilgrimage organizations to Mecca and participated in Organization of Islamic Conference meetings on behalf of Greek Muslims regularly.[96]

The third and final association of traditionalists was the Union of Medrese Graduate Muslim Teachers(Medrese Mezunu Müslüman Muallimler Cemiyeti) established in 1960. It was the anti-secular counterpart of Turkish Teachers Union. The secular minority teachers who graduated from Turkish Teaching Colleges were paid regularly by Turkey according to Law nr.168 for promotion of Turkish reforms, Turkish language and

94 Ibid.

95 Ülkü Gazetesi (minority newspaper), nr.4, 1933, Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri*, 1974, 76.

96 Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri*, 1974, 77-78.

culture abroad.[97] The association of Medrese graduate teachers was promoted by Greece, especially by the then general inspector of minority schools Miniadis.[98]

İlyas, a retired secular teacher, graduate of Teaching College in Turkey, claims that this group dominated the Ksanthian and Rhodopean highland villages where they did not allow the teaching of Latin alphabet until early1980s.

> They imported printing letters from Arab countries and published all school books in Arabic letters; a reading book entitled 'Kıraat' and a Math book entitled 'Hendese'. [99]

Each camp had their own publications in the form of newspapers and periodicals. The anti-Kemalist camp's newspapers were *Itila* published by İsmail Hakkı Çapur (1925-1930), Balkan (1922-1941) by Hasan Mustafa from Veria, *Yarın* and *Müdafa-i İslam* edited and published by the ex -Sheikh-ul-Islam Mustafa Sabri, *Hak-Yol* (1948-1952), Sebat (1957-), *Muhafazakar* by Hafız Reşat (1958-1966), *Adalet* by the ex-Mayor of Bursa Aziz Nuri and *Milliyet* by the notorious Hamdi Hüseyin Fehmi in Ksanthi, which was a pro-government newspaper (1931-1968).[100]

The Kemalist camp's newspapers were *Yeni Ziya, Yeni Yol* and *Yeni Adım* published successively by Mehmet Hilmi until he was expelled out of Western Thrace to Larissa. *Inkılap* by Osman Nuri and Hıfzı Abdurrahman (1930-1931), *Trakya* (1932-1965) with a break during the Secon World War, *Akın* by Hasan Hatipoğlu, also a minority MP, and *Azınlık Postası* by Selahaddin Galip[101], who was deprived of Greek citizenship and lived in Turkey until his death.

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97 Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin*, 2012, 238.

98 Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* 1974, 81; Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devrimin*, 2012, 238.

99 Interview with İlyas, Komotini, summer 2012.

100 Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* 1974, 128.

101 Özgüc,Batı Trakya Türkleri, 1974, 119-128

After 1931, minority primary school teachers were gradually replaced by modernists.[102] In October 1931, during his visit to Athens, Turkish Prime Minister İnönü asked for the abolition of minority religious courts and suggested that the government should provide the minority with freedom to choose the kind of court they preferred.[103] Venizelos had already prepared a bill for the Muslim minority concerning the administration of pious foundations, administration of religious matters and education. He submitted a memorandum of additional changes to the bill to the Parliament on 29 May 1931 which granted Muslims who did not want to be subject to Islamic jurisprudence the right to resort to public courts. However, the bill was never discussed by the Parliamentary Committee or submitted to the General Assembly. As Venizelos lost the elections in 1932, the bill was shelved.[104]

Many of the previous anti-Kemalist teachers and clergymen switched to the modernist side in mid 1970s such as the late elected Mufti of Ksanthi Mehmet Emin Aga,[105] who was among the founding members of Medrese Graduate Teachers. In fact, the schism between modernists and traditionalists had already weakened by the end of Bulgarian occupation of Greece between 1941 and 1944. This owes much to the then Turkish General Consul of Gümülcine. He strived to protect all minority members against the cruelty of Bulgarian administrators. He also supported the modernist teachers in minority primary schools.[106]

The reconciliation process between the two camps was initiated by the Turkish Consul of Athens Kamuran during his visit to Western Thrace in October 1973. He visited the highland villages after getting permission from Greek authorities. To his surprise, he realized that the

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102 Aarbakke"The Political Framework, 2014 , 371.

103 I.O Anastasiadu, Venizelos and the Greek-Turkish Agreement of 1930, Athens, Filippotis, 1980, 81, Maria Demesticha, Minorities in the Balkans in the era of globalisation: the case of the Turks in Western Thrace", unpublished MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2004, 75.

104 Dimostens Yağcıoğlu, "Eleftherios Venizelos ve Yunanistan'daki Müslümanlar/Türkler", *Azınlıkça,* nr.80, Nisan 2014, 47-49, 48.

105 Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin*, 2012, 238.

106 For more details, see chapter 5.

conservative group (graduates of medrese and the Teaching Academy in Thessaloniki, some village imams) and their institutions were not backward as was claimed. On the contrary, they had Turkish consciousness, they were open-minded, sincere and possessed national consciousness (implying Turkish consciousness). In the secular camp, he also noticed the widespread disputes and slandering which was due to nomination concerns for the parliamentary elections. Gürün invited both groups to dinner at the Turkish Consulate in Komotini. There he mediated in between them to end the secular, anti-secular schism and reach a conciliation on the candidates for the parliamentary elections.[107] Soon the two groups reconciled.

Eventually, Gürün managed to solve a social problem unattended by Turkey for decades on his own initiative. He reflects his sensitivity and personal initiative in his book as follows:

> During my duty in Athens, the only thing I was able to do for the minority was to end this schism-even if not totally- but to a great extent. I never felt the need for help from Ankara to do this.[108]

In 1975, many schools in the Ksanthian highlands adopted Saturday and Sunday as weekend holiday and enriched the Turkish part of the curriculum.[109] Furthermore, several educated Pomaks from highlands acquired leading positions as MPs, lawyers, and professionals.

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107 Kamuran Gürün, *Bükreş-Paris-Atina: Büyükelçilik Anıları*, Milliyet Yayınları, Kasım 1994, 232-237.

108 Ibid., 214.

109 Interviews in Ketenlik, August 2017.

§ 4.3 Immigration to Turkey

By 1928, around 200 minority members had preferred Turkish citizenship.[110] In 1932, a certain decree was enacted which allowed the remaining family members in Western Thrace to unite with the heads of family who had already settled in Turkey.[111]In the interwar period, Turkey did not accept immigrants from Western Thrace as was determined by law in November 1923, because the immigrants of Population Exchange were prioritized to settle in the properties left by the Greek Orthodox refugees.[112] For instance, a certain ciftlik owner Hacı İbrahim Ağa complained of torture by Greek authorities on the allegation of hiding Bulgarian brigands and weapons and demanded to immigrate to Turkey. However, his application for immigration together with his family was declined.[113]

Athens sent a telegram to Ankara in 1932 as a response to Turkish newspapers claiming that thousands of Western Thracian minority members preparing to immigrate to Turkey. It was reported that only 27 Muslims had migrated to Turkey. Among them were insubordinates, those who had kin in Turkey, who received payment for their confiscated property in Greece, those who did not pay their loans to Agricultural Bank, and some landless Muslims. It was also stated that the Greek authorities always issued passports to minority members upon demand. The argument that the migrants risked their lives in the river of Evros was unfounded because it had a number of shallow and seasonal dry zones. Furthermore, Greek officials caught many who were trying to illegally pass

110 Fotiadis, K. (1995). "I engatástasi ton prosfígon sti Ditikí Thráki ke i simvíosi ton hristianón ke musulmánon Ellínon, 1919–1930." Endohóra (Special issue 2, February): 63–74, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 65.

111 BCA 030.18.01/ 02.29.44.18

112 Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, Bakanlar Kurulu Kararları (Later BCA), 030.18.1.1/08.39.09, cited in Hikmet Ökzsüz, "The Reasons for Immigration from Western Thrace to Turkey (1923-1950)", *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, 249-278, 2003, 258.

113 Ibid., 259.

through the river to the Turkish side and returned them to their villages.[114]

In 1935, Recep Bey, secretary to the then Turkish Ambassador in Athens, and Rauf Selim Bey, the Turkish Consul in Gümülcine prepared a report about the Western Thracian minority after visiting villages from east (Dedeağaç) to west (İskeçe).[115]Their purpose was to convince rurals not to immigrate to Turkey.

The report stated that in the last three months the number of illegal immigrants was around 700 and taking into account the villages that were not visited could rise up to 1000. The reasons of immigration were insufficient land for cultivation, problems with the Greek Orthodox refugee settlers, indifferent attitude of local authorities to their petitions and requests, lack of proper education for children, the attitude of the Muftis and the political fugitives from Turkey, emotional reasons, relatives in Turkey, some Greek and Turkish land speculators' rumors that Turkey gives land and cattle to the immigrants, reluctance to do military duty and pay agricultural loans taken from Greek Agricultural Bank.

During the 1932-1933 school year, six students were sent to Teaching Colleges in Turkey. Only two returned back to Western Thrace whereas the others remained in Turkey. Upon the expulsion of the fugitives in 1931, secular reforms were gradually disseminated throughout the region and the Ottoman alphabet was replaced with the modern Turkish alphabet in minority schools. However, Greek language was not institutionalized in the minority education curriculum. By 1930, there were 241 minority schools, but only 20 Greek language teachers employed.[116]

Aarbakke contends that in fact Greece did not embark on a project to integrate the minority within the 'social and political structure' of the country. The minority leaders, on the other hand, sought to reach the

114 BCA, 030.10.00/255.715.13.

115 BCA 030.10.116.810.8

116 Aarbakke, "The Political Framework", 2014, 371.

same educational and cultural level with that of the mainstream. However, Aarabakke concludes; '[..]this was hardly feasible and it should not come as a surprise that the lack of integration in the educational system of the host country eventually fostered migration to Turkey'.[117]

117 Ibid., 376.

5

Surviving World War II and the Greek Civil War (1941-1949)

After monarchy was reestablished in Greece in 1935, General Metaxas was appointed Prime Minister in 1936. Greece was ruled by an autocratic regime until his death in 1941. Prior to the Second World War, Greece and Turkey had established political, economic and military alliances against the perceived threat from Bulgaria and Italy. On the one hand, this rapprochement benefited the Greek Orthodox and Turkish-Muslim minorities, on the other hand, Greece took some territorial decisions that incited troubles in the future. In 1931, Greece unilaterally declared that it extended her air zone from 3 to 10 miles. In 1936, after the visit of Metaxas to Ankara, the territorial waters were extended from 3 miles to 6 miles. Turkey did not oppose to it.[1]

This friendly period was disrupted upon the occupation of Greece (1941-1944) by the Axis powers during the Second World War. Greece demanded Turkey to ally with her against the Italian occupation, invoking the bilateral agreements on military alliance and the Balkan Pact. Turkey retained her neutrality. Yet, she sent humanitarian aid collected by the Greek Orthodox minority in 1941 and 1942 when Greece was suffering from hunger during the Nazi occupation. Turkey also allowed the

1 Fırat, "Yunanistan ile İlişkiler", 2001, 356.

Greek ship Adrias which escaped from Nazis to shelter in Turkish waters and sail to the Northern Africa shores.

Prior to the outbreak of the war, Prime Minister Metaxas took measures against a possible invasion by the Axis. Bulgaria was considered the imminent threat due to its geographical proximity. As a security measure, restricted zones were created along the northern border enclosing the highland villages of Ksanthi and Rhodope. Twenty one armed fortifications and a number of checkpoints were established on key roads and viaducts.

Several restrictions were imposed on education, press, political activities and property transactions that applied to all citizens of Greece including the Western Thracian minority. Metaxas was sensitive to keeping the positive status quo in bilateral relations with Turkey. In that respect, the modernist faction in Western Thrace maintained its position since 1931 as the preferred group for communication and dialogue. In this respect, both the Association of Komotini Turkish Youth and the Association of the Turkish Teachers of Western Thrace were officially recognized.

Greece was drawn into World War II only about two decades after the Asia Minor Disaster. It was attacked by Italians from the northern border and occupied by the Nazi Germany and their ally Bulgaria. It suffered great human loss in the war. In 1946, she would be devastated once again by the Civil War between the royalist and the communist factions that lasted over three years.

§ 5.1 Fighting for homeland Greece

Following the Ottoman conscription system, Muslim minority males were given the option of paying an exemption tax or allowed to serve a shorter period.[2] Consequently those who could afford the tax did

[2] Ibid.

not have to do military duty. During World War II, however, Muslim males were conscripted to the Greek army and fought against the Italians on the Greek-Albanian front. A total of 46 Muslim soldiers were killed, 10 were reported missing. In total, 56 casualties comprised 0.04% of the minority population compared to 334 Greek Orthodox casualties from Western Thracian region that made 0.09% of the regional population.[3]

Western Thracian community associations and individuals stood in solidarity with the Greek army by donating clothes, food, cigarettes and money. The Greek refusal of submission to Italians on 28th October, a national holiday ever since, was praised by the *Trakya* minority newspaper after the end of the war, as a success of all Greek citizens including the 'Turks of Western Thrace as Greek citizens.'[4]

In my sample, of the 49 elderly respondents (18 females and 31 males), 16 narrators' fathers fought in the Greek army during World War II including my maternal great grandfather Yusuf. A paternal great grandfather was conscripted but sent back because he had five small children. Apparently, males with four children and more were not conscripted.[5] A journalist's paternal grandfather was taken prisoner of war and detained for seven years in Belene in Bulgaria before he was released in 1952.[6] A veteran of Greek-Italian war in my village, Emin, was taken prisoner of war by the Italians and returned to the village six years later with a handicapped leg when he was believed to have died.

The veterans were given certificates by the army for privileged treatment in public institutions and hospitals. As a disabled veteran, Emin was given a license to open and run a kiosk in the village. The wives of Muslim conscripts who died in the war were put on a life-long salary. Buket's paternal grandmother was one of them, a widow with three children. Her husband died soon after he returned from the war. He devel-

3 Ibid., 70-71.

4 "28 Ekim 1940 [28 October 1940]", *Trakya*, 9 December 1946.

5 Narrations of my paternal grandmother.

6 Interview with A.Dede, İskeçe, summer 2012.

oped a fatal disease because he had stayed in a swamp for three days during the battle.[7] Until the deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations due to Cyprus, Muslim veterans were reportedly invited to annual commemorations in the town center of Komotini.[8]

The Muslim Turks and Christian Greeks were all united against the invaders and fought together with zeal. An article based on narrations of a minority veteran in a minority monthly periodical reveals the solidary between Muslim -Turk and Greek Orthodox soldiers against the Italians and Nazis and the latter's cruel treatment of Greek prisoners of war.[9]

> The German soldiers used to play a game. They threw a piece of bread to the Greek soldier who could say the highest number of words in German. We shouted the German words we had learnt to get the thrown piece of bread; 'Das brot, Wasser, Danke, Meister' as they watched the scene with joy and laughter.[10]

> We were kept in a in a fenced, open air pig farm. Every night we heard screams of women from among the bushes. Elefterakis learned from other prisoners of war that his fiancée, Elena, along with other young women in his village, were raped by the Nazi soldiers regularly. He was devastated…He committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. Halil was overwhelmed with the fear that the same could have happened to his wife in Western Thrace. Wounded by a shell on his hip, he kept saying: 'I will continue to fight the Germans until I am left with a sole finger'. [11]

The perception of Greece as motherland regardless of the ethnic origins can be traced in the below poem written for Elefterakis:

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7 Interview with Buket, Galini, summer 2012.

8 Narrations of İlyas, Komotini; Nihat,Galini, summer 2012.

9 Hüseyin Mahmutoğlu, "Cepheden Eve Giden Yol" , *Birlik* October 1977, nr.36, 12-21 and November 1977, nr.37, 6-14.

10 Mahmutoğlu, "Cepheden Eve", 1977, 17.

11 Ibid., 18-19.

Homeland is Elena
Homeland is Hasan
Homeland is Fatma
Homeland is Konstantin
.....
Homeland is everything
Elefterakis was right[12]

§ 5.2 Bulgarian Occupation of Western Thrace (1941-1944)

Following the defeat of Italians, Germany invaded Greece from Bulgaria on 6th April 1941. Western Thrace was promptly occupied as majority of the Greek troops were along the Albanian and Macedonian fronts.[13] The government authorities abandoned the region immediately.[14] On April the 8th, Germans had occupied entire Western Thrace. On 21st April, they left it to Bulgaria together with Eastern Macedonia. Dimetoka, the closest part of Evros to Turkey remained under German control[15] upon Turkey's demand for a buffer zone.[16] By 1st June 1941, entire Greece was occupied. Germany occupied Athens, Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia, several Aegean islands and Crete. In the capital city

12 Ibid.

13 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 81.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 83; *Trakya*, 03.08.1959.

16 WO/252/800, "Greece, Zone Book, No.8, Macedonia and Thrace, Part 1, People and Administration", 29th February 1944, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 92.

of Athens, the Nazis appointed General Georgios Tsolakoglou as Prime Minister.[17]

In Western Thrace, all mechanisms of state including the military, education, health, police, the courts, municipal administration were replaced with Bulgarian officials.[18] Furthermore, 92,523 Bulgarians were settled in the region.[19] The Bulgarians sought to "Bulgarise' the region. The cities, towns and villages were given Bulgarian names. The public monuments were destroyed and replaced with those of Bulgarian heroes. The locals were given Bulgarian flags and obliged to raise them during Bulgarian religious and national days.[20]

The education system was redesigned. In all Greek schools, Greek teachers were replaced by Bulgarian teachers. Greek language was banned and replaced by Bulgarian as the only official language of instruction.[21] On the other hand, the minority education system in the lowlands remained intact with the exception of Greek curriculum replaced by Bulgarian. Muslim minority students were banned from going to Turkey for higher education.[22] Minority education in lowlands were interrupted due to shortage of teachers. Many elderly respondents, including my grandparents, for instance, could not attend primary school after the 3rd year, because it was closed.

Bulgarian rule was more oppressive in the highlands compared to the lowlands. Unlike the former Bulgarian rule of 1913-1919, Pomaks were not forced to convert to Christianity. However, they were once again

17 Ibid.,83.

18 G. Daskalov, 1992, [Bulgarian] [The Establishment of the Bulgarian Administrative and Political System in the Newly Liberates Lands of Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, Voennopoliticheski Sbornik-Military-Political Journal, Issue 6, 103-127, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 314.

19 Ibid.,108.

20 Ibid., 115.

21 Ibid., 113-114.

22 Ibid.,116.

target for the Bulgarization project organized by the Bulgarian nationalist organization Rodina in cooperation with the appointed Mufti of Ksanthi, Arif Beyski (Kamen Bolyarski), a Bulgarian Pomak.[23]

In the Ksanthian highlands, Pomaks were registered as Muslim Bulgarians. Education was in Bulgarian language except for the Qur'an classes.[24] Female Bulgarian teachers were employed in primary schools to 'emancipate (the Muslim Bulgarian females) from being secluded and shy'. [25] In this respect, school girls were not allowed to wear the Muslim headscarf. The Bulgarian national project, however, did not work due to reasons as organizational problems and 'passive resistance' of Pomaks.[26]

In the lowlands, Muslim-Turks were spared from Bulgarization. The rurals' main concern under Bulgarian rule was physical survival. They cooperated with the Bulgarian administrators and soldiers in the administration of the village and bribed them in order to maintain good relations. In villages where a Bulgarian village headman was appointed, he ruled in cooperation with the rich landowners, imams and other notables. The rich landlords bribed them with gifts such as butter, cheese, meat, luxuries in war times which many people did not have.[27]

Males were entrusted with safeguarding the village on night shifts, herd the flock, do corvee labor to improve roads and fields. The

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23 G.Daskalov, (Bulgarian) [The Establishment of Bulgarian Administrative and Political System in the newly Liberated lands of Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia (1 January 1942-25 October 1944), article published in a Bulgarian Military-Political Journal, Issue 6, 103-107; Kotzageorgi-Zymari X. (ed) H Boulgariki Katohi stin Anatoliki Makedonia kai ti Thraki (1941-1944) [The Bulgarian Occupation in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace], Thessaloniki, Paratiritis, 2002, 58-60, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 115.

24 On the other hand, in some Rhodopean highland villages, Turkish was allowed in primary schools, Ibid.,116

25 CSA/798/2/48, Protocols of the Educational Administration-General of Belomorie, Minutes No.1, Inspectorate Committee for Education in Ksanthi, 10 June 1941, ibid., 117.

26 Ibid, 118.

27 Narrations of the elderly who have lived through this period.

villagers had to submit an overwhelming majority of their agricultural produce to the Bulgarian authorities at harvest. As agriculture was primitive and depended on climatic conditions, they barely had enough to survive. Bulgarian authorities regularly distributed them bean flour. It damaged the intestines, caused painful diseases and eventual death. A considerable number of villagers died of malnutrition.[28]

Many people hid some of their agricultural produce in the wells they secretly dug in their yards. This was the simplest weapon of the poor to survive. In case the Bulgarian soldiers noticed it, they were beaten.[29] In the highlands, due to meager arable land, agricultural produce was much less than lowlands. The part left for each household by Bulgarians was therefore even less. Highlanders had to eat grass and turtles to survive.[30]

The elderly participants reiterated that when the German troops entered Muslim villages, they were nice to the locals. The German soldiers paid for food like milk, eggs and chicken they asked from the rurals. Fazilet compared them with the Bulgarians:

> Before a large German battalion entered our village, our patrol was burnt down. We were terrorized. We took my grandmother's white yashmak and tied it on to a wooden stick as a sign of surrender. The battalion marched into the village. The soldiers asked for water. We showed them the fountain. They patted our heads, called us 'Mouhammedin' and gave us (children) chocolate. They gave us no harm in the short while they stayed. Then the Bulgarians came. They were horrible. Three years of hunger, poverty, fear.[31]

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28 Narrations of my grandmothers, Osman, Ayşe, Yalanca ; Hatice, Yusuf, Melikli, Latife, Mansur, Yasiköy, summer 2012.

29 Ibid.

30 Interviews with Fazilet, Fuat, Şerife, highlander immigrants to Galini.

31 Interview with Fazilet, Galini, summer 2012.

RURALS

Bulgarian occupations of Western Thrace occupy a profound place in the collective memory. Some surviving elderly narrators shed tears while narrating their experiences during the Bulgarian occupation of 1941-1945. They are recalled as times of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, misery, frequent corvee labor, epidemics, torture and fear. My paternal grandmother narrates:

> Almost a fourth of my village died of malnutrition, intestine diseases caused by the bean flour the Bulgarians distributed. Among them were my friends, aunts, neighbors. I was ill for a long time until my father found medicine from an acquaintance. It was very difficult to find medicine.[32]

Torture was reportedly a common interrogation method. The village headmen and notables were reportedly the first ones to interrogate.[33] In one such incident, my paternal great-grandfather Hüseyin, the village headman, was obliged to admit a crime he had not committed. He was beaten for hours at the local patrol until they thought he died and threw him in a ditch where he was found by the villagers.[34]

Locals were punished and tortured for minor mistakes or for no reason. Merdan, as a child, was beaten by a Bulgarian soldier for refusing to give him the bottle of olive oil which he had bought from the grocery store.[35] Some males who fell asleep during the night watch were severely beaten. They were wrapped in fresh sheep skin for a few days or the flesh of fresh cut hens to heal.[36] People were blamed and punished for crimes they did not commit.

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32 Narrations of my paternal grandmother originally from Müselimköy.

33 Kemal Şevket Batıbey, *Batı Trakya'da Teneke ile Alarm: ve Bulgarlar Geldi,* Boğaziçi Yayınları, İstanbul,1976, 8, 13, 73; Interview with Osman, my grandmothers' narrations, Yalanca; Hatice, Melikli; Basri, Domruköy; Mansur, Yasiköy; Sebahattin,Narlıköy, summer 2012.

34 Narrated by my paternal great grandmother Safiye.

35 Interview with Medan, Palazlı, summer 2012.

36 Interview with Hatice, Melikli; Merdan, Palazlı, Cemali, Yalanca; Sebahattin, Narlıköy, summer 2012.

Nonetheless, lowlander notables were luckier than the highlanders as they had access to the then minority MPs in times of urgency. Hatice narrates:

> There used to be an airport in the south of Melikli. It was guarded by the Bulgarian soldiers. One night oil was stolen from the airport. The Bulgarians caught an ordinary villager and interrogated him. The poor man said that he did not know. As he was terribly beaten, he lied to them eventually by saying 'The muhtar(village headman) did'. My father was the muhtar. He was immediately arrested and sent to prison in Gümülcine. A few Bulgarian soldiers came to our house and searched for oil but tey did not find anything. The next day, my uncle went to the MP Hafız Galip who contacted the Bulgarian authorities. My father was released a few days later.[37]

Nonetheless, there were also good Bulgarian administrators. Osman narrates everyday life in Yalanca during the Bulgarian occupation:

> I was seven years old when Bulgarians came… Vasil, the Bulgarian village headman was settled in the rooms of the mosque with his family; his wife, two young daughters and his ten-year-old son. He worked in coordination with the imam Hafız Efendi, and our old neighbor Ömer. They could all speak Bulgarian. Vasil and his family had good relations with the villagers. They attended weddings in the village. His daughters dressed like the local girls. They wore the *grep*[38] and danced with the village girls at *Hıdrellez* fests. I became friends with his son Koley. I used to go to their house to play with him. Koley's mother used to give us slices of bread with butter. Sometimes I went there only to ask

37 Interview with Hatice, Melikli, summer 2012.

38 Silk or satin headscarf with laces around, leaving the front part of the head and the rest of the hair, worn in plaits open. It was usually (and is still in Ksanthian lowland) worn by females at weddings and fests.

> for a piece of bread, "Mayka, lap", (Mum, bread) I used to ask in Bulgarian. She was such a nice woman… My mother had died a year ago. My father was poor. [39]

The narration reveals that the Bulgarian village headman did not have a language problem in the village as the village imam and Ömer could speak Bulgarian. "They spoke Pomak, which is why they could also speak Bulgarian" recounted Osman. Ömer and imam Hafız Efendi had immigrated from Çakalköy (Cakalorovo), a village in the province of Kırcaali in Bulgaria during the Ottoman-Russo War.

Zarife narrates that they had good neighborly relations with the Bulgarian family.

> We used to invite them to our weddings. They dressed nicely and brought gifts for the bride. They danced with us. We used to exchange visits for coffee with Vasil's wife in the neighborhood.[40]

The Bulgarian headman took initiatives for the improvement of agriculture and conditions in the village. There used to be a swamp, home to mosquitos in spring and summer, and the cause of malaria which particularly affected the children. Vasil assembled the village notables and men one day and told them about his plan to drain the swamp. Men gathered with their shovels and dug a ditch to build a water canal to push the water into the river. In return, they were allowed to catch and eat the daces. They caught so many daces that the entire village ate fish that day.[41]

While the rich Greek Orthodox moved to mainland Greece upon the Bulgarian occupation of Western Thrace, the poor stayed. The remaining rurals lived in solidarity. The Greek Orthodox males frequented

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39 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

40 Interview with Zarife, Yalanca, summer 2012.

41 Interview with Osman, Zarife, Yalanca, summer 2012.

the Turkish-Muslim coffeehouses in villages and towns. The two communities united in solidarity in the harsh conditions of the Bulgarian rule.[42]

Another survival strategy was immigration to Turkey through legal or illegal ways. Thousands of minority members reached the Evros river in an effort to reach the Turkish side. However, Turkey decided to refuse immigrants as of 20th April 1941. Those who were allowed in with their families before were settled and granted Turkish citizenship. The refugees detained in camps in Edirne were sent back to Greece.[43]

Batıbey narrates such a day on 1st September 1941, when hundreds of people, including himself, were piled up on the Evros riverbank. The Turkish Commander, deeply touched by the plight of refugees, brought them sacks of bread. After a short emotional speech, he ordered three Turkish soldiers to sail them back to the Greek border.[44] The Bulgarians did not allow them to return to their homes. Therefore, hundreds of minority members had to stay in Dimetoka, the buffer zone, until the end of Bulgarian occupation. Batıbey narrates that they were in better conditions there:

> After our settlement in Dimetoka, we were not faced with hunger again. The Germans gave each family 9 okkas flour, 1 okka sugar, 1 okka olive oil, 2kg soap. Only salt was absent. Turkey sent it to us for free. The German Commander in charge declared that they were going to settle us in abandoned Turkish villages and give us land to cultivate.[45]

42 "Göç ve Sebepleri-3", *Trakya,* 3 August 1959.

43 BCA, 030.18.1.2/96.72.3.

44 Batıbey, *Teneke ile Alarm*, 1976, 38.

45 Ibid., 41.

The number of minority members who immigrated to Turkey during the Bulgarian occupation (1941-1944) is declared 12,500 by the Bulgarian authorities[46], 10,000 by *Trakya* newspaper[47] and between 10-15,000 by the Greek authorities.[48] Between 1944 and end of 1946, until the beginning of the Civil War, an additional 3,000 minority members immigrated to Turkey as reported by the then Turkish Consul of Komotini, Muzaffer Görduysus, successor to Tevfik Türker.[49] The purpose of migration in this period was physical survival as narrated by Selahattin Yıldız, a diaspora member in Istanbul, originally from the Ksanthian highland village of Memkova:

> We immigrated to Turkey in 1941. The Bulgarians too often intimidated my father. We escaped the Bulgarians, not the Greeks.[50]

5.2.1 *Resistance against the Bulgarian Occupation*

The first resistance against the Bulgarian occupation took place between 28-29 October 1941 in Drama, Greek Macedonia. A resistance group of over a thousand men organized by the local branch of KKE staged an attack. 35 Bulgarians were killed including officers, civil servants, and collaborators. The attack was retaliated ruthlessly by execution of 2,140 local Greeks including women and children.[51]

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46 Featherstone et.al 2011, 109

47 *Trakya*, 3 August 1959, No.773.

48 AYE/1944/21.6 Foreign Ministry, Directorate of Political Affairs, 'Emigration of the population from the Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia and Thrace', 30 November 1944, cited in Featherstone et al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 109, ft.60.

49 Ibid., 181.

50 Interview with Selahattin Yıldız, summer 2012, Istanbul.

51 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 136.

It was difficult to organize resistance against the Bulgarian administration in Western Thrace due to its geographical remoteness from central Greece. In between were three occupied zones by Italians, Germans and Bulgarians. The harshness of Bulgarian response in Drama further discouraged any attempts for resistance in Western Thrace. The left wing resistance activity groups in Thrace were EAM/ELAS[52] , the latter was the armed wing of the KKE. They started resistance in the German-controlled zone of Evros in late 1943, through the final months of Bulgarian occupation.[53]

The Muslims, on the other hand, were skeptical against the left-wing resistance groups. Nonetheless, there were Muslims who participated in left-wing resistance groups in Komotini, Sappes and Ksanthi. In the Rhodopean middle-line village of Susurköy, for instance, out of 20 locals executed by the Germans, four or five were reported to be Muslim rurals.[54]

The right wing resistance group of EAO, on the other hand, had a stronghold in Eastern Macedonia and were composed of Turkish-speaking Pontic Greek Orthodox immigrants from the Black Sea. For instance, the Head, Antonis Fostiridis, addressed as Anton Çavuş, was born in Samsun. They were strong supporters of the King. When they were ordered by the British Liaison Officer Major Miller to move to the Haidou forest in the center of the Pomak villages of Echinos, Thermes, Sminthi, Kotyli, the Pomaks supported the EAO by guidance, information, food supplies in return for their promise to keep away from Pomak villages in order to avoid Bulgarian terror. Pomak collaborators of the EAO were in 1958 honored by Greece as 'fighters of national resistance'.[55]

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52 EAM, the National Liberation Front was the resistance organization led by the Greek Communist Party composed of several Greek political parties and organizations to liberate Greece from the Axis occupation. ELAS was the Greek People's Liberation Army and the military wing of EAM.

53 Ibid., 137.

54 Ibid., 143.

55 Ibid., 145.

Featherstone et.al explain Pomaks' affinity to EAO by referring to their commonalities as opposed to the left-wing resistance groups of ELAS and EAM.

> Most fundamentally, the Turkish speaking Pontics who formed the backbone of the groups loyal to Anton Tsaous, were naturally best placed to establish channels of communication along with the Pomak communities in the Rhodope mountains, most of whom were able to converse in Turkish. Both Pomaks and Pontics were mountainous people, engaged in animal breeding and subsistence agriculture. Their isolated and introvert communities placed huge importance on issues of family honor and resented outside intrusion. Committed to their (different) religious beliefs, the two groups shared an overtly conservative outlook and similarly masculine codes. The Pontic Greek Orthodox, who had lived alongside Muslim communities in the Black Sea for centuries, would have been in relatively familiar territory when they first established contacts with the Pomaks. The same is not true about the intellectual instructors of EAM or the overwhelmingly 'Greek 'membership of the local ELAS.[56]

5.2.2 *Exceptional Cases of Collaboration with the Bulgarians*

The Turkish-Muslim minority neither collaborated with nor engaged in resistance against the Bulgarian rule.[57] After all, the poignant experiences of the first Bulgarian occupation (1913-1919) were still vivid. Their solidarity with the local Greek Orthodox community and their non-collaborationist attitude with the Bulgarian rule was mentioned in a number of reports and correspondence of Greek authorities.

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56 Ibid., 147-148.

57 Ibid., 149-150.

For instance, a report of Rhodope Gendarmerie Command of 1947 stated that:

> The Turks of Rhodope, under the guidance of the Turkish Consulate of Komotini, did not proceed to any obvious propagandist activities against the Greek element and our national interests in general.[58]

Reference to the minority in the report as 'Turks' indicates Greece's interchangeable use of 'Turk' and 'Muslim' in addressing the minority prior to 1970s. Equally interesting is the acknowledgement of the Turkish Consulate's influence on the minority. This kind of an attitude reflects the balance of power considerations of the period.

Due to concerns of potential threats to national security, Turkey chose to remain aloof from Western Thrace during the World War II period.[59] Yet, during the Bulgarian occupation (1941-1944), the Turkish Consulate in Komotini was the only legitimate authority for the minority as a stronghold against the despised Bulgarian rule. The then Turkish Consul of Komotini, Tevfik Türker took personal initiatives to protect the inhabitants. He complained about the plundering in Komotini to the Bulgarian and German commanders.[60] Eventually, the pillage ended with the diplomatic initiatives of the Turkish Consulate in Sofia. [61] Due to geographic restrictions, he could not intercede with the Bulgarian oppression in the highlands.[62]

Nevertheless, there were a few cases of collaboration with the Bulgarian authorities at the institutional and the local level. The President of

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58 AYE/1947/111.1 Commander of Rhodope Gendarmarie, 'Report on active propaganda and Public safety in the district of the Rhodope Gendarmerie Command', 13 September 1947, Ibid., 150.

59 Ibid., 53.

60 Batıbey, *Ve Bulgarlar Geldi,* 2000, 27-28; Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 152-153.

61 Batıbey, *Ve Bulgarlar Geldi,* 2000, 33.

62 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 157.

İskeçe Waqf Administration, Hamdi Hüseyin Fehmi, for instance, blatantly collaborated with the Bulgarian administration. He had himself registered as Bulgarian and obtained Bulgarian citizenship and wore a Bulgarian uniform.[63] He also made a lot of propaganda to influence other Muslim Turks to register themselves as Bulgarian. He slandered and informed innocent local Muslim Turks and Greek Orthodox to Bulgarian authorities.

As a renegade man, he quickly shifted sides as the Bulgarians left and the Greek government returned to the region in 1945. In an effort to negate his previous evil acts, he started to engage in a network of espionage against the minority by reporting individuals to the Greek local Police Department. Ironically, he also attended the UN Congress along with Greek delegates to support the Greek claim to the southern zone of Bulgaria predominantly populated by Pomaks.[64]

A German collaborator in Evros was the ciftlik owner Neyir Bey in Orestiada. He was an agent for the German Intelligence and had a group of informants. He went so far as to send his son to prison to get information from the conversations of the imprisoned resistance fighters. His son was on route fleeing to Turkey when he was arrested and killed by the Greek resistance fighters.[65]

In the village, some Turkish- Muslim rurals had themselves registered 'Bulgarian Muslims' and obtained Bulgarian citizenship. It was narrated that the village imam in Yalanca had himself registered a Bulgarian citizen for personal benefits. When Bulgaria was about to retreat, the Bulgarian village guard warned him that he would be punished by the Greek authorities. To everyone's surprise, the imam, together with his family, immigrated to Turkey within two days out of fear and spent the rest of his life in Bursa.[66]

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63 Batıbey, *Teneke ile alarm*, 2000, 68; Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 151; *Trakya,* 27 February 1952, 5 March 1952.

64 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 171.

65 Batıbey, *Teneke ile Alarm*, 2000, 168; Featherstone, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 151.

66 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

In another case, a Turkish-Muslim collaborator was punished by the villagers after the retreat of Bulgarians. Basri narrates:

> In the village of Demircili (Sidiradon), the village guard was a local Muslim Turk collaborator who gave serious harm to the villagers during the Bulgarian occupation. The Bulgarians prohibited to bring wood from the mountains, but the villagers needed them to heat the furnace, to cook and warm themselves in winter. In one such incident, he informed the Bulgarians about the villagers who brought woods from the hills. The men were caught in the mosque and beaten so severely that they were in bloodshed. After the Bulgarian retreat, when the village guard was trying to escape from the village, he was caught and beaten to death by the villagers.[67]

5.2.3 *The end of multi-ethnic society in Western Thrace*

Until the end of World War II, Western Thracians, reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire, were a multi-ethnic community. In addition to Greek Orthodox and Muslim Turks, there were Jews, Armenians, and Bulgarians who had immigrated to Bulgaria in 1920s but came back and resettled in the region during the Bulgarian occupation. They returned to Bulgaria once again upon the end of the occupation. Jews were packed in trains and sent to concentration camps. A number of Armenians were expelled by Greece after the end of Bulgarian occupation because they had collaborated with the Bulgarians. This triggered a domino effect of migration within the Armenian community resulting in massive exodus. Consequently, by 1945, the multiethnic society had become bi-ethnic with the remaining local Greek Orthodox and Muslim Turks.

The presence of Armenians in Greece dates back to seventeenth century as a result of migrations of tradesmen, craftsmen and workers

67 Interview with Basri, Domruköy, summer 2016.

from several parts of Ottoman Anatolia. Upon the Greek defeat in Anatolia, around 80,000 Armenians joined the Greek Orthodox and fled to Greece with the retreating army.[68] Because some of the Armenian refugees attacked local Muslims, the Greek government sent around 5,000 away from the region of Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia to Peloponnese.[69] After their emigration to the West and later to Soviet Armenia, by 1938 there were around 27,080 Armenians in entire Greece. During the Axis occupation, 2000 Armenians died in mainland Greece due to famine and war.[70]

Many Armenians in the mainland collaborated with the KKE during the German occupation and joined the Resistance. On the other hand, some Armenians in Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia collaborated with the Germans and the Bulgarians.[71] According to a report of the General Administration of Thrace dated November 1941:

> Since the establishment of Bulgarian rule in Western Thrace, and especially since 29th September 1941, the Armenian element has supported their efforts, providing false information against the Greek population, aiming to contribute to the elimination of Greeks and thus concentrate and control all the trade in their hands.[72]

In return, they received equal treatment with the Bulgarians. They were not vulnerable to famine and maltreatment as opposed to the other ethnic groups in the region. Furthermore, many boasted their wealth through their commercial activities to the detriment of the local

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68 I.K. Hassiotis, "Armenians" in (eds.) Richard Clogg**,** *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society,* 2002, 94-111, 96

69 Ibid.,105; Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2000, 121.

70 Hassiotis, "Armenians", 2002, 97

71 Ibid, p.97, p.106.

72 GES/DIS 1998: 312-333, cited in Featherstone et.al, p.120-121.

Greeks. According to a local newspaper, out of 28 names who had multiplied their wealth during the occupation, 9 were Armenians. This was very much in contrast to their numerical presence.[73]

Armenians were an urban community and barely had contacts with the rurals. An elderly Komotinian, Ethem, narrated an incident about a group of local Armenians burning the Greek flag in the center of Komotini as a sign of their loyalty to the Bulgarians.[74] In the German-controlled strip of Evros, Batıbey narrates an incident of espionage:

> One day, three Turkish soldiers came to the town of Ferres to ask the mayor for his permission to provide the returned minority refugees(from Turkey) with food and basic needs. Agop Efendi happened to see them and reported it to the German General. The next day, the German General came to see the Greek Mayor, scolded and threatened him for not telling him about the incident.[75]

After the end of the Second World War, Armenians in Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia who collaborated with the Nazis and the Bulgarians were expelled from Greece. Following the proposal of the British Ambassador in Athens they were sent to Soviet Armenia.[76] In 1950s, based on oral testimonies, the Armenian population of the town of Komotini was stated to be 150 persons.[77]

The most unfortunate ethnic group was the Jewish community. They suffered the same misfortune as their fellows in entire Greece and Europe under Axis occupation. The entire community of 4,000 Jews in

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73 Eleftheri Thraki, 26 February 1946, cited in Featherstone et.al, p.122.

74 Interview with Ethem,Komotini, summer 2012.

75 Batıbey, *Ve Bulgarlar Geldi*, 2000, 39-40.

76 Featherstone et.al, p.123.

77 *Οι Αρμένιοι Της Κομοτηνής* [The Armenians of Komotini], Κωνσταντίνος Χατζόπουλος &Τζένή Κασάπιαν, Εκπολιστικός Μορθοτικός Όμιλος Αρμένιον Κομοτηνής [Armenian Educational&Cultural Team of Komotini], Komotini, 2009

Western Thrace were sent to Nazi concentration camps where they were exterminated.[78] Jews of Western Thrace were in fact indigenous Thracians. They were living inside a fortress built in 385 A.D in Komotini when the town was conquered by the Ottomans.[79] A few participants recalled and narrated their being filled into trains at the Komotini railway station like animals.[80] My paternal great-grandfather Hüseyin, who happened to pass by the train terminal with his friends, narrated to his son (my grandfather);

> I cannot forget the screams and pleads of the Komotinian Jews being forced into the cargo trains in Komotini. Our hearts sank at the sight... We walked away from the scene in tears.[81]

§ 5.3 Minority Rurals during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949)

"Once upon a time there was PKK up there!"

By the time the Axis occupation ended in October 1944, the main resistance group EAM-ELAS had established its control over mainland Greece.[82] The new Greek government and the British ordered ELAS to dissolve so that a new regular Greek army could be established. ELAS was reluctant to do it. As the negotiations failed, KKE withdrew the EAM Ministers from the government on 28th November. On 3rd December 1944, a large demonstration was organized in the center of Athens where 20 to 25 demonstrators were killed and between 100 and 120 injured by police fire. In addition to around 15,000 regulars, the British sent 10,000 troops

78 Steven Bowman, "Jews" in (eds) *Richard Clogg, Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society, 2002,* 64-80,

79 1310 Edirne Salnamesi, (in)İsmail Bıçakçı, *Yunanistan'da Türk mimarî eserleri,* İslam Tarih, Sanat ve Kültürünü Araştırma Vakfı, 2003, 123.

80 Interview with Osman, Yalanca; Merdan, Palazlı; Sebahattin, Narlıköy; summer 2012.

81 Narrated by my late paternal grandfather Şerafettin.

82 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 174.

to fight against the 13,000 ELAS forces. ELAS was defeated. As a result, they agreed to sign the Varkiza Agreement (February 1945) to disarm.[83]

However, while ELAS surrendered only part of the weapons, which were not in good condition, they hid the rest in mountainous caves. Around 4,000 members fled to Yugoslavia. By 1946, with support from Tito and other Balkan communist parties, the Communist party led by Zachariades established a regular army of communists -DSE - under the command of Vafiadis. They started attacking gendarmerie stations and National Guard Units and sparked the Civil War.[84]

The Civil War was a dark period for all inhabitants of Western Thrace regardless of ethnic identity. The communist guerillas sheltered in the highlands. The most violent battles between the guerillas and the royal army forces were fought there. Therefore, the highlanders suffered much more than the lowlanders. They were vulnerable to hunger and armed clashes which took many lives and caused immense suffering. The lowlander rurals were squeezed in between the communist guerillas who came and took their food and livestock at night, and the gendarmerie who came to punish them as collaborators in the morning.

The communist guerillas had a stronghold in Greek Macedonia where they were supported by the Macedonian Slavs. They were promised an independent state. In Western Thrace, neither the highlanders nor the lowlanders collaborated with the communist guerillas except for reasons of survival. Belli praises the Rhodopean highland village Hebilköy for their voluntary participation in the battalion[85], however this is questionable taking his position into consideration as a Commander (Captain Kemal) in the guerilla army.

The rurals cooperated with the guerillas in order to survive and for humanitarian reasons. Voluntary participation was marginal. Even volunteers were claimed not to be influenced by communist ideology but benefit-seeking persons. For instance, a certain man from the highland

83 Ibid., 176.

84 Ibd., 189.

85 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 217.

village of Memkova is claimed to have voluntarily joined the guerillas motivated by their promise to appoint him the governor of the region after the war.[86] A certain Hüseyin and his wife Nursiye from Şahin were among volunteers. Hüseyin was the district governor of the communist parastate in the highlands and his wife the inspector of highland minority schools.[87] Some other volunteers were reported to be very poor and/or mischievous.[88] For instance, Merdan narrated that some Pomaks participated voluntarily to steal from villages as he saw a few of them in guerilla uniforms in Palazlı taking food and items by force. [89]

5.3.1 *Highlanders' Experiences during the Civil War*

The highlands, home to predominantly Pomak-Turks, were, in Belli's words, the 'emancipated region'.[90] The guerillas established an autonomous government in the highlands with headquarters in two zones along the Greek-Bulgarian border. The first one was the northeast of Komotini encompassing the villages of Sarakini, Kardamos, Drania, Kimi, Drosini, Vyrisini, Organi, Ragada, Smigada, Esochi, Mirtiski, Vourla, Chloi, Kechros and Mikro Derio extending to Evros. The second zone was the north of Ksanhti comprising the villages of Dimario, Kotyli, Pachni, Melivia, Thermes, Medousa, Kotani.[91]

They had a constitution and an army (DSE). They established a 'People's Committee', similar to the executive organ in democracies. The head of the Committee was a Commissar. The DSE Headquarters called it

86 RahmiAli&Tevfik Hüseyinoğlu, 1946-1949 *Yunan İç Savaşında Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı*, 2009, 125.

87 Ibid., 319; Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 86.

88 Ibid.,142;

89 Interview with Merdan, Palazlı, summer 2012.

90 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 56

91 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 251.

the 'Organization of People's Rule'. Accordingly, each village was ordered to set up a 'People's Committee' composed of seven regular and five reserve members. The members would be elected by the People's Assembly (like Parliament).[92] The People's Committee was responsible for the administration of all aspects of life in the village; education, welfare, public property, resources and taxation. The villagers were subject to taxation which was at the maximum level 15% on individual income or production. The poor were not taxed.[93]

'People's Court' was the main mechanism of the judicial system. It was composed of three elected members of the People's Assembly and a Commissar assigned with the task of a Prosecutor. Moreover, there were two Courts of Appeal; in northern Ksanthi and northern Komotini. People's Justice Legislation was translated into Turkish. All kinds of crimes or issues of conflict from landownership to theft could be brought to the Court. For the crimes against the rule of Democratic Army, court-martials were established.[94]

Featherstone et.al argue that the Peoples' Courts' adjudication on a secular basis frustrated and upset the conservative Muslim communities who had been managing their family issues based on Sharia Law.[95] It is important to clarify that there is no specific article on the implementation of *Sharia Law* in Lausanne but the settlement of issues concerning the family "in accordance with the customs of those minorities" (Article 42) The implementation of Sharia law was already circumvented by the Greek Civil Code anyway.

Several implementations of Sharia such as polygamy and punishment of theft with amputation and of adultery with death were never implemented in Western Thrace post Lausanne or probably before(except for polygamy) because Ottoman Empire did not implement Sharia in the

92 Ibid., 252.

93 Savaş Bulletin, 19 June 1948, cited in Featherstone et.al, p.252.

94 Featherstone et.al, 2011, 254.

95 Ibid.

dogmatic way.[96] Furthermore, neither in Belli's narrations nor in others in this research or that of Ali&Hüseyinoğlu are there any expressions of disappointment or frustration about the secular Court decisions concerning the issues of family law.[97]

Featherstone et.al cite Belli's narration on the prevention of *falaka* as punishment as an example. Apparently, the People's Court in Mehrikoz punishes a young villager with *falaka*[98] for an ordinary offence that is not mentioned. A guerilla tries to stop it, explaining that the punishment is against the rules of a democratic government. In the words of Belli, "It takes a lot of time and effort for him to explain why it is improper."[99]

The villagers' confusion over the disruption is conceivable, given their geographic isolation from the rest of the country, they were still using some primitive methods of punishment. In this respect, it can be argued that the communist rule in the highlands contributed to an understanding about the inappropriateness of these methods that impair corporal health and human dignity.

The communist parastate did not interfere with the highlanders' creed or traditions. They were particularly respectful to women.[100] They did not force them to take off their veils or join their army. On the contrary, they tried to prevent violence against women. For instance, the Court punished males who abused their wives. Ahmetoğlu Hasan from Kato Drosini(Küçüren) was sentenced to one month imprisonment and a fine of 200,000 drachmas for mistreating his wife. Likewise, Bekir Kazım from Kozdere was fined with 50,000 for beating up his wife.[101] The Peo-

96 Nihal Altınbaş, "Marriage and Divorce in the late Ottoman Empire: Social Upheaval, Women's Rights, and the Need for New Family Law", *Journal of Family History*, 1-12, 2014.

97 Narrations of the elderly in this research; Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 2009.

98 The person given the falaka punishment is made to lie down, his legs squeezed between two long sticks by a person, while the other person beats the soles of the feet.

99 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları*, 1998, 107

100 Interview with Fazilet, Fuat, Şehriban Galini; Latife, Iasmos, Hatice, Dokos.

101 Savaş, 20 December, 1947, Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011,254.

ple's Court also ruled over other issues such as dispute over landownership. For instance, a land dispute between two villagers was claimed to be solved justly, annulling the previous decision of the Mufti.[102]

The teaching of modern Turkish language in primary schools was not an entirely new phenomenon in the highlands albeit not on a wide-scale level. There are no narrations in Featherstone et.al or in Ali & Hüseyinoğlu or among that of mine about any disappointment with the teaching of modern Turkish or being called 'Turks' either in daily life or in the newspaper Savaş. On the contrary, one of my narrators, for example, born and raised in Mehrikoz, the Rhodopean headquarters of the Democratic Army, stated that he and his peers were excited and happy to learn the modern Turkish alphabet.[103] Thus, the guerilla movement introduced some modernization into the highlands with an emancipatory potential.[104]

The newspaper (Savaş) in the form of a bulletin in Turkish was issued as a means of propaganda to attract the minority members of highlands and lowlands. Featherstone et.al state that its content was quite different than the bulletin issued in other parts of Greece. While the latter included sophisticated analyses of political and ideological issues, the former included only dialogues between highland and lowland villagers over the significance of the Democratic Army for the Turkish minority, articles of tribute for the DSE fighters including also those from the minority.[105] In the dialogues, the highland villager is depicted as a fervent supporter of the Democratic Army as opposed to the skeptical lowlander.

> Lowlander Villager: You look very confident. What do you think, will this war end soon? Will the nation find peace?
> Highlander Villager: It will end very soon, but only if we do our duty for the fatherland Greece.

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102 Ibid.

103 Interview with Mithat, Komotini, summer 2012.

104 "Introduction" (in) *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (eds) Sibel Bozdoğan-Reşat Kasaba, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.

105 Featherstone et.al, The Last Ottomans, 230.

> Lowlander Villager: What duty?
> Highlander Villager: What duty! For us, the Turkish minority, there is only one route to salvation and this is the victory of democrats. Every Turk who is loyal to his religion, nation and honor has his own share in the struggle by the democrats for the salvation of the people. If your youth take the gun in their hand and go up the mountain and if those who are left behind do necessary sacrifice to help the Democratic Government, and the Democratic Army, then this war will be over.[106]

In another dialogue, the Turkish government is labelled as 'fascist' and immigration to Turkey is discouraged;

> Lowland Villager: Because of the Civil War, life is no longer sweet. Now some Beys in Komotini are advising us to leave for Turkey. The Consul says the same. Some wealthy people believed this advice and have already left Turkey by sea. They say that the tickets are very expensive.
> Highland Villager: I see, they started again with the same old story. Leave your house, your property, your farm, your ox and your vineyard and move out of this beautiful country where your ancestors lived for hundreds of years and where your grandfathers are buried. Go and live as a refugee in a valley in Anatolia without trees, without water. Save yourself from the fascists of Greece to become a victim, a beggar of the fascist government of Ankara.[107]

The impact of the newspaper *Savaş* in the period is questionable, because the level of illiteracy was high (although the number is not statistically available). Even for those who read it, the impact must be, arguably marginal, because the rural minority of the period was ignorant and

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106 Savaş, ıssue 4, 16th February 1948, translated into English and cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 231

107 Savaş, Issue 5, 10 March 1948, ibid., 234.

the few literates were religious and conservative whereas the modernists were anti-communist. For instance, none of my 31 elderly respondents who experienced the period told me that they ever heard about this newspaper.

The narrators stated that in the beginning of the Civil War, the guerillas were nice and friendly to the rurals.[108] They never took food by force because in the highlands food was already scarce.[109] Some of them occupied one or two rooms of the highlanders' houses and within time started to become like part of the family. Fazilet, from Dağkaramusa, who was then a teenager, narrated her experiences:

> The Captain and nine of his men occupied one room in our house. They did not force us to give the room but asked kindly. Sometimes they went to raids or elsewhere and did not show up for days. Some of them used to speak Turkish with us but Greek between themselves. My mother pitied on them and gave them clothes, sometimes tarhana soup. They liked my mother. My aunt, on the other hand, used to despise them. When they returned after days of fighting, she used to say: 'You troublemakers have come again?' and the Captain replied: 'Not for you Hanım(lady) but for the old Hanım we have come' Among them was a young woman, a nurse. My elder sister shared her room and her clothes with her.

The above excerpt underlines that the highlander family accepted the guerillas in their house not necessarily out of fear but for humanitarian reasons as is reflected in the statements 'they did not force us but asked kindly', 'My mother pitied on them and gave them clothes and food', 'My sister shared her clothes and room with the young female guerilla'.

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108 All my (31)elderly narrators who experienced or learnt from their parents; Ali& Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında*, 135, 167, 179,217, 238.

109 Interview with Mithat, Fazilet, Hatice; Belli, *Gerilla Anıları*, 2008**,** 77.

However, the rurals' opinion of and attitude to guerillas reversed as they forced males to fight with them. In the below excerpt Fazilet narrates the day when his father was taken by force along with all other adult males:

> A year later, on a Friday, they ordered the village males and those in the surrounding five or six villages to summon in the mosque. They told the men in Turkish that they would seize the state within five or six months and afterwards they would live together equally and peacefully. In order to achieve it, however, they needed the men in the mosque to join them to fight the final phase. In the meanwhile, the Captain was shaving in our yard. My sister began to cry. The Captain asked my mother why she was crying. "They took her father in the mosque. That is why she is crying." "Stop crying my child" he said and handed her a piece of paper to take to the guerillas in the mosque. My father was released…. Why?... in return for my mother's kindness.[110]

Mithat, originally from Mehrikoz, narrates his encounter with Captain Kemal (M.Belli), during a religious occasion. When he learnt to cite the Qur'an in Arabic script, as was the tradition, his father organized a celebration (*hatim)*in the village. They cooked a meal for the participants, in fact, the entire village. In large cauldrons, rice was cooked with a mix of available herbs, grains and some meat depending on the economic status of the family. Captain Kemal attended the ceremony and gave him a banknote of 10 drachmas as a reward. [111]

On another day in a meeting at the mosque, Captain Kemal proposed the villagers to abduct the Mufti of Gümülcine and bring him to the village in order to serve the rurals. Everyone was stunned and speechless. Mithat's father, who was the village headman, convinced Captain Kemal

110 Interview with Fazilet, Yalanca, summer 2012.

111 Interview with Mithat, Komotini, summer 2012.

not to do that: "The Mufti is not urgent for us. You say that you'll capture Gümülcine soon. Then there is no need to abduct him".[112]

My narrators from highlands and lowlands stated that the guerillas were nice to people until they started losing the battles when they became aggressive, rude and cruel. The clashes intensified in the winter of 1947-1948 and the guerillas lost battles in Alexandroupolis and Komotini.[113] The loss of fighters required the recruitment of additional men. At this point they decided to recruit the adult minority males as well.[114] Belli's entrance into the scene in April 1947 as Captain Kemal would facilitate the plan. The name 'Kemal' was given to him by Lambros, the guerilla leader, who was an exchanged Greek Orthodox from a village of Bursa and a Turkish speaker.[115] He thought it would attract the minority due to its connotations to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. [116]

Captain Kemal began to visit the highland villages with a few other guerillas in his company. Several speculations were made about his identity such as 'a refugee from Turkey, an Armenian, or someone from Bulgaria'.[117] However, he did not succeed in attracting minority males. Within two months of his arrival, he had collected only 30 men.[118] Some highlanders blamed him for the recruitment of males from the minority.[119] However, this was a previously given decision by the guerilla leaders. Belli was absent from the scene for a long while. He was badly injured during an assault and spent months in hospital in Bulgaria to recover.[120]

Among the most fervent fighters, Belli mentions two minority males. The first is Mustafa (aged 30), from a village in the vicinity of

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112 Ibid.

113 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 196

114 Ibid., 197

115 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 41.

116 Ibid.,54.

117 Trakya, 21st July, 1947, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 200.

118 Ibid.

119 Ali& Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 2009, 516.

120 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 200

Şapçı. He is illiterate, landless and single. Belli mentions him as a brave, skillful, and good person, who soon excelled in the Democratic Army and became Platoon Commander. The second is Tahsin Karabıyık, a Muslim Roma, an excellent shooter.[121] On the other hand, some of my narrators and those of Ali&Hüseyinoğlu define both as cold-blooded slaughterers.[122]

The battalion composed of minority males was called the 'Ottoman Battalion' and was established in early 1948. Belli states that the battalion could not be named 'Turkish Battalion' because it also included Greek Orthodox Gagauz (Turkish-speaking), Pomaks and Roma. Therefore, Belli narrates that it was a proper name comprising all although it sounded paradoxical to give the battalion of democracy fighters the name of an empire.[123] The battalion consisted of 500 fighters.[124]

The Ottoman Battalion was based in the villages of Hemetli and Çalabı where they also received military training. It seems that recruitment to the army from the villagers was not forced in the beginning. In addition to voluntary participants, there was also the perception of military service as a duty and the government in the highlands were the communist guerillas. As was narrated by Mithat; "When males reached the age of 17-18, they were enlisted into the Democratic Army. Later, towards the end, they enlisted all healthy males from 17 to almost 60."[125]

It was stated that there was no discrimination or preferential treatment of soldiers on ethnic grounds. A common army uniform was ignored, and the recruits were in their traditional clothes. Desertion from the Ottoman battalion peaked upon the evacuation of highland villages by government order.[126] and during the battle with the Greek army in

121 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları*, 1998, 120.

122 Ali& Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında*, 2009, 336,496-498.

123 Belli 1998, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 216

124 According to Greek government's sources, the number was 1,200. Featherstone et.al claim that the number of 500 given by Belli is the best estimate, *The Last Ottomans,*2009, 204.

125 Interview with Mithat, Komotini, summer 2012.

126 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 104.

Macedonia in late 1948 where the guerillas were defeated.[127] When the deserters surrendered to the Greek army, they were released after giving testimonies, but not recruited by the army. The punishment of desertion from the communist army was death. According to Belli, 'This was the only viable method in the highland conditions'.[128] However, in his memoirs, he mentions only one such execution. Otherwise, he describes a reasonable punishment method:

> Most of the time, when we caught a deserter, we imprisoned him for a few days in bad conditions. Afterwards, if he declared that he regrets his conducts, and promised not to repeat it, we forgave him and allowed him to go to his battalion.[129]

The narrations, however, claim the opposite. Two young Muslim Turk boys abducted from lowland villages of Komotini were caught trying to escape the guerillas. In the highland village of Yassıören, the guerillas ordered two Muslim highlanders to execute them by shooting. Their slogan was "Traitor Turks are executed by voluntary Turks."[130] It was a terrorizing and bitter experience for the entire villagers to be obliged to kill their own folk.

The notorious valley of Maymundere in Ballıca a highland village, a few hours to the lowland commune Yasiköy -was a strategic place for the guerillas in terms of training, meeting, and execution. Deserters and other suspects, some of whom were innocent but victims of slander, were killed in a brutal way without evidence.[131] The most brutal method was tying the culprit to a tree naked with honey spilled all over his body. A number of insects such as bees and ants would bite the man to eat the

127 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 207.

128 Belli, Gerilla Anıları, 1998, 104.

129 Ibid.

130 Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 2009, 106.

131 Ali&Hüseyinoğlu: 2009, 192-194,211; 217,349; Featherstone et.al, The Last Ottomans, 2009, 254; Interview with Mansur, Latife, Yasiköy, Fuat, Fazilet, Yalanca, summer 2012.

honey. Within a week, he would die in extreme pain.[132] It is claimed that there was no amnesty for those suspected to have collaborated with the police or army.[133]

Belli cites the punishment of Hoca Raşid, the imam of Hebilköy. The first allegation against him was that he had overcharged the guerillas for cigarettes, but was forgiven. However, his second act was considered treason. Apparently, he hid a man named Şeytan Emin, collaborator of the Greek royal army. He had secretly entered the village to collect information and sheltered in Hoca Raşid's house. The guerillas broke into his house one night but were not able to catch Şeytan Emin as he'd already fled. In the words of Belli:

> Hoca Raşit was arrested and sentenced to death penalty. The final days of guerilla, the villages are falling one by one. The guerillas do not execute him but tie him to a tree, thinking that the royalists will untie him when they arrive. However, the tree he's tied is very close to the Bulgarian border. The Bulgarian soldiers see him but do not want to intervene with the guerillas. The royalists do not proceed up to that point. The Hodja dies in pain.[134]

On the other hand, there were merciful guerillas who allowed the deserters, rural males taken by force, to return to their villages. A number of minority recruits in the Democratic army deserted at the earliest convenience and surrendered to the Greek army.[135] Fuat narrates his father's flight from guerillas:

> My father and his friend Hakkı made a plan to escape a year after they were conscripted by the guerillas. Hakkı offered the night

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132 Ibid.

133 Featherstone et.al, p.255; Narrations in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, 2009; Narrations in this research.

134 Belli 1998, p.223. For a slightly different version of the story, see Ali& Hüseyinoğlu, p.322.

135 Narrations in Ali&Hüseyinoglu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 519; Interview with Fuat, Yalanca, summer 2012.

> guard a cigarette. While Hakkı was conversing with the night guard, my father moved behind and tied his hands with the help of Hakkı. Then the guard pled them: 'I swear I won't inform you, go wherever you like...but please untie me, because if you don't, the Captain will say that I did not do my duty properly and execute me.' My father untied him and they bid farewell to each other.[136]

A number of elderly respondents compared the Greek Civil War to the armed conflicts between the Kurdish separatist terrorist organization PKK and the Turkish army. [137] Fazilet's narration is illustrative:

> We lived those days my child...squeezed between the guerillas and the government. They collected young men, even teenagers by force to fight for them. Whenever I watch the news on (Turkish) TV, I feel very sad for the killed Turkish soldiers, I cannot hold my tears. Today, 25 Turkish soldiers were killed (she started crying at this point) And those poor people (she means local Kurds) in those villages... They had to leave their villages to survive... just like us during the Civil War.[138]

She narrated her brother's collaboration with the communist guerillas. "My elder brother Ömer was the informant of the guerillas." She said, without using the word 'collaborator'. Here I interrupted to ask: "Was he a communist?" "Oh, no" she replied.

> He did that in order to protect the villagers. He saved so many lives. He collaborated with the guerillas on the condition that they would not recruit any males in the village to fight with them.

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136 Interview with Fuat, Yalanca, 2012.

137 Interview with Merdan, Pazalı; Fazilet, Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012;, Interview with Şaziye Sadıkoğlu, TRT Turkish TV Channel Program "Ömür Dediğin",6th April 2016.

138 Interview with Fazilet, Yalanca, summer 2012.

Her mother was also drawn into this collaboration without knowing. Eventually she ended up in prison in Patra. Fazilet narrates further:

> We used to go to Yasiköy to sell woods and buy sugar, salt, olive oil, soap, rice. One day my mother loaded the donkey with woods and together with my three year old brother Ali, left for Iasmos. Before she set off, my brother gave her a small earthenware pot and told her to take it to Foti's wife because she wanted grape molasses. She gave the pot to her and returned to take it back after she had sold the wood and bought the necessary items. On her way back to the village, she was stopped by the local police. He took the pot, hit it on a rock and saw a small brown bottle with a letter hidden inside. The police immediately yelled at my mother; "You are collaborating with the guerillas??" and took her and my brother to the patrol for interrogation. My mother had carried a letter for Foti's wife from her husband and son, who were among the guerillas in the earthenware without knowing. When Foti's wife was writing a response to the letter, a Greek Orthodox neighbor saw her and informed the local patrol about it. Shocked and speechless, my mother insisted that she did not know anything at all. The police beat up my mother on that night. They also beat up my little brother. What can a three-year old child know? Cruel police... The next day the donkey and my brother were sent to the village in the companion of some villagers. But my mother was absent. Then we learnt that she was taken to the Court in İskeçe. She was ordered to hand her son Ömer over to police and threatened her that otherwise would spend her life in prison. She was sentenced to 101 years and sent to the prison in Patra.

A while after her imprisonment, the remaining of the family abandoned their village and temporarily settled in the mixed lowland village Narlıköy. She narrates the final episode of the clashes between the guerilla and royal army :

> When the guerillas started to lose fights, they became merciless in the village. My brother Ömer and his friends made a plan to escape. They secretly told the villagers to be ready to escape the following night. He went to the guard Pavli and misinformed him saying that the soldiers were coming to the village at night and that they had better hide in the coal mine up in the hills. The guard informed the rest of the guerillas and altogether they hid there. At night, we all escaped, some with their cows loaded with quilts, some others only with their clothes on. The andartes (guerillas) must have come to the village a long while after we left. When we were approaching Narlıköy, we could hear their screams in Turkish, "Ömer...even if you hide in the horns of an ox, we'll find you".

While her family and the villagers temporarily settled in Narlıköy, Ömer hid in Komotini. After a while, he fled to Turkey. At first, he had to stay in the refugee camp in Kesan. Afterwards, he was sent to Kayseri where he lived until the Civil War was over. Then he came back to Greece and did his military duty. He is an example of a number of Western Thracians who immigrated to Turkey and returned to Greece when the Civil War ended.

After three years in prison, her mother was released upon amnesty granted to the prisoners who expressed regrets for having involved in guerilla warfare.[139] Below she narrates her correspondence with her mother through letters which were read and written by a Greek Orthodox doctor in prison and a Turkish speaker Greek Orthodox lady from Anatolia in Narlıköy:

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139 In March 1950, martial courts were abolished, death penalties softened and a considerable number of leftist prisoners were released. Peter Siani Davies & Stefanos Katsikas, "National Reconciliation after Civil War: the case of Greece, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46, No. 4, July 2009, 559-575, 563.

> My mother did not know Greek. She only knew Turkish. In the prison, she learnt how to knit laces because she had a lot of spare time (laughs...) She was busy all the time in the village because life was difficult. She befriended with the prison doctor, a young woman. She gave the laces to her to put in her dowry. The doctor, in return, secretly brought her a boiled egg every morning. She asked her to write her letters via another Greek prisoner who knew Turkish and could translate her words into Greek. She prayed for that doctor until she died at the age of 108. When we received the letters, I went to the neighbor-a Greek Orthodox lady from Turkey - to read and translate them to me into Turkish and write responses in Greek. She was such a nice woman.[140]

The narration reveals the solidarity between the Muslim Turks and the Greek Orthodox communities in all spheres from prison to the village and the prevalence of Turkish language not only in Western Thrace but elsewhere in Greece where Anatolian Greek Orthodox refugees were settled.

In the rest of the narration, the exchanged lady in Polianthos narrates their story of painful flight from Anatolia. Like Hariton's wife, [141] she warns Fazilet that they might have to suffer the same fate one day.

> My child, even if you do not, your children or grandchildren will suffer what we have suffered. While trying to escape Kemal's men, many of us drowned in the gulf of İzmir. The surface was covered with hats. We escaped through the mountains to Thrace. I was with my sister's son, my two sons and daughter. We had no money, no food... My two sons were little children. They got sick and died on the way.[142]

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140 Interview with Fazilet, summer 2012.

141 Chapter 4 154.

142 Interview with Fazilet, Yalanca, summer 2012

Towards the end of the Civil War, by April 1949, villages were evacuated by the Greek army to deprive the guerillas of shelter and food and to save rurals from armed clashes between the guerillas and military.[143] The highlanders had to move to safer zones in the middle-line and lowland villages. The guerillas were dismayed as they were deprived of basic supplies and manpower. [144] The already ruined Democratic Army was cleared up by summer 1949 through a serious of operations by the Greek army. The remaining survivors of the DSE fled to Bulgaria, along with the few Muslim survivors who sought refuge in countries of the Communist Block.[145]

5.3.2 *Lowlanders' Experiences during the Civil War*

Compared to the highlanders, the lowlanders were in a much better condition during the Civil War. For the guerillas, they were source of basic supplies, food, money and in the final stage men to fight. Nonetheless, the lowlanders were also squeezed in between the communist guerillas and the government authorities; the police and the royal army. During the night, the guerillas would raid the villages collecting food, clothes and other necessities. During the day, however, the police came to interrogate the villagers and punished them for aiding the guerillas.

For instance, in Kırköy, a group of guerillas raided the village one night and loaded three carts with food and animals and took by force 950,000 drachmas. They made two men form the village carry them to

143 For instance, the highland village of Kavacık, consisting of ten households then, entirely emigrated to Narlıköy, where a patrol was stationed. Batıbey, *Ve Bulgarlar Geldi*, 2000, 148.

144 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 104; Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 213; Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, 195, 232.

145 Peter Siani Davies & Stefanos Katsikas "National Reconciliation" 2009, 563; Featherstone et.al mention 56 or 70 Muslims that fled to communist countries, *The Last Ottomans,* 214, footnote 48.

the forest. They were blindfolded for hours during the way up to the mountains and on their return accompanied with a watchman while they brought the empty carts back. When the villagers informed the local patrol about the incident, the commander of local troops ordered them to simulate the event. Then they beat up Salih Mehmet Hüseyin, the cart driver taken by force by the guerillas. [146] Had the poor man not obeyed the guerillas, he would have been killed. Because he obeyed them, he was beaten by the police.

A number of narrations in my research and that of Featherstone et. al reveal that the Greek state did not trust the minority.[147]The minority conscripts who fought bravely for Greece just a few years ago had not changed their perceptions. Nonetheless, they recruited Muslim males to fight in the royal army against the communist guerillas. The incident below narrated by Emin Kadiroğlu and also my paternal grandmother who experienced it as a teenager illustrates the government's distrust in minority rurals.

> In the afternoon of December 31st, 1947, my father Kadir Efendi, primary school teacher of the village Megapisto had closed school for holiday and we were on our route to Komotini. Down under the village of Çepelli on the railway, we heard a blast. Apparently the train carrying Greek soldiers had hit a landmine previously laid under the rails. Suddenly shootings from the train were targeted at us. We hid in a trench along the road. A group of soldiers approached us and the peasants working on their fields. They separated the Greeks and released them. They started beating us arbitrarily. Soon we were taken to the patrol in Gümülcine. We, the children were locked in a separate room. We weren't even allowed to go to the toilette until we started to urinate. We were released the next day. My father and the rest of adults were kept in the patrol a week. They asked for a bailsman

[146] *Trakya*, 23 June 1947, nr.316; Narrations of participants who experienced this period.

[147] Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 193

> from my father and others. They gave the name of the Minority Education Inspector Miniadis Efendi and the Komotinian minority MP Osman Üstüner. Miniadis Efendi bailed for the teachers and Osman Üstüner for the rest of the people. This is how they were released.[148]Among those people were my paternal grandmother's father, the then village headman of Müselimköy.[149]

Like the highlanders, the lowlanders also stated that the guerillas were very nice to them in the beginning.[150] My maternal grandmother narrated that when the guerillas first came to their house, they took two sacks of wheat and gave them a piece of paper to show the next raiders so that they will not take food again. Indeed, many households were given papers stating that whatever was taken as loan from people to be paid back when the Democratic Republic was established.[151] However, towards the final phase, they raided the villages more often and forced the villagers to give all food available without any written or oral commitment to pay it back.[152] In contrast to Belli's claim that 'Some of them gave it as tax whereas the others as donations', [153]my narrators stated that gave them because they were scared.

The real terror for the rurals was when the guerillas started taking males by force to fight with them. Some of them were able to escape. In some cases, a Greek Orthodox acquaintance in the guerilla group helped them escape.[154] My maternal grandmother narrates:

> One night a group of four guerillas took my father Yusuf, a veteran of Greek-Italian war, to fight with them. A Greek Orthodox

148 "The narrator Emin Kadiroğlu", Ali& Tevfikoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında***,** 360.

149 Narrated my paternal grandmother.

150 Narrations of participant elderly in this research; Narrations in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu 2009.

151 Bellli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 77; Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 100

152 Narrations in the lowlands.

153 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 77.

154 Mahmut Oğlu Hüseyin, Yeniköy, Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 2009, 349; Hasanoğlu Yakup, Sarancina, 261; *Trakya,* 5 April, 1948, nr.352

local among them turned out to be his acquaintance. During their march to the hills, he pushed him back and whispered to his ear to escape when he attracted the attention of others to something else. He managed to escape and come home safely.

One night they broke into my paternal grandfather's house and took him to fight with them when he was seventeen years old. His father, Hüseyin, the village headman, ran after them. Apparently, he convinced them to release his son by referring to the philosophy of communism.

> I do believe that you will win this war and establish a democratic regime. But then, you educated, smart persons, you will become senior administrators, ministers, scientists... However, my son is ignorant, he won't be of any use to you...But as the only child I have, he will take care of me and my old wife... but if you take him, we'll die in misery. Doesn't your (communist) system prioritize people?[155]

Unfortunately, not everyone taken by force was as lucky. Our widow neighbor Ayşe's fifteen-year-old son was abducted one afternoon when she was not at home. Like many families whose men were taken by force, Ayşe resorted to Greek authorities to find him.[156] but could not. In the village of Yalanca, for instance, out of forcibly taken five males, one of them was missing, another was killed during a fight in the democratic army, whereas three were able to return safely.[157]

The Greek state had an ambivalent attitude towards the minority rurals. On the one hand, they mistrusted them. On the other hand, minority males were enlisted in the organization of rural security units formed

155 Narrated by late my grandfather (died 2005).

156 Narrations in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu 2009; Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 273-277.

157 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

by the government under the abbreviated name of MAY.[158] The MAY units were entrusted with keeping night guards at key points such as railways or bridges in the vicinity. Yusuf narrated two incidents when he was taken to the local patrol for failing to fulfill his responsibilities. In each case, he was released from prison by the help of his Anatolian Greek Orthodox friend Hacı Kiryaku in the neighboring village. His narrations below reveal the sense of solidarity, cooperation between the two communities, as well as the prominence of clientelism as a survival strategy:

> On the first occasion, me and my friend Mümin were on duty with rifles on our shoulders. We were around the main road, watching for guerillas. No one was in sight. It was almost evening. We got hungry and went to the village coffeehouse to eat, but we also drank a small bottle of rakı. Feeling tipsy, we totally forgot about the duty and went home to sleep. In the early morning when I woke up to milk the sheep, I saw two soldiers approaching the house. Mümün was able to escape, but they brought me to the prison in Komotini. Hacı Kiryaku, my childhood friend, heard about it and sent his son to the prison. 'Don't worry.' the boy said. 'My father will have you released from the prison. He's having rakı and dinner with the officer tonight.' I was released at dusk. On another occasion, I confused the day of my duty and failed to conduct it. Again, I was taken to prison the next day. This time I was going to be severely beaten. Once again, Hacı Kiryaku had me released. He was such a dear man....He had come from Anatolia. He did not know Greek at all. Whenever he was called to the court to testify, he did it by the help of a Turkish-Greek translator.[159]

158 Monades Asfalies Ipethrou/Rural Security Units, Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans* 2011, 217.

159 Interview with Yusuf, Melikli, summer 2012.

Solidarity peaked between the local Greek Orthodox and Muslim Turks in mixed villages. There were Greek women who participated in the DSE voluntarily and were encouraged to do so based on communism's emphasis on 'gender equality' and 'emancipation of women'.[160] However, the DSE also recruited Greek women by force although they did not recruit Muslim women.[161] Some lowlander females who lived in mixed villages narrated that the local Greek Orthodox neighbors asked for *ferace* and *veil* to cover their daughters to look like Muslims in order to protect them. Sometimes the Greek Orthodox neighbors sent their daughters and young women to their Muslim neighbors' houses to spend the nights.[162]

There are no narrators in my fieldwork who had any sympathy to the communist ideology or the guerilla warfare. As stated by Featherstone et.al, "Few Muslims shed tears for the DSE's defeat".[163] Their relations with the guerillas were shaped by fears and/or humanitarian concerns. The latter is revealed by narrations of people who offered meals to guerillas because they were hungry or treated a wounded guerilla at home to save a man's life.[164]

Featherstone et.al explain the minority's passivity during the Civil War with reference to religion (Islam), lack of groupness, traditionalism, ignorance (or very low education level) which are antithetical to the communist ideology as well as the anti-communist attitude of kin-state Turkey.[165] Their level of ignorance is eloquently articulated by Featherstone et.al , " Those who experienced the period do not even know today what the guerillas had fought for."[166] This is also affirmed by the narrators in this research. The anti-communist stance of Turkey is also stated by

160 Demokratikos Stratos bulletin, Issue 4, April 1949, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 207.

161 Interview with Fazilet, Fuat, Şehriban, Merdan, 2012; Belli, p.86.

162 Interview with Ayşe, originally from Yasiköy, in Yalanca; Latife, Yasiköy, summer 2012.

163 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 215.

164 Interview with Fazilet, Galini; Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında*, 2009, 498

165 Featherstone et al. , *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 52-53.

166 Ibid., 53

Belli,[167] who adds another significant factor, 'the suppression of the minority for long years that deprived them of agency.[168]

Lack of groupness, on the other hand is a consequence of geography which divides the minority as highlanders and lowlanders with little or no means of transportation and communication in that period. Linguistic differences between the Pomak speaking highlands and Turkish speaking lowlands is mentioned as another factor that aggravated lack of groupness. The latter is not as tangible as the former though. A significant number of Pomak males could speak Turkish as they had done their military duty and/or fought in the Ottoman army and also not all highlands were Pomak-speaking.

There was also the legacy of at least seventy years of recurrent wars since 1877-8 Ottoman-Russo war, followed by Balkan wars (1912-1913), the World War I (1914-1918), guerilla activities between 1919-1922 against Greece, the Second World War and the Bulgarian occupation (1941-1944) which had traumatized the rurals already. They were simply weary of wars. Moreover, the absence of a promise of autonomy or independence in Western Thrace, unlike in Macedonia, could have been another reason of passivity. However, even if such a promise existed, it is not very likely to be strong incentive for active engagement in the Civil War, because a previous struggle for independence in 1913 had ended in annexation to Bulgaria.

§ 5.4 Internal Migration to Lowlands

One of the most significant social implications of the civil war period was displacement, in other words, internal and external migration. The highlanders were driven away from their villages to the lowlands and

167 Belli , *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 79.

168 Ibid.

some lowlanders moved to the towns of Komotini and Ksanthi. Others fled to Turkey. Some of the internal immigrants brought their animals with them. However, the mountain goats did not survive because the ecology of lowlands was not suited to them.[169] Others fled barefoot. They did all kinds of labor to sustain their families. They cut and sold wood, worked as porters in the towns, picked up tobacco, hoed, reaped wheat, herded cattle and sheep in the lowlands.[170]

Some lowlanders temporarily moved to the town of Komotini which was safe because it was under government control. They hired rooms and/or houses in the suburban neighborhoods of Komotini and Ksanthi. Those from the closer villages went to their village during the day to take care of their flock and to work on the fields and returned back to Komotini at dusk on their donkeys or oxcarts. Others from far villages also brought part of their flocks with them which they kept on the outskirt pastures of the town.[171]

The highlanders were not always welcomed in the lowlands when they arrived. The highlander immigrant narrators in Yalanca revealed that they were very well received there. However, some of those who arrived in Narlıköy first were refused by the locals who did not want to share their house with them but agreed to do so upon the intervention of the local patrol.[172] For the highlanders in the lowland villages, many things were new. For instance, they did not have Greek Orthodox neighbors in their villages. The only Greek Orthodox they had seen before were the priests in the towns when they descended to the town to sell wood.

They returned to their villages after the Civil War was over. Between April 1945 and September 1947, Greece was granted aid worth $351 million by the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to be

169 Interview with Fuat, Galini, summer 2012.

170 Interview with Hüsmen, Kendavros, August 2017.

171 Narrations of elderly in Yalanca, Narlıköy, Müselimköy, Çepelli, Melikli.

172 Interview with Fazilet, Galini, Sebahattin, Narlıköy, summer 2012.

distributed to the victims of the Civil War.[173] The state provided the returnees with basic supplies such as food, clothes, as well as tools and equipment such as hammers, hoes, doors, windows, cement, bricks to repair their houses destroyed during the fight.[174]

A substantial number of Rhodopean and Ksanthian highlanders moved to lowland villages and the suburbs of Komotini and Ksanthi in the next decades. A number of highland villages were evacuated as a result. However, in the lowlands, they replaced the lowlanders who immigrated to Turkey. They bought the houses of the lowlanders who immigrated to Turkey from mid 1950s to late 1980s.[175] Fuat, originally a highlander, narrates their displacement and regrets for not having settled in the town.

> When we escaped from Kuzoba, we stopped at the village of Bekirli. The local patrol took us to İskeçe. We brought our goats to the closest lowland village of Kireççili and herded them during the day and went back to the town at sunset. We stayed there for three years in the house of Haliddin family. Then we moved to Arabacıköy in 1951 and a few years later to Yalanca. Before the Haliddin family immigrated to Turkey, they asked us to buy their two-storey house. They didn't even urge us to pay the whole price immediately as we did not have much money with us, but told us that we could pay it later. They immigrated to Turkey without selling their house. The house is still there, abandoned...The stupid Balkan mentality...we did not know the value of the town then...we'd grown up with the goats on the hills.[176]

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173 The aid was in the form of food supplies, construction materials, fertilizers, fuel, cattle, and agricultural machinery, cited in Featherstone et.al, p.269.

174 Narrations of highlander immigrants to the lowlands; Featherstone et.al, The Last Ottomans, 2011, 268-271.

175 Interview with Fuat, Fazilet, Şehriban Yalanca; Mansur, Latife, Yasiköy Sebahattin, Mümtaz, Narlıköy, Hediye, Müselimköy, summer 2012.

176 Interview with Fuat, Yalanca, 2012.

In order to deter Bulgarian demands on Greek Thrace based on their claim of kin (Pomaks) who live there, the Greek government banned the speaking of Pomak language. Therefore, the Pomak settlers in lowlands tried their best to learn Turkish and avoid speaking it due to fear of the police. Linguistic assimilation was therefore inevitable as a result of both government ban and settlement in lowlands where the vernacular language was Turkish. Berna from Ruşanlar narrates:

> My grandparents 'native tongue was Pomak. When they had to flee from the Rhodopean highland village Musacık during the Civil War, they were temporarily settled in a lowland village. The Greek soldiers told them that they were not allowed to speak Pomak language. Then they had to learn Turkish. In fact they learned it voluntarily because they were scared of both Bulgarians and Greeks. They had suffered a lot under Bulgarian rule and they were scared of Greeks. My parents speak Turkish as their mother tongue but can understand and speak Pomak as well. We also partially understand Pomak but we cannot speak it at all. Our children now can neither speak nor understand the Pomak language.[177]

§ 5.5 External Migration during the Civil War

Thousands of minority members immigrated to Turkey in the Civil War period for reasons of safety, or physical survival. A second reason was evasion from conscription to the Greek army.[178] Migration was carried out in illegal ways via swimming or walking (in some shallow part)

177 Berna, Ruşanlar, summer 2016.

178 Communication of Government General of Thrace, Directorate of Political Affairs, Xirotyris, to the Foreign Ministry Departmentof Turkey, 28 April 1948. On 20th April 1948,

of the river Evros or by boats from the coasts of Gümülcine(Porto Lagos, Fener, Nuhçalı) and Dedeağaç to Gökçeada[179] It resembles the current human trafficking with boats loaded with illegal immigrants that often result in human tragedy. This kind of an illegal immigration was quite expensive and therefore afforded by the relatively better off villagers. Some paid 4 gold Ottoman coins per person,[180] or one high value of Ottoman gold coin.[181] Sometimes the human traffickers (local Greek Orthodox) asked for more gold before they approached the Gökçeada beach.[182]

Turkey was not content with the influx of Muslim-Turk refugees. They were concerned that Greece was deliberately ignoring borders to allow as many refugees as possible to leave the country.[183] Nonetheless, Turkey welcomed them. It is stated in the narrations that after they landed in Gökçeada, they were sheltered, given food, examined by doctors and vaccinated. Then they were sent to İstanbul by ship, to the previously arranged shelter in Sirkeci Train Terminal.[184] The refugees were given two options; they could either settle in the place prearranged by the government or be free in choosing the place of their settlement. In the first option, families were provided with house, food and money to sustain themselves for a year. In the latter option, however, families were only given travel expenses.[185]

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200 people were arrested on a beach waiting the boat, 11 were deserters and 15 were supposed to submit to the Army, Featherstone et.al, The Last Ottomans, 2011, 261.

179 Ibid., 262; Narratives of my own family; Narratives in Ali& Hüseyinoğlu, Yunan İç Savaşında, 2009.

180 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 262

181 "Reşat altın" in the vernacular language is named after the Ottoman Sultan Reşad, narrated by Refiye, my father's aunt, 2012.

182 İsmail Molla (Rodoplu)", the late minority MP, in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, Yunan İç Savaşında, 2009, 450.

183 AYE 1950/52.1 Foreign Ministry, Department of Turkey, the War Office, Army Headquarters-General, 23 March 1948, cited in Featherstone et.al, 2011, 266.

184 "İsmail Molla (Rodoplu)" in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 2009, 448-456; Narrations of my paternal aunt who experienced migration to Turkey and back to Greece.

185 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 263; Narrations of my family; Narrations in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, Yunan İç Savaşında, 2009.

RURALS

The Greek state had an ambivalent attitude to the illegal migration of the minority in the Civil War period. The regional administration of Thrace seems to be against their exodus due to reasons related with the regional economy. After all, they were tobacco growers and it was the most profitable agricultural produce. Furthermore, some of them were indebted to the Agricultural Bank of Greece.[186] There were reported cases of human traffickers who had made a lot of gains, some of whom were caught and punished by the police. The government took measures to prevent illegal immigration at Evros border.[187]

On the other hand, the Minister of Public Order, Konstantinos Rendis, in his communication to the Aliens' Centre-General of Macedonia-Thrace, requested to take all necessary measures to facilitate the migration of the minority, in his original words "the population of foreign ethnic origin- allogenon", because it was necessary for 'national interest'.[188] Likewise, the Minister of Navy, in July 1949, asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to "[…] tolerate silently the illegal immigration of Pomaks, because, due to their weak character, they are easy prey for the KKE recruiters and the subversive instruments of (communist) bands".[189]

A considerable number of the refugees returned to Greece, Western Thrace, from the second half of 1948 on.[190] Some of them were sent back by Turkey after temporary residence in the refugee center in Edirne. Being obliged to return to Western Thrace was a tragedy for those who had sold their houses and land before migration. Kuru Salih, an orphan, narrates their migration to Turkey and back:

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186 AYE/1950/52.4, Komotini,27 September 1947, Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 265.

187 AYE/1948/28.4 Sub-Prefecture of Orestiada, The Sub-Prefect, to the Government General of Thrace, Orestiada, 29 September 1947, ibid., 265

188 AYE/1950/52.1 , Ministry of Public Order, Aliens' Department,The Minister of Rendis, to the Aliens' Centre-General of Macedonia-Thrace, 6 March 1949, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 266.

189 AYE/1950/52.1, Ministry of Navy, The Minister, Vassileadis, to the Foreign Ministry, 22 July 1949, ibid., 267.

190 Ibid.

> My father, me and my younger sister set off a scary journey on an overfilled boat to the Turkish side of the river Meriç. As the boat was approaching, I stumbled and fell into the sea. A Turkish man on the seashore jumped into the water and saved me. Some women waiting on the seashore took off my clothes and dressed me in new clothes. We were finally taken to the Refugee House in Edirne. I don't remember how long we stayed there. One day, they ordered all refugees to assemble in the yard. A nicely dressed Turkish official told us sadly that they were sending us back because the Civil War was over. People started crying. My father was very upset because he had sold off our house and land. The only happy one was probably me because I had missed my village. My sister was adopted by a wealthy local Turkish family. My father agreed to it because he did not want her to live in misery. After we returned, my father died of agony. Because we had no land, I worked as a shepherd, a laborer, and a construction worker until I retired. I have never heard from my sister again.[191]

Those who voluntarily returned were either disappointed with the conditions they found themselves in Turkey,[192] or they had temporarily immigrated (without selling their property). The Greek state's decision to temporarily stop conscription of Muslims can also be a reason for return migration.[193] Another reason could be related with the properties of the refugees in Thrace as they could not sell them in the conditions of the time. There were already agreements between Turkey and Greece in 1948 for the protection and safety of the migrants' properties in Western Thrace. The issue was further published in newspaper *Trakya* advising

191 Kuru Salih Salih, Karakurcalı(Krovili), Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında*, 2009,499.

192 Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 262; family stories.

193 Ibid., 267.

the migrants to inform the closest Greek Consulate about their properties.[194]

The exact number of minority immigrants to Turkey during the Civil War (1946-1949) is not known. Öksüz cites this number as 17,793 by reference to a non-academic source.[195] The exact number of return migrants is not precise either. The Greek Embassy in Turkey gives the number of return migrants between July 1945 and October 1948 through the border in Edirne as 3020 but it does not include the number of returnees from other parts of Evros.[196] There are many stories of return migration in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu. For instance, the entire population of the lowland village Dikilitaş (Dedeağaç) is claimed to have immigrated to Turkey in 1941 upon Bulgarian occupation and nearly half of them had returned in 1945 after the Bulgarians were gone.[197]

Unfavorable local conditions in their places of settlement in Turkey, income-related problems, the geographical misfit between the immigrants' previous residence and their areas of settlement are among the driving factors for return migration. Apparently, Rodoplu family accepted the Turkish government's place of settlement in the village of Köprübaşı, 25 km to the city of Diyarbakır in southeastern Turkey. Rodoplu, a previous minority MP, describes the village:

> The village was on a steep valley and there were no trees in sight. The soil was full of cracks over the size of a handspan. There was a narrow stream below, which was, as I learned later, a tributary of the river Dicle. Surprisingly, the houses were all new built, single-storey, white-washed and neatly arranged. They did not have

194 *Trakya,* October 1947; *Son Posta* 1948, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans*, 2011, 265.

195 Ahmet Kayıhan, *Lozan ve Batı Trakya: 1913'te ilk Türk Cumhuriyeti*, İstanbul, 1967,32, cited in Hikmet Öksüz, "The Reasons for Immigration from Western Thrace to Turkey, 1923-1959, *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies* 2004, 249-278, 2003, 274.

196 AYE/1948/105.6, Greek Embassy in Turkey, Skeferis, to the Foreign Ministry, Department of Turkey, 27 November 1948, cited in Featherstone et.al, The Last Ottomans, 2011, 267

197 Ali and Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında*, 2009, 519.

> yards. The officials said 'Look! This is your new village, and these are your new houses. Hundreds of acres of land in sight are all yours… You are going to cultivate them. We'll give you horses and cattle.' The village mosque and school were new. Near the stream was a green meadow where horses and cows were grazing.[198]

In the following part of the narration, Rodoplu, then 9 years old, attends the primary school in their new village and is befriended with a boy, a son of the local large-estate owner, or *Ağa* as referred in the village. Together they go fishing in the nearby stream and their friendship strengthens within a short while. Apparently, they have a problem related to language. At this point Rodoplu narrates what he thought as a child:

"Either he didn't speak Turkish like us, or I couldn't understand the Turkish he spoke. They said they were Kurds."[199] The Rodoplu family stayed for three months in the village and then left for İzmir, where they had relatives. Rodoplu states that his father and uncles were unfamiliar with the structure of land; 'yellow and clayish soil with frequent cracks up to half a meter', different than the type of land they had in Western Thrace. My family could not cultivate it. In İzmir my parents found jobs in a tobacco processing factory and I started working as an apprentice at a relative's tailor shop. My mother, in the meanwhile, developed a psychological disorder. In 1952, after the Civil War was over and the Greek state had established order in the region, we returned to our village in Greece."[200]

As a peasant community, immigrants longed for their own habitat in Western Thrace. Therefore, return migration was also driven by emotional reasons of home and belonging.[201] The illegal immigration of my

198 Ibid., 453.

199 İsmail Molla (Rodoplu)", in Ali&Hüseyinoğlu, *Yunan İç Savaşında,* 2009, 454.

200 Ibid., 455-56.

201 An eloquent ethnographic research on the role of emotions in the perception of citizenship and return migration, see Aida İbricevic, unpublished PhD, "Searching for Home and Belonging: A Qualitative Study to Understand the "Emotional Citizenship" of Diaspora Returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina", Istanbul Bilgi University, 2019.

paternal great grandparents to Turkey and their return migration back to Western Thrace is a case in point. As narrated by my father's aunt Refiye:

> In March 1948, my parents, me, my elder brother got on the boat at the beach of Nuhçalı at dusk. My father paid 2 Ottoman gold coins for each of us. There was another family of four on the boat. All through the day and night we were scared that the boat could sink as it moved up and down over the big waves. When we approached the island of Imbros, the Turkish Coast Guards greeted and welcomed us. They asked us how much the boatman charged, whether he overcharged us and treated us well during the voyage. Nobody complained about the travelling costs. The Turkish Guards gave the boatman a sack of rice as an expression of thanks, and a Turkish flag to wave as he approached the port for reasons of security.

The second part of the narration reveals the dilemma of settlement the family was faced with;

> We were immediately taken to İstanbul. At the Sirkeci Gar, we stayed a few days in the barracks constructed for the incoming refugees. The clerks told us that the Turkish state would give us free land and house and we would be exempted from tax for a few years if we settled in Diyarbakır. My father Hüseyin refused the offer because he wanted to be independent. He took us to Bursa. He had heard before that they could work on the farms. Thus we went to a village called Kestel and worked on the farm of Niyazi Çinçin as seasonal laborers. In autumn, when the harvest season ended, we went to İstanbul, to the village of Alibeyköy. My father had a friend there. They were in the Ottoman army and fought in Edirne front during the Balkan Wars. They had built a gecekondu (a shanty house) there. We hired a shanty house with two rooms. My father was in his late 60s, therefore he did not have much chance for employment. Likewise, my mother was in her late 50s. Only my elder

brother Şerafettin, then 18, found a job as food handler in the canteen of the cızlavat[202] factory in Eyüp. I was 13 then. I sometimes worked on the nearby fields as a hoer.

In the final part of the narration, the father decides to return to Greece due to emotional reasons.

> We were never hungry, but we didn't have abundant food like we did back in the village. Life went on for a year until my father surprised us one evening at the dinner table by telling us that the Civil War ended in Greece. The state was back in... security sustained... and added: "we are leaving for Greece soon". My brother was upset. He did not want to return because had got used to his job in the factory, even made friends. I was getting used to it as well, but my mother and father were not happy. Everyday we wondered about what was happening in Western Thrace, in the village. My father frequented the coffeehouses and visited his Western Thracian friends to learn about it. My mother, on the other hand, often complained about the tiny two-room house. We had a two-storey house built only a year before the Civil War broke out. She longed for her house, her garden, and her neighbors. My father was determined. The man who never expressed his feelings had become emotional ever since we left the village. He said: 'If we do not go back now, there might be a time in the future when you will blame me for having brought you here. When you get married and have your own families, you can immigrate to Turkey again... but let that be your decision, not mine.... I am longing for my land. I am an old man…now that death is close. I've had a difficult life ..I have been through years

202 Shoes made of tyres or rubber, usually worn by poor people in the countryside of Turkey (as well as Greece) The production of such shoes out of defected tyres was first started in 1893 by Carl and Wilhelm Gislow in the town of Gislaved in Sweden. Gislaved official website, https://www.gislaved.ca/car/the-brand, last retrieved 06.05.2021.They also opened a factory in Istanbul, Eyüp, which operated until 1974. For details and the social meaning of cızlavat, see Yılmaz Özdil, "Yüreğimiz cızzlavet", *Sözcü,* 22 November 2014.

of wars and oppression. I want to spend my final years in peace in my village, in my own land.[203]

After a few days, they returned to Greece by railway. The Balkan War veteran father Hüseyin lived three more years, this time in peace and long enough to see his first grandchild, my father.

In the period of the Bulgarian occupation and the subsequent Civil War, rurals' survival strategies varied depending on their geographical and socio-economic status. The poor and isolated highlanders had to abide by the rules of the communist parastate until their villages were evacuated by the government and they were settled in lowlands and suburban neighborhoods of towns. Their options for migration were limited as in the northern vicinity there was the communist state of Bulgaria who aided the guerillas and had a notorious historical legacy for the highlanders. Migration-and return migration were the main survival strategies of the relatively better-off lowlanders and town dwellers who chose to migrate to Turkey and return to Greece after the Civil War.

In a similar vein, a considerable number of Bulgarian Greeks who had settled in Greece chose to return to Bulgaria after 1911. Upon returning back to their historical homelands, the Bulgarian Greeks did not renounce their identities. [204] Neither did the Turkish-Muslim minority return migrants. As stated by Dragostinova, these movements of return migration demonstrate that homeland is not always the territory governed by the real or assumed kin nation.[205]

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203 Narrated by Refiye, Istanbul, 2014.

204 Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands,*2011, 61.

205 Ibid., 55.

6

Dissolution of Large Landowners: Five Narratives

The widely held argument is that until the corruption of the timariot system and its eventual demise in sixteenth century, small peasantry was the common form of land tenure in the Ottoman Empire. Yet, there were exceptions such as eastern part of Anatolia, the Çukurova region and some regions in the Balkans. [1]

As the major characteristic of Asian mode of production, the land belonged to the Sultan. He granted the right to use it to the peasantry, in other words, the reaya, for a life-long term under specific rules, to the local ruling elites in return for the maintenance of a group of soldiers *(timariot)* or in the form of appanages to the favorite persons in the palace or among the ruling elite and to certain powerful persons for land reclamation. These were also eligible to be revoked by the Sultan himself.[2]

The Ottoman agricultural landscape is characterized with abundance of land, scarcity of labor, free peasantry and absence of private

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1 *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East,* (eds)Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak, State University of New York Press, 1991, Çağlar Keyder, "Introduction: Large-Scale Commercial Agriculture in the Ottoman Empire?",1-13; Halil İnalcık "The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftliks: State, Landlords, and Tenants", 17-34; Gilles Veinstein, "On the Çiftlik Debate", 35-53; Tosun Arıcalı, "Property, Land, and Labor in Nineteenth Century Anatolia", 123-133.

2 İnalcık, "The Emergence of", 1991, 19; Arıcalı, "Property, Land" ,1991, 124.

property. [3] The owner of the land was the state and the prevalent system of land use was called *çifthane* system. Accordingly, agricultural production was organized on the basis of "peasant households" or "hane(s)". Each peasant household was given a plot of land to sustain themselves in return for which they were responsible for the payment of a yearly rent to the state, the owner of the land. The given plot of land was called "ciftlik" and its size depended on the size of the household. They could be between 60 and 150 dönüms. [4]

Majority of the land belonged to the Ottoman state (miri), to the charitable organizations (waqfs) and the rest to large and small landowners. The state avoided large land ownership for the fear of losing control. Large landowners preferred to rent small portions of their land to peasant families which impeded the development of export oriented farming. The vast amount of land owned by the landed notables in the towns and countryside, a social class called Ayan, was divided and distributed to small Muslim and Christian farmers.[5]

Land ownership was not legally guaranteed until the Land Reform of 1858. Even the Land Code of 1858 did not generate inalienable property rights in the modern sense. In line with the imperial settlement policies, large areas of land were distributed to individuals on the condition of perpetual cultivation. Therefore, they signified usufructuary rights.[6]

There are two opposing views on the emergence of large ciftliks in the literature. The first view assumes that the large landholdings emerged as a result of an attempt to integrate into the capitalist economy, triggered by the European need for crops such as corn, rice, maize and cotton. Consequently, like in Europe, vast ciftlik lands emerged which invested in mono crop farming. A corresponding change occurred in the

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3 Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Küreselleşme, İktisat Politikaları ve Büyüme,* İş Bankası Yayınları, 2007, 30; Eric Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History***,** I.B.Tauris, London, NY, 1994, 60; Arıcalı, "Property, Land", 1991, 132.

4 İnalcık, "The Emergence of", 1991,18.

5 Pamuk, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete*, 2007,14-15.

6 Ibid.,30.

owner-renter (reaya) relationship to the detriment of the latter similar to serfdom.[7] The second view, on the other hand, argues that privately owned ciftliks began to develop upon the deterioration of the timariot system at the end of the sixteenth century corresponding to the periods of decline and decentralization.[8]

İnalcık mentions four types of ciftliks. The first type of ciftliks emerged on waste or unused land (mevat) as a result of land reclamation. The second type emerged during periods of unrest and disorder. The third type was a result of lax administration, and the fourth type due to the change in the system of leasing of state-owned lands during the decline period. [9]

The first type of ciftliks were formed on unused, waste or abandoned land which were outside the areas under the *çifthane* system. Encouraged by the state and subject to special provisions of Islamic law, this was called "reclamation", (*ihya*). The concerned law required the improvement of the waste land by construction of irrigation and its preparation for cultivation. Then the right to property would be assigned by the Sultan's or the imam's authorization by a special document. Such refinement of waste or abandoned land was encouraged by the state to increase the amount of arable land, most of which would eventually be converted into pious endowments for charitable purposes or public use.[10]

After the authorization of conveyance *(temlikname)*, the new status of the land was recorded in the imperial survey book (*mufassal defteri)*. Nevertheless, the free status of the peasantry was guaranteed with a provision that peasant labor would be based on a voluntary basis. Forced labor was prohibited. Peasants' share of the produce was guaranteed by a predetermined proportion in the document. This was the legal

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7 Supporters of this view are Wallerstein 1980; Keyder 1976; İslamoğlu and Keyder 1977; and Sunar 1980, cited in Veinstein, "On the Ciftlik Debate", and Cvijic 1918; Busch-Zantner 1938; Stoianocich 1953, 1960, cited in İnalcık, "The Emergence of Ciftliks", 1991, 24.

8 Ibid., 19

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.,20. Witnesses for the registration of (claimed) land are still valid in Greece.

assurance of sharecropping, common form of peasant labor. Additional source of labor were peasants willing to work outside of *timariot* lands, and runaway or unregistered peasants.[11]

The second type of ciftliks emerged in public lands in periods of unrest and disorder such as the *Celali* uprising*s* in Anatolia at the end of sixteenth century. Abandoned lands of rurals who fled for reasons of safety were acquired by the members of troops directly under the Sultan's command(Kapıkulu) and other prominent figures. Their ownership was later legalized by a justice decree dated 1609.[12] This kind of ciftliks suffered from labor shortage. They were tended by slaves or hired men. They were fenced and used for livestock raising. Livestock raising prevailed over cultivation in these two types of ciftliks.[13]

The third way of ciftlik formation was a consequence of lax administration in the decline period. When peasants failed to pay their debts to the usurers, their possession rights over the miri lands were given to the local notables and military chiefs by the local court decision.[14] Sometimes, unable to pay the inflated taxes, the peasants themselves transferred their rights in return for the right to remain on their land under the protection of the local elite.[15]

A fourth way of the emergence of big farms owes to the change in state-owned lands' leasing. The public lands leased to individuals were previously recorded in the survey books by officials. However, in the decline period due to reasons as administrative inefficiency of book-keeping and/or abuse of the leasing system, particularly under financial constraints, the treasury began to lease a greater number of miri lands to individuals for a life term and afterwards on a hereditary basis (malikane). Consequently, these lands finally became the leasers' (mültezim) private property, making the leasers landlords, and the peasants their

11 Ibid., 21.

12 Stoianovich 1953, 401-02, cited in İnalcık, 22.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Veinstein, "On the Ciftlik Debate", 1991, 42.

tenants. Thus, a new mediator class emerged between the state and the peasants.[16]

In the decline period, the leasing-out system was no longer in the monopoly of the state-treasury. Persons from the ruling class, from the palace, governors and appanage holders became landlords who did not necessarily live on the farm but managed it through their agents from the local elite(kethüda or voyvoda). The notables (Ayan) in the provinces became lease holders, organizing and controlling more public lands and entrenching their status as tax farmers and heads of local mercenary forces.[17] Their primary concern was maximum profit. Consequently peasants were oppressed for cultivation in an aggressive way. This paved the way for the exploitation of peasants and the land. [18]

Contrary to the argument that the Ottoman economy and social structure were transformed from the Asiatic mode of production to the European capitalism, İnalcık argues that the big farms did not develop on the these (leased) lands as such developments were confined to only certain regions.[19] Plantation like ciftliks emerged on fertile lands in proximity to transportation and communication routes. Referring to McGowan, İnalcık states that such ciftliks developed in the Balkans, Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, the Maritsa Valley, Danuban Bulgaria, the Kosovo-Metohija basin, the coastal plains of Albania and parts of Bosnia, and also in the coastal plains of southern and western Anatolia, Egypt and Syria.[20]

There were 2,259 ciftliks in Greece of sizes ranging from 200 to 2,000 hectares (2000 to 20,000 dönüm) in the regions of Thessaly (584), Macedonia (818), Epirus (410), Western Thrace (84) and 363 in the rest

16 İnalcık, "The Emergence of", 1991, 22-23.

17 Ibid., 23-24.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Bruce Mc Gowan, *Economic life in Ottoman Europe : taxation, trade, and the struggle for land, 1600-1800,* 1981,1-44, cited in İnalcık, "The Emergence of", 1991, 25.

of Greece.[21] Depending on the narrations and the relevant information from Ottoman archives and Edirne Salnamesi as translated by Dede in Nokta newspaper series, it can be inferred that the ciftliks in Western Thrace were either timariot lands, or lands given to important members of the Ottoman ruling elite or favorite persons in the form of appanages as well as empty lands eligible for cultivation.

A list of supposedly expropriated Muslim cifliks in the region was published in a non-academic bulletin in 1928.[22] In his semi-academic work, Özgüç mentions 18 Muslim ciftliks in the province of Rhodope expropriated by the Greek state with a total area of 241,500 dönüms, or stremmata in Greek.[23] This list is claimed to have been submitted to the French General Charpy by the then Western Thracian MP Hafız Galip.[24] Osman Nuri reports the confiscation of three ciftliks in the Ksanthian plain; Ferezler Ciftlik of Hacı Ali Bey and his descendants; Ilgın Ciftlik belonging to Hasan and Hüseyin Beys and Çeltik ciftlik of Hasan Ahmetoğlu

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21 Simonide, "L'economie rural grecque et al. crise de la guerre mondial", p.168, (ed) Andre Andreades, Les effets economiques et sociaux de la querre en Grece, Paris and New Haven, Les Presses Univ.de France & Yale Univ. Press, 1928 ; C. Evelpide, Les etats Balkaniques (Paris: Rousseau, 1930),89; George Sevakis and C. pertountzi, "The Agricultural Policy of Greece" in O.S. Morgan, ed., Agricultural Systems of Middle Europe, 1933, New York: AMS press, 1969 ,148; US Department of Agriculture, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, "The Agriculture of Greece", Foreign Agriculture: Review of Foreign Farm Policy, Production and Trade 8 (1944), 82, cited in Dimitrios I.Loizos, "Land, Peasants and State Policy in Inter-War Greece, (1924-1928)", MA Thesis submitted to Kent State University , December, 1983, 39.

22 *Garbi Trakya'da Türk Emlakı,* Trakya Gayrımübadiller Cemiyete Tarafından Tertibolunmuştur, Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaasi, 1928.

23 [1.İmaret Çiftliği (30,000 str), 2.Murhan Çiftliği (30,000str), 3.Çuhacılar ÇİftliĞi (3,000), 4.Songurlu Çiftliği (5,000), 5.Rumbeyli Çiftliği (5,000), 6.Kırçiftliği (20,000), 7.Kurtova Çiftliği (22,000), 8.Küçükkaval Çiftliği (12,000), 9.Büyükkaval Çiftliği (18,000), 10.Anaköy Çiftliği (30,000), 11. Yassıada Çiftliği (3,000), 12. Kaşıkçı Çiftliği (1,500), 13.Cambaz Çiftliği (30,000), 14. Otmanlı Çiftliği (15,000), 15. Şırlağaç Çiftliği (6,000), 16. Yaygın Çiftliği (3,000), 17.Yardımlı Çiftliği (5,000), 18.Delnazköy Çiftliği (3,000)], cited in Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri*, 138., 1974.

24 Ibid.

Çeltikli.[25] These ciftlik lands in total were between eight to ten thousand stremmata.[26]

These vast ciftlik lands were in the fertile lowland zones. The ciftlik owner landlords were called "Bey" or "Ağa", interchangeably. Koutsoukos states that the owner of the ciftlik territory is addressed "Bey" whereas "Ağa" is less pronounced.[27] A number of narrators stated that 'Bey' denoted the large ciftlik owners who lived in the town and were educated, secular and refined compared to ignorant or less educated, conservative Ağas who lived in the village and possessed relatively less land than the Beys.[28]

On the average, peasants in lowland villages owned between 10 to 20 stremmata of land until 1950s whereas in the middle-line villages average landholding per household was between 5-10 stremmata of land due to the rugged and infertile terrain.[29] Therefore, owners of between 60-70 stremmata of land were considered large landholders, esteemed and referred as 'Ağa'. On the other hand, in middle-line and lowland villages, the social status of 'Ağa' depended more on *being native* as they perpetually received immigrants from highlands.

In this section, data on the Thracian ciftliks is derived from the most relevant and recent work of Vassilis Koutsoukos. From a rich blend of state archives, Greek and Turkish academic, semi-academic sources, Koutsoukos identified 95 estates in 1920 in current Western Thrace (between Nestos/Karasu and Evros/Meriç); 43 ciftliks in İskeçe, 28 in Gümülcine, 7 in Dedeagac and Soufli , 7 in Dimetoka, 8 in Nea Orestiada and 2 in unknown locations.[30] However, not all the names and ethnic or religious affiliations of the ciftlik owners are identified.

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25 *Trakya*, 13.04.1953; Vassilis Koutsoukos, "Από την Αυτοκρατορία", 2012, Table 2 in Appendices, 34-39.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Narrations in the region of Western Thrace.

29 Participants narrations lowland and middle-line villagers, summer 2012.

30 Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 76, footnote 195

The ciftliks in the İskeçe region were within the district of Yenice-Karasu. 43 ciftliks were identified here of varying sizes from 740 to 4,000 stremmata. Some of the ciftliks had Turkish names while some others had Greek names. The sharecropper families of nine ciftliks were Muslim families.[31] In Gümülcine, in seven ciftliks, the share-cropper families were characterized as Christian (Orthodox Patriarchate) followed by Bulgarians (Bulgarian Exarchate). [32] One ciftlik was inhabited by Bulgarian families, another of mixed population of Christians and Muslims and one of pure Muslims (Bekirköy ciftlik). In the township of Karaağaç, part of which today is Orestiada in Evros and Karaagaç in Edirne, there were eight ciftliks. One of them was recorded to have a population of Greek, Roma and Muslim Turkophones. In Dimetoka, out of five estates, one was inhabited by Turkophone Muslim families and another of Greek, Roma and Turkophone families.

Several ciftliks were expropriated by Greece for the settlement of Greek Orthodox peoples from Anatolia although it was against the Lausanne Treaty's Convention on Minorities. The resulting friction with Turkey over these issues were settled by the 1930 Ankara Treaty as Turkey accepted the status quo in return for compensation to the landowners.[33] In the list mentioned in the Treaty, the expropriated ciftliks in the region of İskeçe were over 12,240 dönüms and included (Yeni Çiftlik (4,000), Yolcuzade Çiftlik(1,500), Kütüklü Çiftlik (740), Cebel Çiftlik (4,000) and Ferezler Çiftlik (2000). Three expropriated ciftliks were in the province of Dedeağaç(Kumçiftlik), Deli Elya(Deli İlyas, 1700), Demerdeş

31 Ibid., Table 2 in Appendices pp:34-39.

32 The religious categorization (the prominent ethnic market of the time) is based on the registers of the ecclesiastical province of Maronia. Folder 434 "On Thrace" (1876-1882) of Parliamentary Library for the ecclesiastical provinces of Maronia and Didymoteichou and limited oral testimonies collected during the research process, Ibid., 79.

33 Art.16, prg.4 of Ankara Convention, 1930.

(Demircik, 2,400) and Mara (Maraş,500). The agreement does not mention about any expropriated ciftlik in Gümülcine.[34]

In southern Balkans as well as Thrace, the ciftlik is usually within the boundaries of a village. The owner resides in a two-storey house. In the center of the house is the owner's room for male guests *(selamlık*) adjacent to the room for the women *(haremlik).* Attached to the house are the rooms of male and female servants. In the yard stand the stables, the warehouses, an oven, a blacksmith and a short distance from them, the huts of laborers.[35] The ciftlik owner usually lives in the town and delegates the ciftlik's administration to a trusted butler.[36]

The laborers in the ciftliks of Western Thrace were peasants, sharecroppers, permanent or seasonal laborers.[37] Among the permanent laborers were African slaves, particularly from the region of current Sudan[38] and Ethiopia *(Habeşistan*).[39]Their descendants settled in the lowland villages of Ksanthi where they continue to live today.[40] The majority of seasonal laborers or salaried workers of the neighboring estates in the

34 Mübadelei ahali hakkında Lozan muahedenamesile Atina itilâfnamesinin tatbikatından mütevellit mesailin halli için Yunanistanla imza edilen mukavelenamenin tasdikini mutazammın kanun, pp:897-906, p.906. For full text, see https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc008/kanuntbmmc008/kanuntbmmc00801725.pdf, last retrieved 06.05.2020.

35 Cvijic C. (1918), La Péninsule Balkanique: Géographie Humaine, avec 31 Cartes et Croquis dans le Texte et 9 Cartes hors Texte**,** Paris: Armand Colin, 223, cited in Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 76.

36 İnalcık 25; Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 77.

37 Ibid.„77.

38 Veinstein G. (1991), «On the Çiftilik Debate», in Keyder C. & Tabak F. (eds.), *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, Albany: State University of New York Press: 35-53, p.49

39 From narrations in the region.

40 In the interwar period, the Afro-Muslims comprised 0.5% of the total rural Muslim population. Αλτσιτζόγλου Φ. (1941), Οι Γιακάδες και ο Κάμπος της Ξάνθης, Αθήνα: Αγροτική Τράπεζα της Ελλάδος,pp. 47-49, Koutsoukos, cited in Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 79.

valley west of Karasu were Roma.[41] In the plain of Thrace, a series of ciftliks were also rented by Christians from Muslim owners. The new users of the farms hired laborers to cultivate the fields.[42]

The agricultural produce of these ciftliks was not designed to meet the market requirements. They cultivated a variety of crops involving wheat, barley, maize and fruits.[43] Koutsoukos argues that the cultivation of industrial crops such as cotton, tobacco and corn had started in the early to mid-19th century but was probably limited.[44] Cereals were the main crop. The sharecroppers also grew figs, legumes, olives, mulberries, grapes, raisins, and fruit trees for personal consumption. They were also engaged in husbandry, poultry and sporadically apiculture and sericulture.[45] Buffalos were bred to use in cultivation.[46]

Koutsoukos argues that it is not certain whether the sharecroppers directed their surplus production to markets in Thrace, since products for self-sufficiency usually remained less than needed.[47] However, part of the agricultural products of the ciftliks were delivered to the local

41 Αδημοσίευτη διδακτορική διατριβή, Στεφανίδου Α. (1991). Η Πόλη-Λιμάνι της Καβάλας την Περίοδο της Τουρκοκρατίας. Πολεοδομική Διερεύνηση (1391-1912), Πολυτεχνική Σχολή. Τμήμα Αρχιτεκτόνων Μηχανικών, Θεσσαλονίκη: Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, σ. 157, cited in Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 81. The Roma worked as seasonal agricultural labourers in Muslim and Greek fields later and until late 1980s after when a significant number opted for factory labour in Germany and Athens.

42 McGowan B. (1981), Economic Life in the Ottoman Empire: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land,1600-1800, New York & Paris: Cambridge University Press & Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, σ. 79· Παπαθανάση-Μουσιοπούλου Κ. (1974), Οικονομική και Κοινωνική Ζωή του Ελληνισμού τηςΘράκης κατά την Τουρκοκρατίαν, Αθήναι: Ε. Σωτηρόπουλος & Σια., 108, cited in Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 81.

43 Veinstein G. (1991), «On the Çiftilik Debate», in Keyder C. & Tabak F. (eds.), *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, Albany: State University of New York Press: 35-53, 48.

44 Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 82.

45 Ibid., 81.

46 Ibid., 84.

47 Ibid.,.83.

market and to other bigger markets inside and outside the empire. In this case industrial crops were channeled as raw materials production within and outside the empire. Therefore, design and organization of production were made by the commercial and productive decision-makers in urban centers.[48]Also, agricultural innovations and mechanization were observed in this type of ciftliks.[49]

As for the relations between the ciftlik owners and the sharecroppers, the latter was free in the choice and organization of cultivation as long as they participated in the cultivation costs and the share of income for the quantity produced.[50] In addition to this, they were also obliged to pay taxes to the Ottoman administration. The Christians paid taxes to the church as well.[51] Koutsoukos mentions a peculiar relationship between the ciftlik owners and the semi-nomadic livestock owners, particularly the Sarakatsans- the Greek-Orthodox, Greek speaking nomads.[52]

Based on an agreement between the customary landlord and under the leadership of the chief shepherd, they were ceded the fallow land in return for a relevant price. This system continued in the interwar period on farmland in the Greek countryside.[53] During the winter months, the Sarakatsans brought their flocks to pastures, lowland areas east and

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.,84.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Kahl T. (2009), Για την ταυτότητα των Βλάχων: Εθνοπολιτισμικές Προσεγγίσεις μιας Βαλκανικής, Πραγματικότητας, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Βιβλιόραμα, 280-307, Ibid., 83. The Vlachs or Aromanians in Greece used to be nomadic groups until they were settled in lowlands by Greece. Their mothertongue is a Latin-based language and are regarded co-ethnics by Romania. Like Vlachs, the Sarakatsans used to be nomadic and breed livestock. However, they are Greek-speaking and therefore considered Greek. "Sarakatsan" is derived from the Greek word "Skenitai", meaning tent-people. Harris Mylonas, *The politics of Nation-building,* 2012, 137. A Turkish view considers them Turk-Yörüks (Turk nomads) who converted to Orthodox Christianity.

53 Χασιώτης Σ. (1924), Η Γεωργία εν Ελλάδι: Γενική Επισκόπησις, Εν Αθήναις: Υπουργείον Γεωργίας, 4-5, cited in Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 82.

west of Evros. In the spring, they led their flock to the plains of northern side of Rhodope.[54]

In the period from the declaration of Tanzimat Reforms (1839) until the outbreak of the Balkan Wars (1913), a significant change in land regime was the emergence of non-Muslim ciftlik owners. These were (native or not) powerful economic and political members of the local economy.[55] In 1867, the foreigners were granted the right to landownership.[56] The acquisition of ciftliks by powerful capitalists which kept the institution of sharecroppers intact became a widespread transaction in several regions of the Balkan territories of the Empire including Thrace, too.[57]

Upon the urging of the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Panslavistikis Company (1867), the wealthy Greek Orthodox Grecophone residents of Gümülcine allotted significant funds to acquire land in Thrace, buying estates in the countryside of Şapçı and Gümülcine.[58] In this regard, Lambros Komninos bought the ciftlik of (Susurköy) and Constantine Skuteris and Eleftherios Telonidis the *Kır Çiftlik* which was inhabited by Bulgarians.[59] On the eve of the Balkan wars, S. Spyropoulos and K. Zokoglou appeared as the owners of the ciftliks in the region of Gumulcine.[60]

Prior to the eruption of the Balkan wars, some big ciftlik owner Muslims had already sold their property and moved to Istanbul.[61] A few years later, Dragoumis, the Greek vice-consul of Dedeağaç, suggested to the Greek Government to buy the ciftliks in the countryside of Dedeağaç for the settled patriarchal Grecophone population.[62] In a similar vein, the

54 Maunsell F. R. (1906), "The Rhodope Balkans", The Geographical Journal, 28(1),17,cited in Koutsokos, 82.

55 Ibid., 84-5.

56 Pamuk, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete*, 2007,15.

57 Koutsoukos, "Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 85.

58 Ibid.,86.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 87.

62 Ibid.

Bulgarian residents of the region had urged the Bulgarian government to buy estates there and in the region of Edesa. [63]

During the first Bulgarian rule in Western Thrace (1913-1919), many wealthy Muslim ciftlik owners sold their lands to Christians and immigrated to Turkey.[64] As a native inhabitant in a Ksanthian lowland village, Ömeroğlu made a similar argument, claiming that the amount of dissolved ciftliks prior to 1950 were much more than those after 1950.[65] Nevertheless, by the end of 1930, there were 41 ciftliks with Muslim owners in Thrace.[66] Koutsoukos argues that in Greek Thrace a number of ciftliks that had been established during the late Ottoman rule remained intact until 1950. Gudelis mentions the expropriation of ten ciftliks in 1950. Among them were the seven ciftliks owned by Greek Orthodox and two by Muslims in the plain of Gümülcine.[67]

A second reason of the loss of ciftliks was the inability of the owners to pay their mortgage loans. In early twentieth century, a number of American tobacco companies opened branches in Greece and established partnerships with local stakeholders and occupied farmlands. For instance, Büyük Kaval (Megalo Kaval) cifltlik in Gümülcine, was lost this way. It was purchased by the American Gering Tobacco Company and Ioannidis Brothers.[68] However, the same ciftlik, referred as *Kaval Kışlağı*, is claimed to belong to the Muslim Turks.[69]

In the interwar period and early 1950s, through land reforms, migration and other reasons, a number of Muslim ciftliks were dissolved. From a Marxist perspective, Ömeroğlu argues that neither Greece nor Turkey wanted a wealthy, powerful landed minority class. In this regard,

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63 Ibid.

64 S.Gudelis, (1991). Schésis hristianón ke musulmánon stin ellinikí Thráki. Komotini, Ekloyi, Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 54.

65 Interview with Aydın Ömeroğlu, summer 2012.

66 Koutsoukos, "Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, 87.

67 Γουδέλης Σ. Δ. (1991), Σχέσεις Χριστιανών και Μουσουλμάνων στην Ελληνική Θράκη, Κομοτηνή, 63, Ibid., 86.

68 Ibid., 85

69 *Garbi Trakya'da Türk Emlakı*, 1928, 11.

both the Greek Orthodox bourgeoise of Istanbul and the large ciftlik owners of Western Thrace were considered impediments against the development of state capitalism,[70] for which the nationalization (in ethnic terms) of capital holders was necessary.

This intention was revealed in 1950 report of Aliens' Centre-General in Thessaloniki, proposing the purchase of ciftliks via state funds, as cited and translated by Featherstone et.al:

> Many Muslim owners of large estates wish to leave and permanently settle in Turkey, but they cannot find buyers for their property. From a national point of view, it would be desirable to facilitate them so that their estates could eventually come under the ownership of the state, the Agricultural Bank or Greeks of known patriotic beliefs. This way, alien financial centers, around which the Turkish minority actively rallies, will be gone.[71]

A third reason for the dissolution of ciftliks was the simultaneous political developments of mid 1950s; the agrarian reforms in 1952, the exodus of the remaining Turkish-Muslim large landholders post 1955 due to several reasons.

Another reason was the extravagant lifestyle of ciftlik owners. Their habits of alcohol consumption and gambling pushed them into serious amounts of debt. They had to liquidate their property gradually in order to pay it. This will be elaborated on the next section composed of narratives.[72]

A clandestine strategy to foment political uncertainty among the Muslim-Turk ciftlik owners was put into stage by some local state agent Greek Orthodox males. They spread the rumors that their lands would be

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70 Aydın Ömeroğlu, *Batı Trakya Türkleri ve Gerçek-I,* Avcı Ofset, İstanbul, 1994, 9-10.

71 AYE/1950/52.1, Aliens' Centre-General of Macedonia-Thrace, 2nd Office, to Ministry of Public Order, Aliens'Directorate General, 24 August 1950, cited in Featherstone et.al, *The Last Ottomans,* 2011, 267.

72 Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlu and Aydın Ömeroğlu, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

expropriated at low prices, and it would be wise to sell them at better prices in advance.[73] They tried to convince them to sell by offering high prices for their ciftliks.[74] Consequently, political uncertainty combined with good prices for the property induced many of the remaining big landowners to sell their lands and immigrate to Turkey.

In times of political uncertainty and possible or real conflicts, the rich are usually the first to migrate. For instance, when the city of Anchiolaos, which inhabited part of Greek Orthodox minority in Bulgaria, was plundered and burned by the local mobs as a retaliation for the conflict in Macedonia, the rich were the first to migrate to safer cities such as Constanza, Edirne, and Istanbul. [75] In a similar vein, in Greek Macedonia, for instance, by 1910 many Ottoman Turk landlords had the same fear and started selling their estates to local Christians before the Population Exchange.[76]

Several agrarian reforms contributed to the dissolution of ciftlik lands. In order to create small landholders on the plains in Macedonia and Thrace, the government enacted laws for agrarian reform three times; in 1928,1933 and in 1952 to distribute land to the landless or to peasants with little land. The agrarian reform of 1952 (law nr 2058/1952) expropriated and distributed the land corresponding to over 500 stremma of cultivated land and over 250 stremmata of uncultivated land to the landless. In other words, only 500 stremmata would be left to the landowners who cultivated it themselves whereas for those who did not cultivate but rented their land, 250 stremmata would remain in their possession.[77]

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73 "Boş Dedikodudan hiçbir zaman fayda gelmez. Zararı ise sürekli olduğu halde ve inanıldığı nispette büyük olur", *Trakya,* 4 January 1954; Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlı, summer 2012.

74 Interview with Aydın Ömeroğlu, İskeçe, 2012.

75 Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, 2011, 49.

76 Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat,* 1997, 56

77 "Çiftliklerin İstimlakı" , *Trakya,* 13.04.1953.

According to a Greek source, however, Christians and Muslims benefited equally from land distributions in the 1950s: in 14 villages 304 Christian families received 3,087 stremma land, and 316 Muslim families received 3,228 stremmata.[78] According to Turkish sources, this law was implemented to the detriment of the Muslim Turks' ciftliks and the landless minority members did not benefit sufficiently from the redistribution.[79] Nuri makes a similar argument by underlining the repercussions for shareholder families:

> The villages extending from Yasiköy to the east of İskeçe, called *Soğan Yakası* with Gökçeler and Koyunköy as the townships, used to cultivate the lands they hired from the Beys. After they were expropriated by the Greek state, they had no land to cultivate.[80]

The next section is based on narrations on ciftliks and the social life around them as experienced and remembered by the narrators; descendants of ciftlik owners and the rurals. The first section is based on an interview with the owner of the Ferezler Çiftlik Ali Hacıalioğlu, the only ciftlik that has survived in Yenice. The second section is based on the interview with Nazif Mandacı in İzmir, grandson of the dissolved Mandacı çiftlik in İskeçe. The rest is about two dissolved ciftliks in the Rhodopean lowlands , a grandson of Ali Efendi, a ciftlik owner in Yasiköy, and the wife and children of a dissolved ciftlik owner in Yalanca.

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78 Andreadis Andreadis, K. G. (1956). I musulmanikí mionótis tis Ditikís Thrákis, Thessaloniki, 26-32, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority," 2000, 58.

79 Baskın Oran, *Türk Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu,* 1991, 241; Batıbey, *Ve Bulgarlar Geldi*, 2000, 191.

80 "Endişe Verici Bir vaziyet-2", *Trakya*, 26.05.1952.

§ 6.1 Ferezler (or Firuzlar) Ciftlik in Yenice (Genisea)

The historical Ferezler çiftlik is in the village of Yenice within the municipality of Vistonida, bordering lake Vistonida(Borugöl), the Aegean Sea and the port of Porto Lagos. Ferezler ciftlik dates back to late 18th century. It belonged to Ali Bey's paternal great-great grandfather Mehmet Paşa and was passed on through his sons; Hacı Ahmet Paşa, Hacı Ali Bey, Mehmet Bey, and eventually the latter's son Ali Hacıalioğlu. Hacı Ahmet Paşa owned 14,000 stremmata of land in Yenice and 16,000 in Drama. He had to sell his lands in Drama in order to have his son released from prison. Apparently, he had been slandered, because "In those times, there was rivalry and enmity among the Beys" Ali Bey remarked. [81]

The current size of the partially expropriated ciftlik is 800 stremmata. Ali Hacıalioğlu, aged 50, is the heir and cultivator. He is the eldest son of the previous owner Mehmet Bey and Zoi Hanım. Ali Bey lives in the village of Kireççiler with his family. He was born in Ksanthi. He attended high school in İzmir. He graduated from the university of Redding in the UK as an agricultural engineer. Married to a Turkish national Turkish lady from İzmir, he has one daughter. He is a multilingual person who speaks refined Turkish without any regional accent. He stands out as a *sui generis* intellectual compared to the educated professionals of his age in the region.

His laborers are the local residents of the village Yenice, predominantly Muslim Roma. In the past, during the busy seasons, about 700 laborers used to work on the ciflik land where they stayed in tents. Majority of the seasonal laborers were Roma, and they came from as far as Evros. Within time, however, due to agricultural modernization and technological improvements, demand for labor has significantly diminished. Typical of the ciftliks of the past, Ali Bey is not engaged in mono-crop cultivation. The product range includes corn, wheat, sunflowers, beets, potatoes and

81 Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

beans. The extensive working period on the ciftlik lasts for about 4 months during when Ali Bey works hard in order to sustain efficiency.

Of the 14,000 stremma in Yenice, 2,000 stremma was expropriated by Greece during the refugee settlement. His grandfather had to sell some part of it to cover commercial loss from a joint venture with a local Greek Orthodox merchant. Moreover, three aunts received their share from the land by way of inheritance. His father had to sell a significant portion of land in order to cover the legal expenses in 1950s when he went through two court cases in Greece as he was sentenced with death penalty upon the allegation of collaboration with the Nazis during World War II and with communist guerillas during the Civil War.

Mehmet Bey was imprisoned for 8 months on the allegation of aiding communist guerillas. Eventually, he was acquitted from both. Mehmet Bey's imprisonment incited apprehension and disappointment among the minority elites as was also mentioned by Osman Nuri in his newspaper.[82] Ali Bey narrates:

> The then local authorities had their eyes on my father's land and therefore wanted to get rid of him...because he was the last Bey of Western Thrace. Fortunately, in those times the Greek judges who came from Athens were honest and just.[83]

Born to an ethnic Turk father and an ethnic Greek mother, Ali Bey grew up in a bilingual family. 'I used to speak Greek with my mother and Turkish with my father' he said. Apparently, Mehmet Bey met his wife Zoi during one of his trips in Athens, and they fell in love. In 1947, the first time they had dinner in a restaurant in İskeçe town center, they were both taken by the police and questioned separately, 'What are you doing with a Greek? What are you doing with a Turk?'. Both families objected to their marriage, however they were 'too much in love to sacrifice it to mutual animosities'. Zoi's parents had already passed away, she was raised by her

82 *Trakya*, 1 August 1949.

83 Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

relatives, who later cut off their relations with her forever 'but for other reasons and not due to her marriage with a Turk', Ali Bey emphasized. In fact, she belonged to an exchanged Greek Orthodox family. Her father was from Ayvalık and her mother from Büyükada, İstanbul.

His father never asked her mother to convert. Zoi lived as a Christian and attended Church regularly. His parents initially agreed upon the children's' names to be Turkish though. Ali Bey said he never felt an identity crisis within the family, but he had to deal with biases and frequent intimidation by Greeks as a child, 'Do you feel more Turkish or Greek?' His confusion over the answer was resolved by a tragic incident in 1974, probably the worst year in Greek-Turkish relations due to the conflict over Cyprus.

> In 1974, they burnt down our ciftlik and blocked our deposit at the bank. The court decided that the cause of the fire was short circuit despite strong evidence of arson. We suddenly became very poor. We came through that hardship thanks to our Greek friends who immediately lent us money. Afterwards when I was encountered with the question 'Do you feel Greek or Turkish?" I immediately replied 'Turkish.'

About ten years ago (2002) his parents and his elder brother moved to İzmir. His father died there in 2008 but based on his will, he was buried in his homeland in Yenice, Greece. Concerning his parents' settlement in İzmir, Ali Bey explained:

> My mother loves Turkey and she has preferred to live in İzmir. Although she is Greek, the Turks there have welcomed her and treated her much better than the community here. [84]

Zoi's preference for İzmir is a striking depiction of the clashing nationalisms in both the minority and mainstream communities in Western

84 Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

Thrace. Zoi represents a liminal category for both communities, a situation which suffocates the individual caught in between. As for Mehmet Bey, due to his preference for a Greek wife, the Thracian Turks added a suffix in Greek to his name "aki", referring to him "Mehmetaki", connoting that he's been Greekified.[85]

A late minority teacher, Hasan Dönmez, who taught in the minority primary school of Yenice, mentions about the philanthropic Mehmet Bey and another ciftlik owner İbrahim Bey (Serdarzade) in his memoirs:

> Mehmet Bey, the son of Hacı Ali Bey, the grandson of Hacı Paşa, owns a ciftlik of 9.000 stremmata. He has never involved in politics. He works on his ciftlik like his other laborers. During the Bulgarian occupation, the years of famine, he cooked food in chaldons to feed the poor locals and even offered the food to the travelers passing by.[86]İbrahim Bey used to supply the wood for the heating of pupils in Yenice primary school. He built a teacher's room annexed to the school. He enlarged the Turkish cemetery by donating seven stremmata of land. He served as the Head of Ksanthi Committee of Waqf administration. During this time, he built a gym annexed to the İskeçe Turkish primary school. He had no children, therefore he bequeathed his possessions to his nephew Hüsnü Serdarzade who took care of him until his death. After his death, his nephew sold out all the land.[87]

Mehmet Bey passed away at the age of 92. He was befriended with all the Beys of Ksanthi. Depending on his father's narrations and his childhood memories, Ali Bey stated that the majority of large landowners, Beys, immigrated to Turkey from 1953 to 1960, based on Turkey's free migration policy.

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85 Mentioned in interviews in İskeçe, summer 2012

86 Hasan Dönmez, *Emekli Öğretmen Hasan Dönmez'in Hayat Hikayesi: 1911-1995,* 1991, İskeçe, the booklet given to me by Hikmet Cemiloğlu, İskeçe, 2015.

87 Ibid.

> My father met the late Turkish President Celal Bayar in İskeçe after his address to the public in 1952. He told him that Western Thrace was being depopulated as a result of the Turkish government's free migration policy. When it was lifted in 1964, the rich landlords had already left.[88]

Apparently, the Beys led an extravagant life. They frequently offered treats to friends. They spent large sums of money on entertainment, drinking and gambling. Some went bankrupt because they made unprofitable investments and/or they were unable to keep up with changes in agriculture and economy. "Unlike the English aristocracy" Ali Bey said, "Our Beys were more interested in travelling and having fun than adapting their ciftliks to changes." [89]

Due to a number of reasons, Ali Bey stated that 14 Beys of Ksanthi sold their lands and settled in Turkey between 1956 and early 1960s and added reproachfully:

> If only half of them had stayed, we would be stronger to make (economic) coalitions together with small land-owner peasants. We could be strong enough to struggle against inauspicious state decisions until 1990s.[90]

According to narrations of Ali Hacıalioğlu, the large landowners who settled in Istanbul did not have a prosperous life as they did in Western Thrace. Born into wealthy and educated families, many ended up as failed bourgeoisie in Istanbul.

> I still keep some of the letters of my father's friends, the Beys. 'Brother Mehmet Bey, how are you dealing with the sale of our remaining land? Life in Istanbul is very expensive...' They were

88 Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

89 Ibid.

90 Interview with Ali Hacıalioğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

> anxious of poverty even when they had not consumed up the money they had brought with them.[91]

Some of them emigrated before they could liquidate all their property. They left certificates of procuration to their kin to sell the rest of their lands and send them the money later. Some of them were usurped by their kin and never got the money after their property was sold.

The Beys of İskeçe bought immovables such as flats and stores in central districts of İstanbul like Şişli, Ortaköy, Bakırköy. They engaged in trade by opening small businesses in textile or opened their own stores and became shopkeepers. As they did not have any experience in trade in a big city like İstanbul, many went bankrupt. Some of them passed away in extreme poverty. Some of their children, on the other hand, received good education and had white collar jobs. They integrated in the mainstream Turkish society and did not live in colonies in specific districts of Istanbul like Western Thracian rurals.

As the last Bey of modern times, Ali Bey preferred to settle in his homeland after having lived in İzmir and England as a student. He said that he got a number of job offers from multinational companies but preferred to live in Greece and manage his ciftlik. The motives behind his return migration were relatively better life standards in Greece and emotional reasons of home and belonging.

> People in multinational companies across Europe earn large sums of money, drive the latest model cars and possess the latest model cell phones. However, they look like zombies because of excessive work and stress. [92]

Like his father, he has not involved in politics. 'It is very difficult to keep the balance between the two sides' he said, 'I cannot handle such a tension'.[93]

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91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

§ 6.2 The Mandacı Family

The Mandacı family owned part of the large ciftlik around the village of Inhanlı. The large landowner Emin Ağa and his sons immigrated to İzmir in mid 1950s. Prof Nazif Mandacı, his grandson, claims that his grandfather owned around 18,000 stremmata of land within and around the villages of Inhanlı, Öksüzlü and Bekeobası. Eminağa had five children and lived in a two-storey house in Öksüzlü.

Emin Ağa's father was an officer in the Ottoman navy. When the Ottoman navy was dissolved, he was granted land in the form of an appanage. Later, he became a tax farmer *(mültezim)* and eventually he accumulated a vast amount of land in his possession. Emin Ağa also possessed a large flock of buffalos herded by a number of shepherds and his surname could have derived from this. Mandaci family's possession of large property is one of the emblematic cases relevant to the decline of land tenure system in the Ottoman state characterized by the appearance of large ciftliks owned by mültezim families.

During the Bulgarian occupation, Eminağa's agricultural production was seized by the regional Bulgarian authorities and the family barely survived. During the subsequent Greek Civil War, the family was harassed by local insurgent groups, particularly by the Sarakatsans, Greek Orthodox highlanders whom the Turkish landlords occasionally employed as seasonal workers. Upon several attacks on family members, particularly his grandfather, the family decided to immigrate to Turkey in mid 1950s.

After he settled in İzmir, he bought a house, opened a grocery store and bought some land and continued cultivation. His grandson Mandacı thinks that his grandfather must have sold part of his land in a short while, left some part of it to his brothers in return for a price much under value, and asked them to send the rest. He says that it is a probability that the unsold land was acquired by his grandfather's brothers, because he

suddenly died without leaving any account relating to his possessions in Greece. 'When I visited my grandfather's village a few years ago, I heard the rumors 'Has he come to inquire into his lands?' he remarked in a humorous way.

Some immigrant families' descendants in Turkey regularly have visited Western Thrace post 2000 to inquire into possible land inheritance issues and frequented lawyers offices.

§ 6.3 Two Ciftlik owners in the Rhodopean lowlands: Ali Efendi and İzzet Bey

The ciftliks of Ali Efendi and İzzet Bey comprised lands within the boundaries of the villages of Yasiköy, Yalanca, and Ortacı, all in adjacent locations. This part depends on the narrations of their grandson, Zafer Bey, a retired businessman in Istanbul and the narrations of some elderly locals in these villages. Ali Efendi is Zafer Bey's maternal grandfather and İzzet Bey is his paternal grandfather. Ali Efendi was from an ulama family; therefore he was never addressed as 'Bey' or 'Ağa' but 'Efendi'. His father and grandfather had graduated from medrese in Istanbul whereas Ali Efendi's education was interrupted by wars.

Ali Efendi had around 1,000 stremmata of land in a triangle at the intersection of the villages of Yasiköy, Balabanköy and Karamusa. He cultivated mainly tobacco and wheat, corn, barley and beetroots. The areas in the municipal center of Yasiköy on which the current public and minority primary school buildings, the football stadium, the municipal buildings, banks and the local patrol were built belonged to him.

Zafer Bey claimed that the majority of his lands were expropriated during the junta period with a compensation much below their original value. On the other hand, some local elderly narrators claimed that one

of his sons was an adventurous alcoholic and these properties were urgently sold for prices much under their value to pay his debts.[94]

Mansur stated that part of Ali Efendi's vast lands were acquired by usurping the lands of poor and fatherless families. His narration fits into İnalcık's argument about frequent usurpation of land due to lax administrations particularly during the Ottoman decline period. From a religious point of view, he said 'Haram (ill-gotten) land does not benefit anyone in the long term'[95]:

> Ali Efendi had vast amount of land here and in the surrounding villages. When we were children, we used to hear that he and his father usurped a lot of land. The area where the current bus stops and kiosk are located belonged to a couple of our kinsmen. They had no children. When they died, their nephew claimed his right for inheritance. He was threatened by Ali Efendi's father's men. Therefore, the poor man could not get anything. My father's father fought in the Balkan Wars and died when my father was a child. My father used to tell me that he owned a lot of land, at least 120 stremmata, but they were usurped by Ağas and other people. Therefore, my father was landless. He had to work as a shepherd first, then made his own herds of cattle and sheep. Eventually, he was able to make savings to buy a piece of land.[96]

Zafer Bey's paternal grandfather İzzet Bey lived in the village of Ortacı and was the owner of Ortacı çiftlik, also identified by Koutsoukos.[97] Zafer Bey claimed that his great grandfather was a timoriot owner and had at least 20,000 stremmata of land, extending to the neighboring villages of Narlıköy, Karamusa and Yalanca. İzzet Bey lived in the village and died of an illness caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

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94 Interview with Mansur, Yasiköy, summer 2012; Narrations in Yalanca, summer 2012.

95 Interview with Mansur, Yasiöy, summer 2012.

96 Ibid.

97 Koutsoukos, Από την Αυτοκρατορία, 2012, Table 2, Appendices section, 34-39, 35.

After his death, his son Osman Bey, (Zafer Bey's father) moved to Gümülcine and lived in his mansion *(konak*) and regularly went to his ciftlik to manage cultivation. Some of his land was cultivated by share-croppers and the rest by laborers who were landless villagers; Sarakatsans, Pomaks, Turks, and Muslim Roma. The agricultural produce was diversified and included cotton, beetroots, wheat, barley and squash. They bred buffalos and owned herds of sheep and cattle. Landless and poor Muslim Turk males were employed as herders. They had two African origin butlers. Their wives were Osman Bey's caretakers when he was a child. They did not immigrate to Turkey. They were given a house and land and lived their lives in Greece.

On the other hand, Ali Efendi permanently lived in his house in Yasiköy, which is located on the main route extending from Istanbul to Thessaloniki, at equal distance to the towns of Gümülcine and İskeçe. Ali Efendi, a notable of Yasiköy, was narrated as a far-sighted, well-educated, devout but also a secular person.[98] As opposed to large landowner Beys who preferred to keep aloof from politics, he was deeply involved in it. Ali Efendi's father was a clergyman(müderris) and a teacher in medrese. He was affiliated with the CUP. Atatürk and his friends sometimes stayed in their house on their route to Selanik. He was murdered during a morning prayer in the mosque in 1913.

Ali Efendi was predestined to the same end. While he was entering his house, he was slaughtered by one of his laborers who was also a far relative. It was 1970 and the junta period in Greece. A Greek Orthodox neighbor lady saw the hiding murderer with an axe in his hand and yelled at him to warn him. Yet, he could not escape. His murder incited terror in the village and around, among Muslim Turks as well as the Greek Orthodox.

A few locals stated that the murderer had a controversy with Ali Efendi over a particular tiny area he wanted to add to his house. Ali Efendi

98 Narrated by my paternal grandmother, whose father was befriended with Ali Efendi and they exchanged visits when she was a child; Interview with Ayşe, Ali, Mahir, Galini, summer 2012.

refused to give him the area and apparently insulted him.[99]Zafer Bey and some local people believed the state was behind it because the junta regime (1967-1974) despised him as he was a Turkish nationalist.[100] In this regard, his end resembles that of Zülfikar Bey in Necati Cumalı's novel *Viran Dağlar.*[101]

The murderer was sentenced to twenty years of imprisonment, but allegedly released after a few years. He did not come to his village again. He is claimed to have lived his life on the Greek island of Kos and his children assimilated within the Greek Orthodox community. Apparently, his daughter became a doctor and married a Greek Orthodox.[102]

Like other big landowners, Ali Efendi and İzzet Bey were harassed and threatened during the Bulgarian occupation and the subsequent Greek Civil War. Unlike the notables and large landowners of the epoch, Ali Efendi did not immigrate to Turkey and lived his life in his village.

> Despite our pleas to move to Istanbul and live with us, my grandfather Ali Efendi insisted on living in Greece. He used to say 'These are our ancestor's lands. If I go, if you go, what will happen to them?'[103]

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99 Interview with Mansur, Ayşe, Latife, Yalanca; Mahir, Yalanca, summer 2012

100 Narrations in Yalanca.

101 Necati Cumalı, *Viran Dağlar,* Cumhuriyet Kitapları, Mayıs 2011. It is the story of a Turkish Bey in current Greek Macedonia. As the head of a Muslim-Turk guerilla band in the mountains during the Balkan wars and WWI, the Bey becomes a legend in the region. No one can catch him. Eventually, he is murdered in his sleep by one of his laborers whom he'd previously treated with kindness for many years. Originally published in 1994, the novel was awarded the Literature Prizes of Orhan Kemal, Yunus Nadi and Ömer Asım Aksoy in 1995. It was translated into French with the title "Le Dernier Seigneur de Balkan". It was made into a film by a joint group from France, Germany, Spain, Poland Italy, Bulgaria and Greece. For more information, see https://www.insanokur.org/viran-daglar-necati-cumali/, last retrieved 20.07.2019.

102 Narrations in Yalanca and Yasiköy.

103 Interview with Zafer Bey, Istanbul, 2012.

Osman Bey immigrated to Istanbul with his family in 1954, when Zafer Bey was only one year old. The family settled in the two-storey house they had bought in Bakırköy a few years ago. As foreign nationals were forbidden to buy immovable property in Turkey, they bought land and houses with title deeds in the name of their Turkish citizen relatives. They acquired Turkish citizenship two years after their settlement after denouncing their Greek citizenship at the Greek Consulate.

Osman Bey lost a serious part of his fortune due to bureaucratic obstacles and deception of his kinsmen. After the family acquired Turkish citizenship, the relatives who owned the title-deeds either refused to return them or asked for large sums to transfer the property back to their real owners. In Western Thrace, the certificates of procuration for the sale of their remaining lands were misused by their kin. 'We tried hard to reclaim our remaining lands, but conditions in Greece then were not good as they are today' Zafer Bey remarked.

Apparently, Osman Bey had made a joint investment with some relatives and bought land plots in Gazi Mahallesi, between Kemerburgaz and Alibeyköy. He cultivated the land and did husbandry. In 1962, the Turkish government expropriated some of the land including theirs in order to build a dam. However, because his father did not have valid title deeds for his share of land, he was not paid compensation. Before he settled in Turkey, he had sent money (gold coins) to relatives to buy land in Sakarya because he thought he would continue farming. However, after a few years of his settlement, he lost the land due to allegations of fraud in purchasing.

After losing his second plot of ciftlik land, Osman Bey went into business. He did animal trade, opened a butcher's and sold to Apikoğlu, the renowned sausage company. Afterwards he acquired a Unilever franchise. However, he never got the financial returns he previously did from farming in Western Thrace.

Osman Bey's relations with his previous villagers continued after he moved to İstanbul. Zafer Bey narrated his childhood memories about their visits with nostalgia.

> Our house in Bakırköy was like a *dergah (*dervish lodge). Our relatives, neighbors from Greece, carrying baskets filled with chicken, fruits, eggs as gifts would come to Bakırköy on the black train. They either visited us or stayed in our house during their stay in Istanbul. Some registered their children to boarding schools. Some did shopping for weddings. Others looked for a flat or plot of land to purchase. Shopping at the Grand Bazaar was their favorite activity. We were happy to host them.

Zafer Bey stated that they had good relations with their neighbors in Bakırköy. However, they had more sincere relations with Western Thracian immigrants and the Greek Orthodox minority neighbors in Bakırköy, because there was a cultural misfit with the mainstream locals. Zafer Bey describes his mother as bilingual (Turkish and Greek), educated, devout and modern.

> My mother could speak Greek almost like her mother tongue Turkish. She used to wear the headscarf and pray five times a day. However, she had many Rum (Greek Orthodox) neighbors and friends in Bakırköy. In those years, there were a lot of Rums in Bakırköy. We lived in houses with big gardens. Bakırköy was green, beautiful, and silent then. We used to exchange visits with our neighbors during the day or after dinner. The district received a considerable number of immigrants from the East in later years. After mid-1960s, Rum families left Turkey and settled in Greece. I am still in contact with some of my childhood friends. They experienced in Athens what we experienced here.[104]

His parents' thoughts and feelings about their immigration towards the end of their lives were kind of ambivalent. On the one hand, they were glad that they settled in their homeland Turkey and that their

104 Interview with Zafer Bey, 2012.

three sons graduated from university and had white-collar jobs. On the other hand, they had a deep nostalgia for the past, longing for their lands and life in Western Thrace and a certain regret for having immigrated.

> They never had the prosperous life they had in Western Thrace. They lost the previous high social status they enjoyed in their homeland.... because they became ordinary people in Turkey. From vast lands of a ciftlik and a mansion in Gümülcine, to a two-storey house, and then a flat in Bakırköy, their space was reduced. When the wooden two-storey houses in Bakırköy were transformed into apartments, my parents felt even worse- as if they were entrapped or imprisoned in the flat. When they compared their failure to continue cultivation and the disappointments in business with the improving economic and social conditions in Greece as they got the good news of relatives and neighbors who stayed, they felt regretful.[105]

§ 6.4 Two Large landowner Families in Yalanca

This part depends on the narrations of the two large landowners' Hacı Paşa and Hacı Yakup Ağa's descendants in Yalanca and Istanbul. The village of Yalanca was established in 1530. It was recorded in Ottoman archives as 'Yalancılı' within the township of Gümülcine.[106]

Hacı Paşa was a member of the Ottoman ruling cadres and was granted land in the form of appanage. He was originally from Bosnia. He settled in the village in late 1700s. Hacı Paşa's grandson Ahmet Bey was the narrator Yüksel Hanım's paternal grandfather. His father Ahmet,

105 Ibid.

106 T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel. Müd. Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başk. Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Rûm İli Defteri - 937/1530.2002, Ankara.

named after his grandfather, was one of Ahmet Bey's three sons. Following the marriage pattern of notables, Ahmet Bey married the daughter of another ciftlik owner from Kireççiler. He was sent to school in Edirne from but was dismissed because of his alcohol addiction. He lived an extravagant life and died at the age of 47 due to an alcohol related disease. By the time he died, he had sold out majority of his lands. When the remaining lands were divided among the children, his son Ahmet inherited only 120 streammata.[107]

The large landowner families lived in two-storey houses which had spacious rooms and high ceilings. They were called *hanay* in the vernacular language. The houses were situated in a wide yard surrounded by trees and grapevines. The courtyards were enclosed with high walls. In the yard there was a pump which was replaced by drinking fountains in 1960s and later. Poor females in the village were hired as maids to do the housework and look after the children. 'Neither of my grandmothers could cook' said Yüksel Hanım. 'They had maids to cook and do all the housework.'[108]

The second big landowner family; Hacı Yakup Ağa and his brothers Salim and Mehmet Ağas are narrated as having settled in the village in late 1800s. They came from Bulgaria with their families, flocks, horses and laborers. However, no information is available about how they acquired their lands. The title deeds bearing the seal of the Sultan are still kept by their descendants and were shown to me. Hacı Yakup Ağa and his brothers altogether possessed around 2,000 stremmata of land. They had two-storey houses. There were four guest rooms adjacent to the house and a huge stud for the buffalos and mules. Hacı Yakup Ağa's two-storey house survived until last year when it was pulled down because it was disintegrating naturally and therefore posed danger for the passerby. Salim Ağa and Mehmet Ağa sold their houses before they immigrated to Turkey in late 1950s.

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107 Interview with Yüksel Yalanca, summer 2012.

108 Ibid.

The Ağa and Bey families' children married with people of equal status. This was the norm for marriage. They seldom married with ordinary rurals. For instance, Hacı Yakuğ Ağa's daughter (Ferişte Hanım) and son (Ali Bey) were both married to Bey families from Gümülcine but lived in the village. Hacı Yakup Ağa died in 1943 when he was around 90. Apparently, he owned a sizeable portion of the Balabanköy forest.[109] It was claimed that this forest was expropriated by the government in mid 1950s, rehabilitated and distributed to the landless Greek Orthodox. The heirs sued the decision but lost because they were told that their title deeds were invalid.[110]

Majority of arable land in the village belonged to these two families. Their estates were fertile, vast and unfragmented. The sharecroppers and laborers of Ağas were from among local Muslims and Christians. There was no ethnic segregation for agricultural labor. The landless families worked as sharecroppers and/or laborers on their land and the males as their shepherds for their cattle and sheep. The Ağas were the first to buy tractors in the village while the peasants were still ploughing with oxen. Therefore, they could make agricultural surpluses before the ordinary peasants.

According to narrations of some villagers, from time to time, Ağas claimed ownership of forests and meadows and ordered the small landowner and landless villagers to clear these areas. The villagers in return were given the land to cultivate for one or two years. This was the required time for the land to become properly arable. In the end of the agreed period, the land was taken from the villagers and cultivated by the Ağas. In those years, prior to -late 1950s there was a kind of a tacit contract between the Ağas and the villagers. Therefore, they did not dare oppose the Ağas because they had men in their service similar to police or mafia, who threatened, tortured, even killed the trouble-makers.[111]

Anyone who got involved in crimes such as theft, burglary, stealing from harvests were seized by the Ağa's men and punished by beating.

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109 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:8: Balabanköy", *Trakya,* 14.07.1952

110 Interview with Sadıka, Hacı Yakup Ağa's great granddaughter, İstanbul, summer 2016.

111 Narrations in Yalanca, Yasiköy, Narlıköy.

The punishment applied to those who acted against the word of Ağa in any matter. For instance, Salim Ağa's son Mehmet Ağa had a separate punishment room in his yard in order to beat the wrong-doers as well as those who did not abide by their decisions. When I expressed my surprise at this, Osman reproached:

> Why are you shocked? They were the police in those times. It was good that they punished the criminals... Look what is happening in the village now. No leadership… A man came from Bulgaria and settled in the room of the football team next to the stadium. Despite our reactions, the village men do not care... The village has become a passerby inn. [112]

After 2007, when Bulgaria became an EU member, a number of Bulgarian citizen Turks and Turkish-speaking Roma came to Western Thrace for seasonal labor such as tobacco picking and/or cattle herding. Some of them did not return when the agricultural season was over and continued to stay either in an abandoned cottage or rented a deserted house, usually those whose owners passed away. When the interview took place, a Bulgarian (Turkish-speaking Roma) man was staying in the dressing room of the village football team. Many elderly were unhappy with this situation, but others did not mind and allowed him to stay for almost four years. They hired him on a daily basis to work on the fields.

The social organization in the villages in the period of large land-holders were nonetheless not in the form of a tribal organization. The Ağas were the highest authority in the village. However, it was not like the feudal structure in southeastern Turkey.[113] The Ağas were the governors and the police of the village. Their word was like rule, but they did not interfere with villagers' familial affairs such as marriage, divorce or what crop to plant unless it directly affected them. Sometimes they gave loans to villagers they particularly liked and asked them to work on their

112 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

113 Lale Yalçın Heckmann, *Tribe and kinship among the Kurds*, P.Lang, Frankfurt, NY, 1991

fields or pay their loans at the harvest time. This was not like moneylending with interest.

The sons and grandsons of Ağas in late 1970s had different kind of relations with the villagers. They assisted the villagers in their encounters with the Greek bureaucracy and other institutions. They were kind of middlemen. For instance, they assisted them to find doctors when in need in the town center. They even provided occasional, short term small loans for those in need. They also acted as intermediaries as they had networks with Muslim and Christian government officials in the city. Even in Istanbul, they offered free accommodation to the villagers who came for a simple visit, to look for a flat to buy or to do shopping for weddings or enrolled their children to high schools. [114] For the grandson of Hacı Yakup Ağa, Necati Bey, a number of elderly narrators in the village said: 'He was such a good man.... unlike Ağas of the past'.[115]

Ağas had good networks with the Greek locals and authorities. For instance, Ali Ağa of Karamusa, sent his servant to the train station in Yasiköy to declare his travelling time so that the train would wait for him. However, there are also cases which Ağas' networks with the government officials sometimes turned out to the detriment of villagers. Hediye narrated such an incident in interwar period:

> My paternal grandmother's family came from Sülova (Suluova), currently in Greek Macedonia before the Population Exchange and bought a house in the village. The public notary visited the villages once or twice a year and registered the lands and updated them. Yet, he did this in the official language, Greek, which few people knew at the time. The notary accomplished his task in the presence of a witness and the only person he was acquainted with in the village was the Ağa.[116] In the village coffeehouse, the notary gave my grandfather the title deed which was

114 Narrations of the villagers and personal experiences for the years 1985-1994.

115 Narrations of elderly participants in Yalanca, summer 2012.

116 Land registration with the verbal testimonial of a witness, the practise of the Ottoman decline period, is still implemented in Greece.

written in Greek, but he did not know Greek at all. My grandmother, on the other hand, could speak and write in Greek. As she read the title deed, she noticed that the land they purchased was registered in Ağa's name. (Apparently the notary and the Ağa were collaborating). She took two guns from the chest, hid them in her pockets. She entered the coffeehouse and pointed them to the Ağa and the Greek notary and said: 'I have lost my land in Macedonia and if I happen to lose my land here.... I'll shoot you both...now, register this title deed properly in my name!'. Appalled by the armed threat of a Muslim woman in the male domain of the coffeehouse, the notary immediately changed the title deed in her name.[117]

Sometimes Ağas scolded, insulted and even beat villagers in public for the simple mistakes they did. The shepherds either abandoned their jobs or continued due to extreme poverty. In one such incident in late 1960s, when Hacı Yakup Ağa's son Ali Bey insulted a man in the coffeehouse, the man grabbed a stick and pushed him off his mule, saying 'You cannot talk to me like this...Your time has ended up.'[118]

This was the period of two concomitant developments. The Greek state had consolidated itself and there were police patrols to deal with crimes and other disputes. Agricultural modernization in the form of irrigation channels and land distributions to the landless and the emergence of labor migration to Germany were empowering the poor peasantry against the landlords.

Hacı Yakup Ağa's son Ali Bey started travelling to Turkey in mid 1950s and established contacts with the kin settled there. He was cautious. He did not sell his land all at once and immigrate immediately. Initially he sold some of his land, bought a flat in Istanbul and started a textile business. As he went bankrupt, he started another business, and another, until he had sold all of his land, including also part of his sister's

117 Interview with Hediye, Müselimköy, summer 2012.

118 Interview with Fuat, Yalanca, summer 2012.

rightful due. Eventually he settled in Istanbul in 1970 and acquired Turkish citizenship after he denounced his Greek citizenship. He apparently did not succeed a single business and led a modest life until he passed away.

Hacı Yakup's daughter Ferişte Hanım and her husband Şevket Bey from Gümülcine had a daughter and a son. Their daughter Nedime married Ahmet Bey's son Ali. Their son, Necati Bey broke the marriage custom by eloping with a beautiful girl (my father's paternal aunt Refiye). He inherited around 200 stremmata of land. He followed the trend and bought a flat in Istanbul as well. Yet he continued cultivation back in the village with his family until early 1980s. He sold his lands and opened a haberdasher's shop in a Western Thracian immigrant neighborhood in Istanbul. He kept his house in the village and a small piece of land over which he had legal controversies with his sister. He lived in between two countries and died in Istanbul as a Greek citizen with a residence permit in 2003.

Likewise, in the neighboring village of Karamusa, the big landowner Osman Ağa had 1,000 stremmata of land. His son Ali Ağa immigrated to Turkey in 1960s. He did a number of businesses but failed all. He died in poverty. His son Mehmet Bey was seen selling candies in the local bazaar in the district of Alibeyköy by the visiting villagers in 1970s. Similarly, three large landholders from Domruköy liquidated their lands and immigrated to Bursa where they invested in textile business but went bankrupt.[119] 'Well, they did not have any skill other than cultivation, therefore they failed all their ventures in the city' stated the narrators.[120] The immigrant Ağa's stories resemble that of *Züğürt Ağa* , the cult Turkish film about the story of a big landlord in southeastern Turkey who sells his land, immigrates to Istanbul, and fails all his business ventures.

Immigration of large landholders in Rhodopean lowlands started in late 1950s and continued until late 1960s, which corresponds to the military regime period. Overwhelming majority of their lands were sold

119 Interview with Basri, Domruköy, summer 2017.

120 Interview with Nedime, a granddaughter of Yakup Ağa; Interview with Ali, Yalanca, 2012.

to the local Greek Orthodox because local Muslims were penniless whereas the local Christians were granted long term -low-interest government loans to buy Muslim estates. Therefore, post 1960s, big land ownership was transferred to the local Greek-Orthodox. This led to an ethnic change in landownership in the lowlands. Landless and small landholder Muslim peasants became laborers on the fields of local Christians.

On the other hand, upon the ethnic change of land ownership, a few narrators stated that their working conditions on the fields improved. Corvee labor was lifted. The working hours were reduced. The payment got higher. Elderly females in Yalanca made a comparison:

> On the fields of local Christians, our working hours were predetermined; from early (6:00 am) in the morning to 6.00 pm in the afternoon. Thus, during the summer, the working day ended earlier than the sunset. Moreover, they gave us food and drinks for lunch for free. Previously we were not given lunch and had to bring bread, tomatoes, onions, olives from home. The Christians did not ask for corvee labor, but the Ağas did. For instance, in the summer, we picked pumpkins during the day. In the evening, we were asked to remove their seeds. In autumn, we picked cotton. In the evenings, we had to remove cotton seeds from cotton balls. We were not paid for these kinds of additional labor. [121]

Nihat, a retired laborer from Germany narrated his childhood days when he worked as a shepherd for the Ağa in Yelkenciler :

> We were a poor family, my parents and four siblings. After I finished primary school, the school teacher tried to convince my father to send me to high school. I was smart and I wanted to study. Unfortunately my father hired me as a shepherd to the village Ağa. In my shoulder bag were a slice of bread, a bowl of yogurt,

121 Narrations of Gülsüm, Mücel, Refika, Züleyha, Zeliha, Yalanca, summer 2012.

and a few pickles to eat during the entire day. This was the only food given by the Ağa. My dear late mother sometimes brought me boiled eggs and bread fried with butter and sugar. She brought it secretly, because if the Ağa saw her, he would be offended and say 'Why aren't you content with the food I give him? You're ungrateful'. In the morning I milked the cows together with others. Then I took them to the meadow. They would go into different directions. I was a weak child. It was so difficult to herd them… A year later, I was hired by another Ağa for his flock. He gave me better food, canned fish, cheese, bread, butter. I was also paid better. However, my job was not only to herd the flock. I had to milk them in the morning and in the evening. My hands would ache terribly. I also had to clean the hencoop from time to time. Not a moment was I free. After three years of working as a shepherd for the Ağas, I went to Athens to visit my eldest brother who was doing his military duty there. Then an acquaintance found me a job in a factory which offered much better working conditions and pay. I worked there for two years. Then I worked on a big ship. After I got married, I moved to Germany with my family where I worked until retirement.[122]

122 Interview with Nihat, originally from Yelkenciler, Yalanca, summer 2012.

7

Consolidation of the Greek State, Reforms and Immigration to Turkey

In 1950s, the displaced highlanders' return to their villages was a major issue that received wide coverage in the newspaper *Trakya* until late 1950s.[1] The state-granted reparations were usually in the form of food, construction materials and animals. On the other hand, the villagers' complained about the sluggish pace of bureaucracy[2] and the (perceived) discrimination of Muslims compared to Greek Orthodox rurals concerning the speed and the value of aid materials .[3] The destitute condition of houses and shortage of livestock bore fatal consequences in some villages.[4] For instance, in the highland village Otmanören, 6 of the 10 children of the returned families were reported to have died due to extreme

1 In 1952, for instance, he published the amount of monetary aid given to each village in the province of Ksanthi. "Çete Felaketzedelerine ne kadar yardım edildi", *Trakya*, 31.03.1952; "İmar ve İskan İşleri", *Trakya*, 09.03.1953.

2 "Bize Cevap Verecek Bir Makam Arıyoruz", *Trakya,* 20.01.1950; 02.01.1950; 16.01.1950;23.01.1950; 13.03.1950; 27.05.1950; 12.06.1950;24.06.1950; 25.09.1950.

3 "Çete felaketzedelerinin ekmeğini kesmeyiniz efendiler!", *Trakya,* 16.01.1950; "Gene Çete Felaketzedeleri Hakkında", *Trakya*, 23/02/1950; 16 ve 23 Ocak'taki "Çete Felaketzedeleri" ile ilgili haberlere Trakya Umumi Valisi'nin verdiği cevap", 13.03.1950; "Osman Nuri 'nin Vali'ye cevabı", 20.03.1950; "Yanık Köylerin Yapılması: Çalabı", 24.06.1950

4 "Köylerimizin Hali", *Trakya,* 12.06.1950

cold because all the houses were severely destroyed during the final battles of the Civil War.[5]

A second issue was the abandoned property of Muslim rurals and town-dwellers who illegally immigrated to Turkey during the Bulgarian occupation and the subsequent Civil War. In a series of articles post 1950, Osman Nuri criticized the authorities for their haste in registering the abandoned property as state property.[6] This was based on Law nr.1539 enacted in 1938 according to which the abandoned property passed to the state unless the owners or their legal representatives returned and demanded them back by submitting required documents of ownership. Otherwise, after 10 years, it became state property. The process was reduced to three years by an annex to the law in 1953.[7]

Reportedly, right after the end of World War II, the Greek government began to detect and register abandoned property. In 1953, in a number of issues of the *Trakya* newspaper, Nuri warned the relatives and friends of immigrants to inform that only two years were left for their properties to pass under state ownership and that they should issue a power of attorney to their relatives in Western Thrace to deal with these issues.[8] He reiterated the need to take action by referring to the remaining Jews of Thessaloniki who managed to acquire the properties of exterminated Jews into the community's ownership.[9]

Post 1950s, a significant development in rural Greece was the settlement of highlander pastoralist Sarakatsans in lowland villages.[10] Like highlander Muslims, these Greek Orthodox nomadic highlanders were

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5 "Hem Suçlu hem güçlü" *Trakya*, 27.03.1950.

6 "Azınlığımızı çok taciz eden bir mesele"], *Trakya*, 29.05.1950; "Terk Edilmiş Mülklere dair Kanun Projesi", 03.08.1953; "Memleketi Terketmiş Olanların Mülklerine dair", 17.08.1953; 27.08.1953; 28.11.1955; 29.06.1957.

7 *Trakya*, 03.08.1953; 17.08.1953.

8 "Türkiye'de Yerleşenlerin Mülkleri", *Trakya*, 23.02.1953; 28.11.1955. These warnings and the related news appeared in Trakya until the end of its release date in 1965.

9 Ibid.

10 Ernestine Friedl, *Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece*, New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962, 4.

temporarily settled in the lowlands of Western Thrace towards the end of the Civil War. However, unlike the Muslim highlanders who abode by state orders and returned to their highland villages, many Sarakatsans remained with their flocks in the lowlands. In Nuhçalı, Sakarkaya, Nuhullu and Bekaobası, the Sarakatsani refused a number of disputes arose over the use of grazing lands between them and the locals. Nuri asked the new Governor of Thrace to deal with the issue.[11] In the next article, the Governor of Thrace reported that the Saraksani in Nuhçalı were sent back and Nuri conveyed him the villagers' gratitude.[12]

In another case, Sarakatsans encircled the village of Bekaobası with their huts and brought their cattle for grazing in the village pasture. In response to Osman Nuri's complaint, the local authorities stated that the zone was under inspection, and that the military banned several zones for the seasonal settlement of Sarakatsans.[13] Nonetheless, in some villages the Sarakatsans were able to stay in the lowlands owing to their clientelistic relations with some local Greek authorities. For instance, they returned to Yalanca and Karamusa after they were sent away and continued to exploit the 800 stremmata pasture.[14]

Osman Nuri, also a minority MP, was closely involved in rurals' issues. He not only voiced them through his newspaper *Trakya* and other initiatives at the Greek Parliament, but also informed the rurals about laws, regulations and bureaucracy and encouraged them to take action concerning their livelihoods such as prices and subsidies for their crops (mainly tobacco). In one article, for instance, he conveys the message of the Director of Ksanthian Agricultural Bank about certain transactions. He recommends the villagers to organize on a cooperative basis and establish a village fund so that they could apply for and get loans from the Agricultural Bank collectively, thereby reducing the time and cost of individual applications.[15] Unlike in 1970s and 1980s, local and regional

11 "Köylerimizin Mühim bir Derdi: Karakaçan Meselesi", *Trakya*, 28.11.1955.

12 "Valimiz", *Trakya*, 12.06.1950.

13 *Trakya*, 16.06.1952.

14 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet: :9: Ortacı, Yalanca, Karamusa", *Trakya*, 04.08.1952.

15 "Köylümüzün Teşkilatlanması çok önemlidir", *Trakya,* 19.06.1950.

Greek authorities responded to the MP Osman Nuri and tried to provide solutions for the rurals' complaints.

The Greek state stepped back in the village and reembarked on the interrupted process of state consolidation after the Civil War. Several citizen services such as health, transportation and communication were institutionalized. Health services were made free for all citizens by law in December 1955, when the center right Karamanlis government came to power.[16] . Each village was given a telephone which was placed in the village coffeehouse or grocery store.[17] The village coffeehouse was also a grocery store until 1970s, when the two were separated albeit not in all villages. The gathering space of males gradually shifted from the mosque room to the coffeehouses.[18] Yet, individual households in the village were given telephones from mid- 1990s on.

Until then, anyone who needed an urgent taxi or inform their relatives abroad (in Turkey and Germany) or in other cities such as Athens or Thessaloniki, had to go to the coffeehouse to use the phone and pay for the call. Whenever there was a phone call for a villager, it was announced by the coffeehouse owner through a megaphone. The receiver would walk or run to the coffeehouse and wait for the call. Thus, every single inhabitant learnt about the phone call. The receiver had to narrate it on his/her way back home because phone calls were made for urgencies such as illness, accident, and death. Letter writing was the most common form of communication.

In late 1950s, refrigerators began to enter the lowland villages. Until then, meat and dairy products were kept in earthenware placed in the specially dug wells in the garden. Washing was done in the yard during an entire day of the week with hot water from boiling cauldrons on fire. Food was cooked in the furnaces in the kitchen. The kitchen was a living room and a sleeping room for the elder parents or parents-in-law

16 *Trakya*, 29.12.1955.

17 Osman Nuri claimed that the village of İnhanlı, 20 km to the town of İskeçe had not been given a telephone and subsequently criticizing the indifferent attitude of the Hellenic Telecommunications Organisation (OTE) . *Trakya*, 13.04.1953.

18 Narrations in the region.

because it was the warmest room during cold winters. One compartment of the wardrobe attached to a wall in the bedroom was the bathroom. Water for bath was boiled in big iron pitchers on the stoves. There was no running water in the houses. People had wells or primitive iron pumps in the yard to extract water from underground. Running water came into the houses in 1960s.

Buses started coming to lowland villages in late 1950s. However, the bus passed through villages on the main routes more frequently than other smaller and remote ones, where they passed through once on weekdays. In 1960s, there was at least one taxi in the mixed lowland villages, or communes. In the lowland villages, oxcarts, four-wheeled vehicles pulled by oxen were used for transportation and for wedding processions. In the highland villages, the means of transportation were donkeys and mules. In the middle-line villages, mule or donkey carts,- *talika* in the vernacular language- were used until early 1990s. The talika was used to carry tall baskets of tobacco from the fields to the house. Until late 1960s, when trucks arrived, camels were used for transportation, especially between the town and highlands to bring wood to the townd-wellers.[19]

Conscription was made mandatory for the Muslim minority for the first time in 1960 by law which concerned those born in 1939 and has been mandatory ever since.[20] Previously, conscription was voluntary and could be evaded by exemption tax. Those already under arms and the deserters could not benefit from the exemption tax.[21] In exceptional periods of wars, however, Muslim males were conscripted to fight in the

19 Narrations of Mehmet Devecioğlu, one of the sons of Veliddin Devecioğlu who was the last owner and herder of a number of camels in Komotini, available online at: http://efagonizesthe.blogspot.com/2010/12/blog-post_20.html, by Angela Fotopoulo, last retrieved 20.06.2021.

20 Based on narrations of the local Western Thracians; Cemali, Bekir, Galini; Rahmi, İbram, Komotini, summer 2012.

21 *Trakya*, 20.04.1953; 28.12.1953

Greek army. The Muslim clergy were exempted from military duty unless they resigned or were dismissed before the age of 37.[22]

My paternal and maternal grandfathers, Murat, Yusuf and Merdan avoided military duty by paying the exemption tax.[23] Yusuf stated that in 1948 he paid 2,700 drachmas as exemption tax which was then the price of an ox.[24] My maternal grandfather said he had to sell my grandmother's *beşibirlik* (ornamental coin worth five gold pounds) to pay the exemption tax. Exemption tax was affordable by better off rurals.

The lowlanders narrated that agriculture was primitive until tractors arrived in mid-1960s. They did not have irrigation systems and the agricultural produce depended on the amount of rainfall and climatic conditions in general. Until 1960s, husbandry was the basic form of income generation. It descended to a secondary role in late 1960s after agricultural reforms; particularly tractors and fertilizers were introduced. Every household had a barn of cows which were milked early in the morning and late in the afternoon. A village herder was employed to graze all cows until late afternoon when they were brought back to the barns. Some families had flocks and hired shepherds to herd them, or it was the teenager or adult sons' duty to herd them. Both agriculture and husbandry were family labor.

The rurals were busy all through the year except for the cold winter period when they could relax. Yusuf narrated his life in 1950s:

> We used to plough the land with oxen. Preparations for cultivation began a month before May. I often grew watermelons. I used to put them in my oxcart and ride to Gümülcine to sell them. There were no fertilizers, no pesticides. The harvest depended on weather conditions. When watermelons ended, I planted tomatoes. They were among the first tomatoes in the market as they ripened early April. I sold them at good prices; 2 drachmas per kg. We always had a number of cows in the barn and hens in

22 *Trakya*, 16.08. 1954.

23 Interview with Osman, Yalanca; Merdan, Palazlı, summer 2012.

24 Interview with Yusuf, Melikli, summer 2012.

the backyard. We used to work hard, but we made savings. I bought 45 stremmata of land. During the warm days of winter, I used to ventilate the land with a shovel to make it more fertile. Our holiday was the cold winter months of December, January and February. We fed the cows with ground wheat mash. Then we went to the coffeehouse to chat and play cards. Sometimes we hired local musicians (who played the drums and zurna)[25] to dance and have fun.[26]

§ 7.1 Educational Revolution: a by-product of Greek-Turkish Rapprochement

In 1952, Turkey and Greece exchanged visits at the level of Presidents (Turkish President Celal Bayar, Greek King Pavlos) and Prime Ministers (the Greek PM Venizelos and the Turkish PM Menderes). A Turkish-Greek Mixed Committee was established to cooperate in trade and security related matters. Visas were mutually abolished. In the words of the then Greek PM Sofokles Venizelos: 'The friendly relations between Turkey and Greece are so strong that within a short while we will declare the two countries are one".[27] Consequently, both minorities experienced a

25 Drum players are usually accompanied with zurna (a kind of flute) players. This is traditional orchestra that play folk music in Thrace and Anatolia. The performers are usually Roma.

26 Intervew with Yusuf, Melikli, summer 2012.

27 Melek Fırat, "İlişkilerde İkinci Dostluk Dönemi (1950-1955) (eds) Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası,* 2001, 587.

'golden period' in education and other matters until the deterioration of relations post 1955.[28]

As a gesture, King Pavlos built the first minority high school in 1952 in Komotini, probably, as stated by Aarbakke to be able to improve the Greek Orthodox minority education in Istanbul.[29] It was named after the then Turkish President Celal Bayar who attended the opening ceremony.[30] It had a bilingual (Greek and Turkish) curriculum. The Greek teachers of the Greek part of the curriculum would be paid by Greece and the Turkish teachers for the Turkish part of the curriculum would be paid by the School Education Board.[31] It was a high school even more advanced than the Greek public schools of the time in the province with its science laboratories, art workshops and sports facilities.[32]

The signing of a Cultural Protocol between Greece and Turkey in 1951 triggered a chain of educational reforms to the favor of the minority. In fact, it can be argued that it had a revolutionary impact on the transformation of minority education. The Cultural Protocol, although not legally binding[33], was implemented on mutual consent of both countries. It was a revolution for the minority education, leading to the proliferation of modernist minority teachers and dissemination of Turkish secular reforms within the minority. Minority school education was institutionalized by setting standards for the opening of minority primary schools,

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28 Stamatopulos, K. M. (1996). I teleftéa analambí. I Konstantinopolítiki Romiosíni stahrónia 1948–1955. Athens, Domos, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 134, footnote 200.

29 Ibid., 133.

30 Fırat "İlişkilerde İkinci Dostluk Dönemi" 2001, 587.

31 *Trakya* , 04.08.1952.

32 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 133; Narrations of persons who were among the second and third term graduates of Celal Bayar High School in Komotini; Ibram Onsunoglu; Hediye, Megapisto, Buket,Galini; Hikmet Cemiloğlu, Orhan Hacıibram, Mustafa Tahsinoğlu, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

33 It was proposed by the Council of Europe in 1949. Hulusi Kılıç, *Türkiye ile Yunanistan Arasında İmzalanan İkili Anlaşmalar, Önemli Belgeler ve Bildirgeler, T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı Yunanistan Dairesi Başkanlığı***,** Ankara, 195, cited in Şerafettin Hurşit, *Lozan Antlaşması'ndan Günümüze Batı Trakya Türkleri Eğitim Tarihi,* Gümülcine, 2006, 40-42.

the curriculum, appointment of teachers and a coordinator for the entire minority schools.[34] Subjects such as History and Geography would be taught in Greek whereas Maths, Science and Religion in Turkish along with separate Greek and Turkish language classes.[35] School books would be prepared and sent by Ankara, after inspection and consent by Greek authorities, distributed to minority schools.[36]

Teachers for the Turkish part of the curriculum would be trained in Teaching Colleges in Turkey. In fact, acceptance of minority students in Turkish Teaching Colleges was not a new phenomenon. Already in 1930, nine students were accepted to study at Turkish colleges, of whom, only five returned to teach in Western Thrace. Four of them fled to Turkey during the Second World War while only one remained.[37] No student was sent to a Teaching College in Turkey between 1941 and 1945 because of the war.[38] With the Cultural Protocol, Turkey was granting scholarships to the minority students accepted to Turkish Teaching Colleges on the condition that they return to teach in minority schools in Western Thrace.[39] From among the first graduates, 20 teachers were employed in minority schools in the academic year of 1960-1961.[40] They were later sent to seasonal Greek language seminars in Thessaloniki to learn Greek.[41]

Another significant reform was appointment of exchange teachers, alternatively, quota teachers, for minority schools in Western Thrace and Istanbul. For instance, in the school year of 1952-1953, 24 Turkish

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34 Ali Huseyinoglu, "The Development of Minority Education at the southeastermost corner of the EU: The Case of Muslim-Turks in Greece", University of Sussex, PhD, 2012,163-164.

35 Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority,* 2000, 143

36 However, minority schoolbooks from Turkey were only accepted in 1955 for the school year of 1955-1956., Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 134

37 *Akın* , 27.04.1984, cited in Huseyinoglu, ""The Development of" 2012,165.

38 *Trakya,* 22.11.1954.

39 Huseyinoglu "The Development", 2012, 166.

40 *Trakya*, 31.03.1959.

41 Ibid.

teachers were sent to Western Thrace by Turkey to teach in minority schools.[42] In fact, the need for exchange teachers arose from the lack of teachers in the newly built minority high school in Komotini as well as in minority primary schools in vilages, where education was carried out by the village imam and/or Muslim clergy. Some of the minority primary school teachers of the early 1950s were primary school graduates.[43] In order to improve the teaching quality of the existing minority schoolteachers, Greece and Turkey organized regular summer training programs.[44] In mid 1960s, the Greek state made it mandatory to pass a Greek language proficiency test for minority teachers.[45]

After 1950s, the Greek teachers for the Greek part of the curriculum were appointed and paid by Greek governments. On the other hand, teachers for the Turkish part of the curriculum were hired by the villagers; by the waqf trustees and members of primary school council on a yearly basis. Their salaries were paid according to the contract made between the Council and the teachers. Until 1960s, teachers were paid in kind; wheat or tobacco.[46] The primary school was designed on a six-year basis. The pupils in upper classes of 4, 5 and 6 supported the teacher in the school by checking and correcting the lower-class pupils' in-class tasks and homework.[47] However, not all minority primary schools had Greek teachers even in 1960.[48]

In order to be eligible to teach, prior to 1960s, a teaching license was authorized by the then Minority Schools Coordinator and the police

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42 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 34.

43 Interview with Osman, retired teachers Mümtaz, Mithat, İlyas, Ethem, Komotini; Mustafa Salihoğlu, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

44 Huseyinoglu, "The Development of Minority Education", 2012, 165

45 Enver Kavaklı, "Elence Kursları ve Önemi: Öğretmen Arkadaşlardan Dileğimiz", *Birlik*, nr.1, 10 August 1963.

46 "Türk Azınlığı", *Trakya*, 14.08.1950 ; "Öğretmenlerin tütün ile ödenmesi hakkında", *Trakya*, 25.09.1950. Narrations of elderly participant villagers.

47 Interview with Osman and N.M, Galini, summer 2012.

48 Until the 1961-1962 school year, education was carried out only by one teacher in the village of Galini, Osman Hüseyin, "Yalanca", *Birlik,* 10 August 1963, r.1, 15.

regardless of the candidate's eligibility, qualifications or experience. In 1959, Osman Nuri was complaining that there was no authority, no individual, no organization of the Turkish minority to check a teacher candidate's eligibility to teach in minority schools. [49] He also criticized the Minority Teachers' Association *(Muallimler Cemiyeti)* for its passivity and indifference.[50]

Osman, a primary school graduate, was authorized and hired as a primary school teacher in 1950s. Apparently, he was smart and had high grades in primary school. After graduation, he continued to assist the teacher at the school for three more years. The primary school teacher appealed to the Inspector Miniadis who granted him a license to teach by reference of the teacher. At the age of 18, he was hired to teach at the primary school of a highland village of Beygirciler. His one-year teaching experience gives a vivid picture of the primary school education, the role of the teacher substituting the imam when in need and his perception by the villagers.

> I was appointed to the village of Beygirciler for the school year 1950-1951. It was a highland village of Turks. Turkish was the only language spoken in the village. There was no school building, not even a proper mosque but only a masjid. I was responsible for teaching during the day and citing the call to prayer (ezan) in the evening and at night. I did not cite it in the morning, noon and afternoon because of teaching hours. Friday and Saturday were weekend holidays whereas Sunday was a school day. We performed the Friday prayer in the nearest village of Yasiköy. According to Islam, Friday prayers were not performed in masjids. In the break time and after school, I used to play football and games with the pupils. One day I ordered my male students to have their hair cut properly, but I emphasized, 'not too short', but 'neatly'. I had no intention to deprive my male pupils of hair, but I did not want them to have

49 *Trakya,* 31.03.1959.

50 Ibid.

messy hair either. The next day, all pupils had haircuts, except Nazif. I asked him why he did not have his hair cut. He responded in a spoiled manner; 'I'll have my hair cut only if you also have yours cut.' I told him that he could not speak with me in that way because I was the teacher. The boy replied, 'I recognize no teacher'. I ordered him to leave the classroom. During the night prayer at the masjid that evening, I asked their fathers whether they were content with my order of haircut, and everyone seemed to consent to it. Then I told them about Nazif's behavior. One of the villagers suggested to bring a pair of scissors and cut some pieces of his hair so that he would have to have his hair cut like the rest of the pupils. The next day, I and that villager held him in the classroom and cut some pieces of his hair by force. Nazif swore at me and left. While I was citing the prayer that evening, I noticed Nazif's father approaching with a large stick in his hand. Terrorized, I fled to the masjid and locked the door. Apparently, Nazif lied to him saying that I swore at his mother, who had recently passed away. His father was enraged. The next day he came and apologized to me. As I learned later, the villagers told him 'How dare you attempt to beat a teacher due to a child's words? He is the man of the state. If he complains you to the authorities, you'll end up in exile on an island.' In the end of the year, I left the village. I was appointed to Dikilitaş, but I didn't go there. I was very upset by this incident. I lost my enthusiasm to teach. Two years later training programs started in Turkey for the local teachers. I did not go because I had not been teaching for over two years.[51]

The narration reveals the primitive understanding of education and discipline over the haircut, very typical of the primary schools in Turkey until late 1990s. Even worse, the teaching license given to a primary school graduate is beyond comprehension although it might seem to be a pragmatic option in that period. These were altogether indications of an

51 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

urgent need for real teachers and curriculum for minority schools. Moreover, the fear from authority, in this case, rurals' fear of the state is palpable in Nazif's father who decided to apologize him for fear of authorities.

Funding for education from both states continued for a long while and contributed to the social development of the minority.[52] Construction of minority schools and their spatial separation from the mosque was a significant step towards secularization. The existing ones were also repaired and improved.[53] For instance, the primary school of the lowland village Yalanca was built in 1960 with these funds under the leadership of the School Council Head, my late paternal grandfather. Construction materials were provided by the government. The school was constructed by the rurals' collective labor. [54]

Similarly, the primary school of the lowland village Çepelli was enlarged and repaired in 1959. As of 1962, there were 120 pupils in six different classes from 1-to-6. There were 4 teachers in the school: a Greek teacher, a teacher of Religion, a quota teacher from Turkey, and a Turkish teacher, graduate of Teaching College in Turkey. 20 male and 4 female students from the village were studying at Teaching Colleges in Turkey.[55] In the school year of 1960-61, in Eşekçili, construction of the primary school was completed. It had three classrooms, a teacher's room and an additional room, two minority teachers and a Greek Orthodox teacher.[56]

Several steps of secularization followed. One of the most outstanding, was, arguably, the re-identification of Muslim minority schools as 'Turkish' (law 3065/1954), which implicitly meant an ethno-national

52 "Ekalliyetin Kültürel Kakınmasında Hükümet Yardımı", *Trakya,* 16.09.1957.

53 In a series of articles in *Trakya*, "Boyacılar Köyünde İlkokul", 17.08.1953; "Türk Okullarına Hükümey Yardımı" , 08.11.1954.

54 Interview with Osman; my father's narrations; Osman Hüseyin, "Köylerimizi Tanıyoruz: Yalanca", 14-15.

55 İbrahim Hasancıkoğlu, "Köylerimizi Tanıtıyoruz: Çepelli Köyü", *Birlik,* May, 1962

56 *Batı Trakya Dergisi*, 1 August 1961, n.2, cited in *Nokta,* 7 April 1989, n.32.

recognition of the Muslim minority as 'Turkish.'[57] Alexandris evaluates it as a turning point in the gradual transformation of a basically religious minority to a national one.[58]

The suggestion of the use of Latin alphabet in the highland villages was another endeavor for secularization. The Minority School Inspector Miniadis proposed the use of Latin alphabet to 105 teachers in the Pomak populated highland villages, which was, according to Aarbakke, meant to appease Turkey. However, it was not mandatory.[59] On the other hand, the state did not intervene in the weekend holiday. Some villages (especially the highlands) continued with Friday-Saturday as opposed to others (lowlands) who changed it to Saturday and Sunday.

The reforms in minority education were not confined to the use of new Turkish alphabet, textbooks, teachers and school buildings. Novel cultural activities were introduced for the pupils. For instance, in some villages, end-of school year theatre plays were organized. Nuri recounts the theatre play by pupils in Kireççiler minority primary school in the end of 1952 school year as remarkable. It was performed bilingually in Turkish and Greek. The Greek military brigade commander was invited as a guest, who, after the play revealed his astonishment by saying that he thought it was a Turkish-Greek mixed primary school.[60] According to the Turkish journalist Arpad, "the education in the minority primary schools in the village Kireççiler and the central primary school in Gümülcine was the same as primary education in Turkey".[61]

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57 The memorandum sent to the mayors and presidents of communities in the province of Rhodope ordered to replace the title "Muslim" with "Turkish", cited in Rozakis, "The International Protection of Minorities in Greece", 1996, 104.

58 Alexandres, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul* , 1983, 308.

59 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 136.

60 *Trakya,* 02.06.1952.

61 Arpat, B. (1954). "Batı Trakya'da neler oluyor", *Vatan Gazetesi*. İstanbul, 19–26 November, cited in Aaarbakke, "The Muslim Minority," 2000, 134.

The cultural protocol did not only reform minority education but also the minority culture. For instance, Turkish newspapers were allowed in Greece, imported and sold in İskçe by Şakir Servili.[62] Turkish films were imported and shown in the movie halls of Gümülcine and İskeçe and in open-air cinemas in villages during the summer where both the local Muslims and Greek Orthodox attended. Turkish films were reportedly very popular even among the local Greek Orthodox.[63] The owners of the movie halls also invited musicians and singers from Turkey to give concerts.[64]

The reforms in minority education resulted in the proliferation of secular teachers. However, they did not please all segments of the minority and majority, particularly the traditionalists (conservatives) and the far nationalist Greek Orthodox. The Union of Muslims in Greece, headed by Hafız Reşat and Mehmet Emin Aga[65], representing the traditionalist/conservative faction, showed their opposition to educational reforms by three letters they sent to the Greek authorities dated 28.05.1955.[66] Furthermore, they did not allow quota teachers from Turkey to enter minority schools in the Ksanthian highlands.[67]

The traditionalist teachers(clergymen) organized under Muslim Teachers' Association pioneered by some of the remaining of the 150 fugitives in highlands. They continued education with the old script (Ottoman) and employed highlander males who did not speak Turkish at all as teachers in the minority schools. In fact, it is stated that many of these teachers did not know Arabic script themselves and were therefore not eligible to teach the children.[68] Nuri claimed that "teachers avoided using

62 *Trakya*, 26.05.1952

63 Narrations of minority locals, Greece, summer 2012.

64 Announcement of a concert in Reks movie hall in Ksanthi, *Trakya*, 02.06.1952.

65 Mehmet Emin Aga changed sides later and shifted to the secular group. Before he passed away in 2006, he had been the 'elected Mufti' of Ksanthi for almost twenty years.

66 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 136

67 Interview with A.Dede, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

68 Interview with Orhan Hacıibram who attended primary school in Oreon, Ksanthi, 2012; *Trakya,* 14.04.1959.

the word 'Turk' in the highlands because they regarded it as the most serious political crime".[69] As a secular himself, he blamed them for serving the political aspirations of the Greek state represented by the police and the Minority Schools Coordinator whose ultimate purpose is to 'divide and rule' and evaluated it as an impediment against the cultural and educational development of the minority.[70]

The schism between modernist teachers and medrese graduates deepened even more with the enactment by Turkey in 1960 the law nr 168 on *Social Assistance for non-citizen but Turkish origin Teachers* who serve Turkish culture in the countries they live. It was intended to encourage Teaching College graduate Western Thracians to return to Western Thrace to teach and live there. The principal condition to be entitled to social assistance (monetary) was "not to engage in acts against the Turkish Culture and Turkish Revolutions."[71]

The law entitled these teachers to pensions, lifelong regular payment in case of their dismissal from their posts. Their rights would be transferred to their spouses and children upon death.[72] The beneficiaries were Turkish Teaching College graduate minority teachers and teachers who attended the Teacher Training Courses in Turkey. These teachers established their association entitled 'Western Thracian Turkish Teachers' Union' in 1952.[73] Exclusion of medrese graduate teachers aggravated the already existing schism in between and led them to establish their own association, 'Western Thracian Medrese Graduate Muslim Teachers' Association' under the auspices of Miniadis, the Minority School Inspector in 1965.[74]

The secular teachers, usually graduates of Teaching Colleges from Turkey contributed to the enlightenment and social development of the minority. They set an example not only in school but in everyday life with

69 *Trakya*, 13.04.1953.

70 Ibid.

71 Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin*, 2012, 239

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., 237.

74 Ibid., 240.

their interactions with the villagers. They made significant contributions to the minority press and literature by authoring newspapers and periodicals such as *Birlik, Öğretmen, Aliş* (for children). They embarked on a modernizing mission by promoting awareness for education, good parenthood, health other social issues.

In one such article, for instance, the author addresses the Muslim clergymen and his male colleagues to help emancipate their wives from the traditional long black gown *ferace*. He criticizes the family pressure on women to wear the *ferace,* which he describes as a primitive dress, 'black and shameful'.[75] He speaks for the females who hate it and look for husband candidates who will emancipate them from wearing it. Furthermore, he recommends the coat (manto) in the transition process to modern dress.[76]

A post-modern argument against this kind of a modernization argument would probably deem this as an oppressive act not taking into consideration the voice of women who wear the *ferace*. I do not mean to generalize but I have personally known a significant number of ruralwomen who wore it reluctantly as it was imposed on them by their parents and later by their husbands and husband's families.

To conclude, the rapprochement post World War II generated an educational revolution for the minority in terms of the construction of new and modern school buildings, new curriculums, and educated, eligible teachers. The educational reforms also led to the modernization of males and subsequently females which would generate a number of positive social changes in the upcoming decades. Therefore it is still remembered as the golden period by many elderly.

75 Osman Hüseyin, "Ferace", *Birlik*, 10 August 1963, 8

76 Ibid.

§ 7.2 Land Distribution and Land Disputes

A major reason behind the loss of land previously belonging to or cultivated by the minority rurals is the lack of a proper land register in Greece[77], as well as lack of proper title deeds. The Ottoman regulation of 1858 which granted land ownership to the person who cultivated the land at least for 10 years was recognized in the Greek Constitutions of 1914 and 1929.[78] However, some title deeds were lost due to subsequent wars and migration whereas some others were not recognized by the Greek state.

Kıymet and Hacer , for instance, stated that their fathers' title deeds for 80 stremmata of land were not recognized by the state and they lost substantial pieces of land they used to cultivate. The state explanation was that they had to apply to the authorities to have their title deeds renewed when the region was incorporated by Greece. Both claimed that their expropriated lands were distributed to Sarakatsans who gradually abandoned pastoralism and settled in lowland villages post 1950s. Their fathers went to Ankara to get documents certifying the validity of their title deeds but the Greek state did not recognize them either. [79] This kind of a struggle demonstrate that the rurals did not always accept a *fait accompli* but exercised agency.

Disputes over land expropriation usually stemmed from allocation of pastures, which the minority rurals claimed belonged to the village and was a vital source for husbandry. However, the Greek state treated them as public land eligible for distribution.[80] Nonetheless, despite a number of reported unjust land allocations, the minority landless

77 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 60; *Trakya,* 16.05.1952.

78 Oran, *Türk Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu*, 1991, 248.

79 Interview with Hacer, Dialampi, Kıymet, Galini, summer 2012.

80 "Endişe Verici Bir Vaziyet", *Trakya* 16.05.1952, 11.08.1952.

and small land owners also benefited from land distribution from clearing of forests, unused public land for cultivation and the expropriation of *ciftlik* lands in 1952.

Osman stated that the Greek government distributed land (five stremmata) to all landless Muslims, including the Roma, in Yalanca, Karamusa, Balabanköy and Yasiköy from the cleared parts of Balabanköy forest.[81]Likewise, the 700 stremmata pasture and forest land in the south of Komotini were fairly distributed to the minority villages in the area including the village of Büyük Doğanca.[82]

The first type of disputes concerned the decisions of local authorities over distribution of land created by clearing of forests and unused land. One of the most sizeable clearing projects in this regard was that of *Koca Orman* comprising an area of 45,000 stremmata, divided by the river Karasu into two equivalent parts that remained in İskeçe and Kavalla. Therefore, it turned into an issue of conflict in between the two towns.[83]The landless villagers of the area and those who owned less than 6 stremmata of land (with the prerequisite that they did not sell land before) were entitled to register for land allocation. Nuri addressed the General Governor of Thrace and the Regional Agricultural Office to distribute land to the landless rurals of the highland village Otmanören stating that half of the villagers were landless.[84] In an issue months later, Nuri was heralding that the problem was about to be resolved.[85]

Nuri's involvement in land issues was sincere and far from a propagandist nature. His honest and courageous attitude can be observed in his critique of the Turkish media and Turkey. For instance, in 1954, Nuri published a disclaimer of the General Governor of Thrace against the allegations of the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* that no land was allocated to the local Turks of Western Thrace from Koca Orman. The disclaimer

81 Interview with Osman, Galini, summer 2012.

82 *Trakya,* 30.05.1955.

83 "Emirlerde Katiyet Olmalıdır", *Trakya*, 28.01.1952.

84 "Otmanören köyü", *Trakya,* 22.02.1952.

85 *Trakya*, 19.03.1952.

revealed in detail the number of Christian and Muslim families in the Ksanthian lowland villages and the amount of land allocated to each.[86] Nuri blamed *Hürriyet* newspaper for their false publication of news about Western Thrace, which he argued would harm the Western Thracian Turks and provoke the Greek mainstream public. He further questioned the purpose of the newspaper:

> They did not dare publish a verse about the Western Thracian Turks in the most disastrous times. Therefore, their concern for problems in these ordinary current times cannot be considered an act of goodwill or an auspicious purpose.[87]

Concerning *Hürriyet's* coverage on land issues, Nuri asserted that the land disputes were a result of the 1930 Turkish-Greek Ankara Agreement to which Turkey consented to the *fait accompli* by lifting the 16th article of Lausanne Treaty.[88] Nuri gave a sarcastic response, accusing them implicitly of feeding on lies and provocations and exploiting the minority for their own interests: "We sense a sort of concern that if Greece does something in favor of the minority, they'll be deprived of their capital."[89]

He also criticized Turkey for not having sent aid to the kin in Western Thrace. He even questioned the sincerity of Turkish politicians' by underlining their indifferent attitude to the prevailing poverty;

> We've received aid from as far as the USA, the UK but not from Turkey. Those who seem to be care about the Western Thracian Turks avoided sending material (aid). This would be a sign of sincerity… instead they make us steps in their political games.[90]

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86 "Umumi Valiliğin bir Tekzibi", *Trakya*, 22.02.1954.

87 "Tamamıyla Yalandır, 20 Subat 1954 Hürriyet Gazetesine İthafen", *Trakya,* 01.03. 1954.

88 Ibid.

89 "İt Örür, Kervan Yürür", *Trakya*, 22.03.1954.

90 "Parcels (aid) have arrived" , *Trakya,* 01.02.1954.

The second type of land disputes were between the exchanged Greek Orthodox and the local Muslim Turks which were claimed to be due to "(ethnic) maps" drawn by authorities between 1925 and 1929 and during the Metaxas regime (1936-1941) to put into practice in the future. These maps were claimed to have been drawn after the Mixed Commission left the region in 1933 who remained in the region for eleven years and fairly resolved the land disputes over refugee settlement. The villages established for the refugees adjacent to the Turkish villages demanded more and more land and the minority villages were gradually squeezed in a shrinking area.[91]

Nuri criticized the lack of proper land register in Greece[92] , which is still a major issue of conflict between the Greek state and the Greek Orthodox clergy.

> From Evros to Ioanian islands, landowners in Greece prove their ownership of lands inherited from their great grandparents either by showing witnesses that they have been cultivating the land for generations [zilyetlik] or by showing their Ottoman title deeds. Even their ownership of land is regarded suspicious by the authorities.[93]

The dilemma of the minority rurals to prove the ownership of their land was a long and costly process as reflected in rurals' complaints;

> When one day your neighbor, the exchanged Greek Orthodox who settled here knock on your door and claim ownership to your land which has been feeding you and your family for ages

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91 " Endişe Verici Bir Durum-1", *Trakya*, 16.05.1952.

92 "Greece's Orthodox Church and state consider divorce", available online at: https://www.dw.com/en/greeces-orthodox-church-and-state-consider-divorce/a-46405437, last retrieved 02.09.2019; "Greece is on the path to becoming 'religion neutral", available online at: https://www.trtworld.com/europe/greece-is-on-the-path-to-becoming-religion-neutral-21628, last retrieved 02.09.2019.

93 *Trakya*, 16.05.1952.

> and say: 'This field is given to me by the Agricultural Department because on the map your name was not written. Now it belongs to me', what will you do? You'll end up in court. You'll have to pay the lawyer, the court, the witnesses, and will not have enough time to tend your land due to these formalities. Eventually you may even suffer a monetary loss even more than the value of your land. If you lose, you'll have lost both your land and your money. Even if you win, you won't be given your land but probably the government will pay you the legal costs accrued and permission to clear an amount of field from an infertile piece of land.[94]

This procedure to prove land ownership was changed in 1955 by Law nr. 3194 passed in the Greek Parliament. Accordingly, no one would have to resort to Court to prove their land ownership. Instead, the Commissions established for Land Expropriation, headed by a judge and composed of an agricultural and settlement expert was entitled with the right to give such decisions after an investigation. The person in question could nevertheless resort to the Court if he was not content with their decision. Even those who lost at the Court until then were granted the right to appeal within one year after the enactment of the law. Nuri cited a number of villages who could benefit from the new law.[95] A year later, it was reported that sixty persons claiming partial ownership of the five hundred stremmata pasture allocated to the landless in the village of Arabacıköy in 1952 resorted to the Court based on this law. After two years, the verdict partially accepted 18 applicants' demands but denied the rest.[96]

Nuri claimed that the concerned maps were prepared for the purpose of encircling minority villages to the advantage of the exchanged Greek Orthodox, allowing their expansion without having to purchase land from local Turks. The maps were allegedly drawn secretly without consulting or informing anyone. The lands belonging to the minority

94 Ibid.

95 "Ziraat Kanununda Lehimize bir Değişiklik", *Trakya*, 18.04.1955

96 *Trakya*, 7 May 1956.

were sometimes deliberately registered as *property of an unknown owner*. Nuri alleged that the government did not recognize the maps showing local Turks' lands, which were drawn by conscientious Greek Orthodox engineers, claiming that their validity ended in 1932 when the refugee settlement was completed.[97]

These maps were stated to be the reason of land disputes in Arabacıköy,[98]Demirbeyli, Koru, Kalfa, Misvaklı[99], and Balabanköy. They posed a potential threat for the rest of lowland villages and households who on the average possessed around 30 streammata of land. Nuri warned the rurals to be alert as he emphasized; "We must struggle with this sinister invasion which is the product of a systematic policy".[100]

In 1951, the inhabitants of Koru were complaining that their pasture was cultivated by the exchanged Greek Orthodox inhabitants of the neighboring village Pigadia. Disputes on this public land were creating confrontations between the Greek Orthodox locals, the local Greek authorities and the Muslim Turk villagers.[101] Nuri brought the case to the authorities. After a bureaucratic struggle, contrary to the local authority's claims, Nuri learnt that there was no official land allocation from pasture.[102] The loss of this pasture would mean the deprivation of Turkish-Muslim peasants from their living source as they depended on husbandry. In the 60 household Muslim village of Koru, ten households were stated as landless, whereas the rest had 3 to 4 stremmata of lands.[103]

The next articles on the subject illustrate the then immature and corrupt nature of Greek bureaucracy. Some Greek Orthodox village guards and the Mayor's secretary in Gökçeler allegedly issued false doc-

97 Ibid.

98 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:4: Arabacıköy , 09.06.1952; 16.06.1952.

99 "Endişe Verici Bir Vaziyet-5: Misvaklı ", *Trakya*, 16.06.1952.

100 *Trakya*, 16.05.1952.

101 *Trakya*, 14.09.1953.

102 Ibid.

103 *Trakya*, 14.07.1954.

uments with the purpose of allocating Koru's pasture to the Greek Orthodox villages because they were expecting shares from the pasture land. The authorities investigated and found out that the documents were fake and submitted them to the concerned local Court. After five delays, the defendants won the case upon the testimony of Mancikos, the General Governor Agricultural Chamber Head who was favoring the exchanged Greek Orthodox villagers.[104]

The basis for such decisions, in this case the township decision 53/1937, according to Nuri, was the previous secret maps and decisions taken during the period of Metaxsas dictatorship when local administrators were appointed and barely any objection was possible.[105] On the other hand, the Ottoman documents were allegedly showing that the land in question was a pasture.[106] Therefore, depriving the landless villagers of the pasture land would be the end of their single income source husbandry and make them servants to the Greek Orthodox neighbors.[107]

In a similar vein, in Arabacıköy, 981 hectares of land was depicted as forest on the map of the Topography Department. In fact, it was cultivated by 110 minority families in the same village as well as by those in nearby villages. However, only 30 families had Ottoman title deeds and contracts whereas the majority had no deeds or contracts. None of these families cultivated more than 18 stremmata of land and some of them did not possess land elsewhere. The Department of Agriculture, without doing any research, decided to allocate 750 stremmata of this land to 34 Greek Orthodox refugees and 17 local Turk families. Nuri claimed that the latter had been included 'to sugar the pill', so that the beneficiaries would not all be Greeks. However, there were reportedly Ksanthian (urban) local Turks within this group, some of whom had suborned in exchange for land which they were not entitled to.[108]

104 *Trakya*, 2.08.1954.

105 *Trakya*, 09.08.1954; 16.08.1954; 23.08.1954; 06.09.1954; 13.09.1954, 20.09.1954.

106 *Trakya*, 23.08.1954.

107 *Trakya*, 06.09.1954.

108 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:4: Arabacıköy'", 09.06.1952.

The Agricultural Department allocated 100 stremmata to 15 local Turks whose title deeds were recognized. The Greek Orthodox refugee families were told to plough the land. A few days later, the Governor, the civil servants and the plaintiffs (the local Turks) met at the office of the MP Nuri to discuss the issue. The Greek authorities based their arguments on the law which stipulated that "in the vast amount of public land belonging to the government or the municipality, if there are lands owned by persons, they are also subject to allocation. In return, the owners either get some piece of land or are financially compensated."[109]

On the other hand, the local Turk villagers claimed that it was not public but private land cultivated for ages. Finally, the Governor suspended the land allocation and conveyed the issue to the related Ministry. In the meanwhile, both sides tried to plough the land where they confronted each other albeit with no reported violence except that apparently the Greek Orthodox locals unharnessed the horses. Eventually, the 80 local Turks sent a memorandum to Athens.[110]The decision from Athens ordered the lands without proper title deeds to be taken and the rest to be left to the owners until the court procedure was over.

Likewise, in the Ksanthian lowland village of Misvaklı, the Greek Orthodox refugees were settled in between two local Turks' neighborhoods. Over 2,500 stremmata pasture was allocated to the new settlers. In 1928, a branch of the Ksanthian stream changed direction and flew through some local Turks' fields. Therefore, the topographers registered them in the same year as pasture on their maps. As a result, the Greek Orthodox refugee settlers ploughed around 200-300 stremmata which had previously belonged to the local Turks.[111]

A similar land dispute occurred in the lowland village *Taşlık*. However, the Mixed Commission had acknowledged the land ownership rights of the local Turks and given them certificates of ownership. Reportedly, after the Mixed Commission completed its duty and left the region,

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 *Trakya,* "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:5: Misvaklı, 16.06.1952.

the Greek Orthodox refugees ploughed the local Turks' lands and troubled them. The local minority villagers, in the turmoil of the Civil War, between 1948 and 1949, sold their fertile lands for much under value and immigrated to Turkey.[112]

Nuri warned large landowners not to believe in the rumors spread by local and exchanged Greek Orthodox and civil servants that the state would expropriate their lands for much under value, and that it is best to sell them beforehand at better prices. However, already in 1946, the Agricultural Department had allocated 6,000 stremmata of land in Balabanköy previously cultivated by the villagers and distributed 2,000 stremmata to the exchanged Greek Orthodox of the neighboring villages. Only 54 stremmata were distributed to 18 of 30 landless local Turk families, which was, according to Nuri, meant to avert the possible accusation that local landless Turks do not get their share from land distribution.[113]

Apparently, some big landowners resorted to local authorities, but their voices remained unheard.[114]Consequently, of the prominent big landowner Turks in Balabanköy such as Mehmet Ali Mümin, İmam Hüseyin, Alicik, Ömer Süleyman, Salim's wife Cemile, Mümin Çavuş's wife Gülsüm and Üzeyir sold their houses and lands and in total 1280 stremmata to Sarakatsans and immigrated to Turkey in 1951.[115] Already in 1946, these persons' 201 stremmata of land were allocated and distributed.

Nuri drew attention to the tendency of emigration among the large landholder notables, reiterating that it generated a demoralizing impact on the villagers. He tried to convince the rest of the big landowners not to sell their lands by referring to the already depopulated village

112 As stated by Nuri, the annual rent for one stremma was 100,000 drachmas but they sold it for 60,000 drachmas. "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:6: Taşlık", *Trakya,* 23.06.1952.

113 Ibid.

114 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:8: Balabanköy" , *Trakya,* 14.07.1952

115 Ibid.; Narrations of two locals of Balabanköy, and the nearby village Yalanca , summer 2012.

of Sasallı and asking a patriotic rhetorical question in the end of his article: "Shall we allow the once upon a time the wealthiest village of Komotinian lowlands –Balabanköy- to disappear?"[116]

Nonetheless, not all the land disputes were solved in favor of the local Greek Orthodox villagers. A dispute over pastureland between the villages Kalfa(Turkish-Muslim) and Karidia (a Greek Orthodox village) for instance was resolved to the benefit of the former. Apparently, the 320 stremmata pastureland of Kalfa intersected with the fields of Karidia. The pastureland was the heartland of the village because the herds and cattle depended on it. Reportedly, in 1938, during the military rule of Metaxas, the local Greek Orthodox of Karidia persuaded the civil servants to issue a decision for the allocation of the pastureland among themselves and other the Greek Orthodox villages of Pandrusu, Proktiyon and Kalitea. However, the government refused to implement the decision and it remained in limbo.

After the war, the villagers of Karidia brought the issue to the agenda. In 1950, at a time of government elections when the General Governor of Thrace and the local minority Turk MPs were in Athens, they made a deal with the local authorities and ploughed 70 stremmata of the pastureland for cultivation. After the elections, however, the new local authority ordered them to leave the pastureland. In reaction to the order, they ploughed even the rest of 250 stremmata. The villagers in Kalhas complained about the situation to the local authorities. They were proven right, and the Greek Orthodox locals were driven out. However, the dispute was not legally resolved.[117]

What was striking about the land disputes between the local Muslims and the Greek Orthodox villagers in 1950s is that neither resorted to violence. In cases where the exchanged Greek Orthodox laid claim to the lands previously cultivated by local Muslims, the latter struggled for their rights by way of resorting to intermediaries such as the minority MPs or the local and judicial authorities.

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116 Ibid.

117 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet-10-Kalfa", *Trakya*, 11.08.1952.

In the case of Arabacıköy, for instance, Nuri claimed that "If the 100 households intend to defend themselves collectively, the battle will be even worse than guerilla warfare".[118]Likewise, when the mayor of Yasiköy asked the local Turks: 'Why didn't you defend yourselves by taking an axe, or a club or a scythe? One of the local Turks replied: "Do we necessarily need to engage in violence? Is there no government here? Does the government always side with the unjust people?"[119]

This kind of non-violent behavior may not be due to the staunch belief in the rule of law and the institutions to sustain it. It is rather the reluctance to engage in any kind of act that might trigger violence in a country that is ruled by the disputed party's coreligionists /co-ethnics. It is also a reflection of diffidence; a common trait of the uneducated rural community. Above all, seeking for justice or solutions to problems through intermediaries, like the officials, MPs, lawyers, and others holding power is the ubiquitous survival strategy of the minority.

Nuri criticized the passivity of the landless and small landowner villagers concerning applications for land distribution. Their passive, negligent attitude and the fatalist mentality precluded them from submitting petitions for the land distribution provided by Land Reform of 1952. He urged the landless villagers to apply for land even from places far from their village like the *Koca Orman* Forest. He also criticized the wealthy, large landowners for not informing and guiding the ignorant, diffident villagers.

> The large landowners in villages consider it against their personal interests and are worried that they'll lose their servants if those landless villagers get land from distribution.[120]

Not all the results of the land disputes were covered in the subsequent issues of the *Trakya* newspaper. It seems that a number of them

118 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:4: Arabacıköy", *Trakya,* 09.06.1952.

119 Ibid.

120 "Köylülerimiz Dikkat Etsinler", *Trakya*, 29.12.1952.

were entangled in legal procedures. Nuri remarked that "There is no single land dispute resolved precisely (legally) in our homeland. The proceedings are kept in limbo until they resurface". History would prove him right in the future such as the land expropriation attempt in İnhanlı.

§ 7.3 Evacuating Villages: Immigration to Turkey: 1952-1967

7.3.1 *Illegal Immigration to Turkey*

In 1950s, immigration to Turkey followed the previous illegal migration pattern of the war period. Osman Nuri ardently criticized the immigrants, the Turkish policy for accepting them at a time when the war was over, and the Greek authorities for not taking sufficient measures to stop illegal migration.[121] Illegal migration was the preferred form because it was very difficult to get a travel visa from Turkish Consulate in Komotini. The applicants for a visa were obliged to bring a commitment bill [122] from a previously settled person (relative or neighbor) in Turkey, answer hundreds of questions, and undergo a long and arduous process of investigation.[123]

The motive behind illegal migration was the economic hardship in Greece after two successive wars. On the other hand, the economic conditions in Turkey who successfully remained aloof from World War II were better. In 1950, for instance, in Greece, the tobacco market, the main source of income for most minority peasants was dominated by Ameri-

121 "Nasreddin Hoca'nın Türbesi, *Trakya,* 14.08.1950; Interview with Osman, Yalanca; Mümtaz, Komotini; and narrations of elderly members of the family.

122 Taahhüt senedi; written commitment about the address the traveler will stay and the person who'll take care of him/her during his/her stay.

123 *Trakya,* 14.08.1950

can (Virginian) tobacco. According to the Marshall Plan, Greece was expected to produce 60 million kilos of tobacco for the year 1950. However, there were already 49 million kilos unsold tobaccos from the previous year, as well as another 12 million kilos from 1948. This was due to the influx of American Virginia tobacco into Greece. Nuri criticized the contradictory American policy;

> Our ally and supporter, the USA, on the one hand provides us with various forms of aid. On the other hand, she damages our national agricultural produce (tobacco) pushing 2,5 million people into poverty.[124]

Another cause of illegal migration was to evade military duty. In fact, military duty was made mandatory for Muslim minority males in 1960. However, those unable to pay the exemption tax had to do it. Furthermore, the rule did not apply in wars as mentioned before. Nuri criticized Istanbul newspapers for publishing some Western Thracian illegal immigrants' stories without any investigation. Apparently, they were spreading false news, that the Greek state was oppressing the Turks in Western Thrace.[125]

There were other reasons of illegal migration such as having committed a crime and abandoning families and/or wives. For instance, a man from the Rhodopean village Sendelli immigrated to Turkey illegally right after slaughtering his wife upon false allegations of cheating to escape the police.[126] A number of married men illegally immigrated to Turkey to abandon their wives and families.[127] A number of divorce announcements of women abandoned by their husbands and not contacted

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124 "Tütün Meselesi", *Trakya*, 22.03.1950, 14.08.1950; 25.09.1950

125 *Trakya*, 19.10.1953; 09.11.1953.

126 Narrations in the middle-line and lowland villages of Komotini; *Nokta*, "Tamna-Eşekçili", 7 Nisan 1989, nr.32; "Fethiye", *Rodop Rüzgarı* , nr.12, 01.03.2000.

127 Narrations in Yalanca, Müselimköyi Yasiköy, Narlıköy, summer 2012.

for at least five years or more were published in *Trakya* by the Mufti Ofice.[128]

On the other hand, there was also return migration from Turkey back to Western Thrace. Some of these return migrants had previously liquidated their properties. Therefore, when they returned to their villages, they had to work as shepherds and laborers on the fields to sustain themselves. Some of the return migrants who had already obtained Turkish citizenship sought ways to regain Greek citizenship. In 1955, Nuri informed the return migrants that they could apply to the Agricultural Bank for loans to buy sheep and/or cattle.[129] He also urged the villagers who had money to buy the lands of those who were selling them to immigrate to Turkey legally during the free migration period of mid 1950s to early 1960s.[130]

In fact, return migration from Turkey to Greece has been an ever-existing phenomenon. Until late 1971, part of the railway extending from Istanbul to Edirne passed through the town of Karaağaç (given to Turkey by Greece as war reparation in 1924) into Greek territory. After the construction of a 67 km extension from Edirne to Pehlivanköy that was finalized on 4th October 1971, it did not pass through Greek territory again.[131] It is narrated that until early 1970s, some Western Thracian settlers in Turkey jumped out of this train while it was passing through the Greek territory.[132]

In order to prevent illegal immigration to Turkey, a circular of the Turkish Consulate of Komotini was published in *Trakya* declaring that

128 "Müftüden Boşanma İlanı", *Trakya,* 02.06.1952; 06.10.1952; 19.10.1953; 09.11.1953; 28.12.1953; 15.03.1954; 10.06.1957.

129 *Trakya***,** 16.05.1955.

130 Ibid.

131 Nükhet Işıkoğlu : "Bir garip istasyon "Karaağaç", 12.02.2012, available online at https://rayhaber.com/2012/03/nukhet-isikoglu-bir-garip-istasyon-karaagac/, last retrieved 20.08.2019.

132 Narrated by my father who had a few acquaintances that returned to Greece this way.

the Western Thracian illegal immigrants would not be allowed in anymore and warned people not to engage in such a venture.[133] In June 1951, it was reported that 100 Western Thracian refugees who illegally reached the island of Gökçeada were sent back. As they had no documents concerning their Greek citizenship, they were therefore kept at the docks until the end of investigation.[134]In a similar vein, the Greek police and border guards became sensitive about illegal migration. Osman narrated that he and his three friends were stopped by the Greek police in a forest while they were walking over the hills heading for the river Meriç to illegally immigrate to Turkey in the summer of 1951.[135]

7.3.2 *Legal Immigration to Turkey as free immigrants*

Prior to the free migration period, legal migration to Turkey was rare. The wealthy could immigrate to Turkey because the door was not open for the poor.[136] Nuri criticized Turkey's unequal treatment and asserted that it created dismay and mistrust towards Turkey among the poor rurals as well as a sense of insecurity for the future.[137]

He also warned Turkey that if she opened the door for the poor, barely anyone would remain in Western Thrace. Some wealthy, large landowners and notables had already immigrated to Turkey in the interwar period. For instance, Niyazi Bey from İskeçe sold his ciftlik of 3,000 stremmata in early 1930s and settled in Turkey.[138] Fehmi Bey, who was

133 "Declaration from the Turkish Consulate of Komotini", *Trakya*, 11.12.1950

134 "Illegal Migrants to Turkey sent back", *Trakya,* 19.06.1951.

135 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

136 "Göç ve Sebepleri" , *Trakya*, 13.07.1959.

137 Ibid.

138 Interview with Aydın Ömeroğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

elected to the Greek Parliament in 1926, liquidated all his assets and immigrated to Istanbul where he continued to take his salary from Greece.[139]

Turkish free-migration policy was originally intended for the Turks in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria[140], but extended to Greece based on the 1930 Convention on Residence, Commerce and Navigation between Turkey and Greece.[141] It triggered a substantial number of small and medium landowner Muslim-Turk rurals, but, particularly the remaining large landowners to immigrate to Turkey between 1953 and early 1960s. Two decades later Gürün would evaluate it as an inconsistent policy that paved the way for the loss of large landholdings.[142]

Osman Nuri called this trend "*migration craze*"[143] and often voiced his anti-migration stance in his newspaper *Trakya.*[144] He never hesitated to criticize the minority elite, the Turkish newspapers and the Turkish government for encouraging free migration among the Western Thracian Turks.[145] Nuri gives the number of Western Thracian Turkish immigrants to Turkey between 1941 and 1954 as 40,000.[146] The same number is given by the Turkish diplomat Bayülken for the period between 1939 and 1958.[147] According to Orhonlu, between 1952-1962, 18,537 Western Thracians migrated to Turkey, of whom 15,903 were free migrants and 2,624 refugees.[148]

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139 Ibid.

140 Ali Eken, "Identity, Nationhood and Migrations to Turkey from the Balkans:1950-1960", *International Migration*, 10 April 2021; 1-12.

141 Akgönül, *The Minority Concept*, 2013, 111.

142 Gürün, *Bükreş-Paris-Atina,* 1994, 203.

143 Trakya, "Göç" , 11.07.1955.

144 *Trakya*, 26.04.1954; 03.05.1954; 10.05.1954;11.07.1955

145 *Trakya,* 29.03.1954; 26.04.1954; 03.05.1954; 10.05.1954

146 *Trakya*, 10.05.1954.

147 Bayülken, Ü. H. (1963). "Turkish Minorities in Greece." *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 4: 145–164; 150-151,cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 93.

148 Cengiz Orhonlu, "Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığın İsmi Meselesi ve Yunanistan'ın Parçalama Siyaseti", *Türk Kültürü,* 1966, s.44, 683-688, 688. Orhonlu takes the number from *Milliyet*, 9 May 1964.

Immigrant visas were granted by the Turkish Consulate in Gümülcine on the condition that applicants submit a legal document declaring that they liquidated all their property.[149] Özgüc argued that the poor who did not have property should have been prioritized for immigration. This way they could be given land in Turkey and a chance for better lives. Yet, the wealthy and educated families were given priority.[150]

Wealthy immigrants were preferred because they would not be financial burdens for the Turkish state. On the contrary, they were expected to contribute to Turkish economy and society. For instance, the Turkish Consulate demanded the applicants to purchase and bring sewing machines (Singer) because there were not enough sewing machines in Turkey. The existing sewing machines in the applicants' houses were not accepted. They were asked to buy new ones from Sami Efendi's shop in İskeçe.[151]

In the haste to get the free migrant visa, a number of minority members sold their property under value.[152] Some of them could not liquidate all of their property. For instance, in the lowland village Sarıyer, a certain large-land holder Ali was not able to sell his entire lands before he immigrated to Turkey. Apparently after years, it was confiscated by the state.[153] Few rurals purchased their low-priced houses and land either because they had no money or they were also planning to immigrate to Turkey.[154]

The free migration policy was obviously contradictory in nature in a period when Turkey was making significant investments on minority education and Greece was embarking on several reforms to improve the living standards of rurals. The pioneer immigrants were the wealthy

149 "Göç" , *Trakya,* 11.07.1955.

150 Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri,* 1974, 164.

151 Interview with Selahattin Yıldız, İstanbul, 2012; Interview with Mustafa Tahsinoğlu, Kireççiler, summer 2012.

152 Interview with Mustafa Tahsinoğlu, Kireççiler, summer 2012.

153 Interview with Ahmet, Sarıyer, summer 2015.

154 Ibid.

large landowners. The lowland villagers who emulated them acted on the perception 'If the Ağa goes, why should I stay? He must know better than us'.[155] The large landholders set an example for the ordinary villagers, and consequently sparked a 'domino effect' within the minority. Between, 1955-1960, for instance, 30 families in Yalanca immigrated to Turkey and settled in Bursa, İzmir and Adapazarı. [156]

Undoubtedly, the villagers who followed suit were wary of the almost decade long wars in Greece and sought a safer and more stable country to live. Some of the villagers who had already illegally migrated to Turkey during the Civil War came back to liquidate their property and emigrated again between 1955 and 1960. After all, Turkey did not always keep the doors open and they did not want to miss the opportunity. In addition to these practical reasons, there was also the emotional aspect of Turkey as the perceived homeland.[157]

Another reason triggering migration was sporadic incidents of violence in villages which directly or implicitly targeted the local Muslim Turks. A village guard was murdered and his corpse found at the Karasu river bank between the villages of Okçular and Tıkızlı. The local patrol arrested Akif oğlu Sabri, Besim oğlu Hüseyin, Arabacı Şaban Mustafa and the Tıkızlı village headman Süleyman Halil upon false allegations. They were severely beaten and threatened with death unless they admitted the murderer. Yet, the men were innocent. A group of villagers ran to the then MP Osman Nuri for help, who resorted to the General Governor. The Governor told the villagers that he would report the incident and asked them to sue the local patrol officers.[158]

One of the local patrol officers apparently asked Hamdi Bey, minority MP and owner of Milliyet newspaper, to discourage the villagers from filing a suit against them. The accused villagers were threatened by Hamdi's men to renounce their complaint. Despite the Governor's and

155 Interview with Osman, Yalanca; Merdan, Palazlı; Naşide, Öksüzlü, summer 2012.

156 Interview with Osman, Narrations of my grandmothers, Yalanca, summer 2012.

157 Interview with Osman, Yalanca; Mansur, Iasmos; Hatice, Melikli, summer 2012.

158 "Tıkızlı Köyündeki Münferit Olay , *Trakya*, 22.02.1954.

Nuri's insistence, they did not take legal action but preferred to immigrate to Turkey instead.[159] This precipitated further migrations, and by 1957, the small village of Tıkızlı was entirely evacuated.[160] A few days later Hamdi would report a fight between the Greek Orthodox village herder and two local Muslims in Kireççiler in his newspaper with a title encouraging migration: 'It is not possible to live here anymore.'[161]

The brutal murder of two minority males in Müsellim Tekke in 1954, during the free migration period, incited unprecedented fear within the community and resulted in substantial number of rurals abandoning their villages and immigrating to Turkey.[162] It is in the collective memory and has been narrated ever since.[163]

Three young men from the village of Müsellim Tekke had withdrawn money from Agricultural Bank in İskeçe. On their way home on foot, their neighbor Andreas stopped them and invited them for a drink in a tavern in Misvaklı. After a nice chat and drinking, Andreas accompanied them to their village. Suddenly he took out his pistol and threatened them to give him their money. When the three men refused and engaged in a fight, three Greek Orthodox locals appeared from the hollow they had been hiding and attacked them. One of the Turks managed to escape while two others were brutally murdered.[164] Andreas was punished with death penalty two years later while the other two were sentenced to 17 years.[165]

159 "Tıkızlı Köyündeki Münferit Olay, *Trakya*, 22.02.1954.

160 Narrations of Emel, from Okçular, Istanbul, 2015.

161 "Tıkızlı Köyündeki Münferit Olay , *Trakya*, 22.02.1954.

162 Many people in the surrounding villages immigrated to Turkey. Narrations of Ali oğlu Raif's (one of the murdered men) sister's grandson, Cüneyt Yalçın(lives in London), online interview, 2020.

163 My grandmothers narrated it to me several times when I was a child although our village is much far away from that where the murder was committed.

164 " Canavarca bir Cinayet" *Trakya*, 10.12.1956

165 *Trakya,* 03.02.1958

§ 7.4 Depopulated and Dwindling Villages

As a consequence of free migration wave, a number of villages were either depopulated or dwindling by early 1960s. In 1955, for instance, minority primary schools were reduced in number, from 305 in the entire region to 250 or 260. They were mostly the fertile lowland and middle-line villages. The highland villages on the other hand, remained intact.[166]

Highland villages were being gradually depopulated via internal immigration to lowlands, towns and Turkey since the end of the civil war. Dede's narration of the village Kaşıkçılar in 1970s indicates the conditions and expectations of villagers in Rhodopean highland villages:

> The villagers depend on husbandry and tobacco cultivation. The population of the village is reported to have fallen from 22 households to 8 households. There is no running water but four water wells. In the primary school, there is only one minority teacher teaching all classes. The villagers are striving to find a way out of the village because they want to educate their children. The young men cannot get married due to poverty. They want to immigrate to Turkey. The ideal husband candidate therefore is expected to have a house in Turkey.[167]

The trend of internal immigration to lowlands lasted until mid-1990s and has been an ongoing process. Some highlander settlers in the lowlands later migrated to Turkey, thus making it from highlands to lowlands and eventually to the cities of the Marmara and Aegean regions in Turkey. Some populated highland villages such as Dullu, Gülecik, DağKaramusa and Kuzoba have been entirely evacuated. The incoming highlanders bought the houses of lowlanders who immigrated to Turkey.

166 *Trakya*, 24.01.1955.

167 Abdurrahim Dede, "Batı Trakya'da Bir Türk Köyünün Ölümü: Kaşıkçılar", *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 6 Haziran 1980,35-40.

Majority of their lands, on the other hand, were purchased by wealthy local Greek Orthodox. As a consequence , highlanders' settlement in lowlands prevented them from being entirely evacuated.

In the province of Rhodope, lowland villages of Fener, Sarıyer, Meşe and Karapınar lost a significant inhabitants during the free migration period, the junta period and later. Karapınar, for instance, was totally evacuated in 1957 and replaced by Greek Orthodox.[168] In Meşe, three to five minority families remained in 1967. During the junta period (1967-1974), a number of arson-related incidents were reported. For instance, buildings and summer houses that belonged to Necati Meşeli were set on fire. The local woodchopper and timberman İbrahim Sabri's warehouse was burnt down.[169] As narrated by the remaining villagers of Sarıyer in 1989:

> The first and biggest dissolution took place with that malignant free immigration policy after the end of Civil War. They sold their lands for much under their value. During the oppressive decades of 1970s and 1980s, many more left. Today we are only 8-9 families remaining. Part of the mosque is also used as the primary school. We bought materials to repair the mosque, but they (the authorities) did not allow us. In order to prevent us from repairing it illegally, the police kept night shifts. Eventually our materials got spoiled. The Mufti did not help us either.[170]

For the past three decades, Sarıyer has become a holiday resort with two hotels, several lodgings and summer houses belonging to Greek Orthodox, and town dweller minority members. They are from the upper middle class; well-educated professionals such as doctors, lawyers, pharmacists and the petty bourgeoisie. The seaside villages Fener, Sarıyer and Meşe are vivid during the summer, quiet in fall and almost dead during

168 *Trakya*, 26.09.1957.

169 İleri, nr.588, 16.03. 1991

170 *İleri*, "Namı-Türk: Sarıyer, Nam-ı Yunan: Arogi", nr. 561, 25.08.1989

the winter. The few local Muslim-Turk families in Sarıyer today are either retired workers or transmigrants from Germany.[171]

Recurrent migration ultimately changed the ethnic composition of a number of lowland villages. Palazlı, for instance, became a Sarakatsan village from early 1960s on, with few minority households remaining today.[172] In the vicinity, Sasallı was deserted by the local Turks in early 1950, among them were large landowners who immigrated to Turkey.[173] It became a mixed Roma and Greek Orthodox village. In Balabanköy, only ten minority families remain today, half transmigrants in in Germany. Like Palazlı, Kara Musa and Ortacı[174], it has become a Sarakatsan village.

In the Ksanthian plain, the villages of Okçular, Fıçıllı, Tıkızlı, Celepli, Büyük Davutlu, Küçük Davutlu, Gereviz, Elmalı, Kızılcaköy were depopulated this way. These were the rich, fertile, land-abundant villages of Western Thrace. They were part of Ottoman Yenice where tobacco was first grown.[175] In early 1970s, a cigarette brand was launched into the tobacco market bearing the name of the village of Kireççiler written in Greek alphabet.[176] They were the first to adopt the secular Turkish reforms and send students to Teaching Colleges in Turkey.[177]

Some villages in the Ksanthian plain had already been emptied before the free migration period. For instance, in 1952, there were only three families left in the village of Büyük Davutlu , where a significant number of Greek Orthodox refugee families were settled. Gereviz faced the same fate. In the villages in the vicinity of Okçular, a significant number of Greek Orthodox refugees were settled who were all claimed to be

171 Personal Communications with a few locals in Arogi, summer 2015.

172 Interview with Merdan, Nefise, Palladio; Osman, Galini, summer 2012.

173 *Trakya*, "Endişe verici bir vaziyet 8: Balabanköy", , 14.07.1952

174 "Endişe Verici bir Vaziyet:9", *Trakya,* 04.08.1952.

175 Metin Ünal,"Tütünün Dört Yüz Yılı", (ed). Emine Gürsoy Naskali, *Tütün Kitabı* , Kitabevi Yayınları, İstanbul 2003, 17.

176 See annex, from Abdülhalim Dede, Batı Trakya'nın Eski Fotoğrafları , facebook group.

177 Interview with Mustafa Tahsinoğlu , Kireççiler, summer 2012.

Turkish-speaking.[178] In Okçular, today there are only four families live.[179] In 1956, Fıçıllı reportedly had a population of around two hundred and a magnificent mosque.[180] As of 1983, Haki reported that the valuable relics in the mosque were stolen.[181] In 2018, only two families remained in the village.[182] Likewise, Celepli had a population of 398 in 1924, which dropped to 250 in 1951, to 110 in 1961, to 37 in 1971 and totally extinct a few years later.[183]

The Ksanthian lowlands were the first to get depopulated. It can be argued that immigration was driven by safety concerns here. The local Turks were intimidated by the Greek Orthodox exchanged settlers who reportedly had the habit of frequently harassing the local Turks not only over land disputes but by intruding in their private realms- their houses and wedding celebrations as was reported in *Trakya*.[184] Immigration of large landowners is another reason that contributed to their evacuation.

In the Rhodopean lowlands, on the other hand, such harassments were not reported. Geographic location can be another reason behind the evacuation of these villages. Rhodopean villages have enjoyed safer geographic position as they are in the middle of Western Thrace; between Ksanthi and Evros and closer to Turkey. On the other hand, the Ksanthian lowland villages border Nestos River on the west, the demarcation line of Population Exchange and the region of Greek Macedonia with no minority population.

Nuri gives the figures of immigrants from 1954 until the end of 1957 as 5,260 households which approximately makes between 11,000 and 16,000 people when the number of children is taken as 2 or 3 per

178 "Davutlu Vakası", *Trakya*, 31.03.1952; Narrations of Emel, originally from Okçular, Istanbul, winter 2018.

179 Narrations of Emel, 2018.

180 Rıza Kırlıdökme, "Güle güle 2014 Merhaba 2015", *Gündem* , 14.03.2015.

181 İleri, nr. 316, 28 .09.1983

182 Interview with Hikmet Cemiloğlu, İskeçe, summer 2018.

183 Celepli (Ageli) in Batı Trakya Köyler Ansiklopedisi, Cilt-I, 87-88.

184 "Davutlu Vakası ", *Trakya*, 31.03.1952

household.[185] This was a substantial loss in minority population and lands.[186]

185 *Trakya,* "Batı Trakya'dan Türkiye'ye Göçler",03.02.1958.

186 Ibid.

8

Surviving State Oppression (1967-1991)

§ 8.1 Reflections of the 6/7 September Events & the Outset of the Cyprus Dispute

The Cyprus conflict sparked an anti-Greek sentiment in Turkey fueled by the provocative circulations in the Turkish press. A smear campaign targeted Istanbulian Rums, accusing them of supporting Greece and providing material benefits to the fighters of EOKA in Cyprus despite the disclaimers of the governor and the Patriarchate.[1] On 6-7 September, during the tripartite talks over Cyprus at the London Conference, the newspaper *Istanbul Ekspres* spread the false news that Ataturk's house-of-birth in Salonika was bombed. Cyprus is Turkish Society (*Kıbrıs Türktür Derneği*) held a demonstration on the same day. It soon turned into a pogrom. Non-Muslim minority property in the city was plundered by a huge crowd when the police refrained from intervention. [2]

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1 For more details of excerpts from the press, see Akgonul, 184-189. For example, the 28th August 1955 dated Hürriyet declared that "if Greeks dare touch our brethren, then there are plenty of Greeks to retaliate upon".

2 Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları,* 2007, 200-209; Alexandres, *The Greek Minority,* 1992, 256-257.

4340 shops, 2000 houses, 110 restaurants, 83 churches of which 3 were burned down, 21 factories, 27 pharmacies, 12 hotels, 11 surgeries, 5 minority clubs, 3 newspaper printing houses, 26 schools and 5 sport clubs were attacked and plundered, and two Greek cemeteries were desecrated.[3] The material loss amounted to 165 million liras. It immediately incited national and international condemnations. The Turkish President İnönü described the events as "a national disaster", accusing the Menderes government of incapacity to prevent it.[4] *Cyprus-is-Turkish* Society was banned, and the 87 members were arrested. After several investigators, many observers were convinced that they were prearranged.[5]

In my interviews, the rural narrators made no mention of any reflection of the pogrom in Western Thrace. In fact, many of them did not know about it at all. Arguably the rurals did not learn about it as they did not have television in 1950s and the number of newspaper readers was limited. In *Trakya* , the pogrom was covered on 12th September 1955 with the title "Yüz Karası" (Shame). Nuri condemned the pogrom vehemently on behalf of the entire Western Thracian Turkish minority. He implicitly appreciated the civilized reaction of Greeks in Greece by not retailing it against the Western Thracian Turks :

> We are living together with this nation (Greeks) as a minority. Despite the agitation, this nation prefers the feeling of being civilized instead of being labelled as barbarians. Until now, we (Turks) had no reason to be ashamed. The last incidents in İstanbul and İzmir make us feel ashamed. Now we are ashamed in front of the Greek nation and at the same time we envy their level

3 The New York Times, 17.09.1955, cited in Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları,* 2007, 207. Alexandris claims that 200 women were raped in the suburbs , the ninety year old priest of the Balikli monastery was burnt alive in the church, and several priests were seriously injured. Alexandres, *The Greek Minority*, 1992, 257-258.

4 Ibid., 262.

5 Ibid.

> of civilization. Turkish citizen Rums! Please accept Greek citizen Turks' sincere sympathies.[6]

The pogrom received wide coverage in the *Trakya* newspaper for three successive issues; 19th September, 24th, 31st October, 7th November 1955. Nuri criticized the two local Komotinian newspapers, *Proia,* and *Foni tis Rodopis,* who reportedly adopted a hostile attitude to the Turkish Consul of Komotini.[7] They blamed him for persuading the local Müftü, members of the Waqf Property Administration Board, and minority members of the Town Council not to condemn the 5/6 September events and criticized the minority members of the Town Council who did not attend the meeting previously arranged at the Municipality Hall to condemn the events.[8] They reflected the distorted perception of reciprocity by an arrogant attitude and an implicit threat; "We could have done the same thing to the local Turks to retaliate against the pogrom in Istanbul but we preferred not to."[9] Therefore, the Turkish Consulate should at least thank Greece. In his reply, Nuri was almost giving a Political Science lecture:

> We do not understand why you ask the Turkish Consulate to thank Greece for taking measures in the region against a possible retaliation. There is no Turkish citizen in Western Thrace. We are Greek citizens. We are neither slaves nor hostages. The laws of our state (Greece) do not protect us according to the laws of another state (Turkey).[10]

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6 *Trakya*, "Yüz Karası" [Shame], 12.09.1955

7 Proia, 22. 09.1955; cited in *Trakya*, "Yersiz ve Saçma Tehditlerden Vazgeçiniz Efendiler" 24.09/ 31.10/07.11 1955

8 Local Greek newspaper *Proia*, 20.10.1955; Foni Tis Rodopis, 14.10.1955; cited in *Trakya*, 24.09.1955

9 Proia (date not mentioned), cited in *Trakya*, 07.11.1955

10 *Trakya*, 24.10.1955.

Another impact of the pogrom was witnessed at the 28th October Greek National Day commemorations in Komotini in 1955. Minority veterans were always invited to the parade along with the Mufti and the Administrative Board and other minority associations. They were sent invitations in advance and asked if they wanted to lay a wreath on the monument of the martyrs. However, only the Mufti was invited to the commemoration that year. The Administrative Board's and minority associations' demand to lay wreathes on the monument were refused.[11] For the first time, minority veterans were excluded from the commemoration, thus, their honorable contribution to the war against Italians was ignored.

Nuri criticized the state's discriminatory approach stating that 28th October was not a religious festival but a commemoration day of all Greek citizens who fought to protect the country from invaders. He added that the 29. Battalion, renowned for its bravery, was mainly composed of Komotinian Turks. On 31st issue, Nuri expressed minority's disappointment by stating that minority Turks were not responsible for the pogrom in Istanbul referring to exclusion of veterans; 'What does this have to do with the pogrom in Istanbul?'[12]

On the other hand, unfortunately, a Western Thracian university student in Thessaloniki was involved in the events that triggered the pogrom, which is a shame in minority's history. Oktay Engin, from Komotini, the son of the former minority MP Hasan Faik was the first minority student accepted to a Greek University, to the Faculty of Law in Thessaloniki. He was granted scholarships both from the Greek government and the Turkish government. Apparently, he had been working for the Turkish Intelligence Service. He spread the false news that a bomb exploded in Atatürk's house to the Turkish media. It was in fact a minor explosive that exploded in the yard of the Turkish Consulate which harmed no one. Right after the incident he was taken into custody and then sent to prison

11 *Trakya*, 31.10.1955

12 Ibid.

but released on bail a few months later. He fled to Turkey and was appointed to a senior administrative position. [13]

Western Thracian minority was dragged into the Cyprus dispute both by Greek and the Turkish media. As early as 1956, Cumhuriyet newspaper was comparing Dr. Fazıl Küçük and Osman Nuri, urging Turkey to support them.[14] Nuri gave a professional response which probably annoyed the right wing in Turkey. He declared that Western Thrace was no way comparable to Cyprus, and that it had to be kept out of foreign policy considerations, closing his remarks with a quotation from the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes:

> Our struggle is to attain welfare, peace, social development within the frame of Greek law. It hasn't been born by the impact of any foreign policy (implying Turkey) or the Cyprus dispute. […] We are against any attempt to make the Western Thracian Turks any instrument of foreign policy. Therefore, in response to the journalist's demand for 'more support for us', we only say 'Stand out of my sunlight'.[15]

In the meanwhile, the Cyprus dispute was exploited by the minority media, the Greek media and the Turkish media. Hasan Hatipoğlu, a former MP and journalist, was reporting the hatred graffiti and scripts on the walls in Komotini under the title 'Terrifying Graffiti' in his newspaper Akın which began publication in 1957.[16] Nuri criticized him for agitating

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13 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 97; İbram Onsunoglu, "Hep Türklüğün Yüksek Çıkarları için-Oktay Engin ve Bağımsız Listeler", available online at minority news and discussionportal: https://www.tiken.net/index.php?route=product%2Fproduct&product_id=1385&fbclid=IwAR1Aq_ayOYDHqaczwj4tYo_jrMUwA9Ea_qmkKPS_FwvDByoU7tajjayDIdU#.XXICjmxQtig.facebook, last retrieved 05.09.2019.

14 *Cumhuriyet*, 30.09.1956, cited in *Trakya*, 08.10.1956.

15 *Trakya,* 8th October, 1956.

16 Trakya, 23.12.1957.

people and confuted his allegations of a terrorist group making plans of a massacre against the minority.[17]

As reported by Nuri, the newspaper *Makedonia* published in Thessaloniki was proposing a population exchange between Cypriot and Western Thracian Turks (to Turkey) and the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul and the Patriarchate (to Greece).[18] The Greek government immediately rebutted it by issuing two disclaimers. The Turkish press, on the other hand, gave a positive response to the proposition but excluded Cyprus from the equation.[19] Nuri stated that the Cyprus dispute sparked a trend in the Greek, Turkish and minority press that it would not be possible for the minorities to live in their homelands peacefully.[20]

§ 8.2 Minority Governance Redefined: 1967-1991

6-7 September events did not incite a significant migration wave among the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul.[21] However, when the Cyprus issue turned into a stalemate in 1963, the Istanbulian Rum minority were once again targeted by anti-Greek sentiments provoked by media. The declaration by the then Turkish Prime Minister Suat Hayri Ürgüplü on 16th October 1965 stated:

> I cannot guarantee what might happen in Istanbul if one Turk was killed in Cyprus. Additional security measures have been taken to prevent riots and possible attacks. Such measures, however, have been taken before, as during the riots of 6/7 September 1955. [22]

17 Trakya, 30.12.1957.

18 24/26/27 11.1957 *Makedonia* Newspaper, cited in *Trakya*, 25.11.1957, 20.01.1958.

19 *Trakya*, 20.01.1958.

20 *Trakya*, 20.01.1958; 27.01.1958;

21 Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları,* 2007, 220-221.

22 *Cumhuriyet*, 16 October 1965, cited in Alexandris, *The Greek Minority*, 1992, 288.

Even though the statement was condemned by the then President Cemal Gürsel, this unfortunate declaration exposes the ethnic and discriminatory conception of (Turkish) citizenship.

The Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul failed to prove their neutrality despite all their efforts including the donation of 5,000 liras by the Patriarchate to the campaign for the Cyprus veterans.[23] Due to the failing negotiations over Cyprus, the Turkish government decided to impose a punitive sanction on Greece and unilaterally revoked the 1930 Residence Agreement. Thus, around 10,000 Greek national Greek Orthodox from Istanbul who had settled by the same Agreement in 1930s were expelled. Apparently, these people were "harming the economic life in Istanbul, funding the Greek Cypriots' endeavors of unification with Greece."[24]

Greece did not step back as balance of power considerations over Cyprus surpassed the fate of a group of kin. On the contrary, three days after the revocation of the Agreement, EOKA attacked two Turkish villages in Cyprus. [25]Greece brought the issue of forced mass expulsions to the UN Security Council, however, no significant action was taken against it.[26]

The Greek national Greek Orthodox were made to leave the country under anti-humanitarian measures. Their property was confiscated, their savings in banks were blocked by a government decision, their goods were seized. They were allowed to take only 22$ with them on their way back to Greece.[27] Even worse, they were forced to sign a petition at the police declaring that they had involved in actions against the interests of Turkey including currency offences, funding of the Greek Cypriot terrorists, and that they were leaving the country voluntarily.[28]

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23 Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları,* 2007, 258.

24 Apoyevmatini, 29.03.1964, cited in Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları* ,2007, 262.

25 Ibid., 263.

26 Alexandris, *The Greek Minority,* 1992: 283.

27 Ibid., 284.

28 Ibid., 283.

Since these Greek nationals were affiliated with Turkish national Greeks via marriage, the number of people who left more than coupled the number expelled. The expulsions daunted the Turkish national Greek Orthodox, inciting a domino effect for immigration. By 11 October 1964, 30,000 Turkish nationals of Greek descent had left Turkey.[29]

Greece did not respond to the expulsion by direct retaliation on the Western Thracian minority. However, during the coalition governments between 1965-1966, as a counter measure against the growth of minority population, a Coordination Council, a deep state organ was established which would in the upcoming years develop and implement a *de facto* regime of oppression and discriminations for the minority.[30]İliadis proves that the surveillance regime for the minority was established prior to the junta. [31]

When the junta assumed power in Greece in 1967, they suspended basic rights and liberties for all Greek citizens. It was only recognized by Congo and the USA.[32] The Greek junta embarked on rapprochement with Turkey due to legitimacy-related concerns and for more influence on the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul. In this regard, upon Turkey's initiative, a joint conference was held in Alexandropouli and Keşan on 9-10 September 1967. Thus, in January 1968, Turkey became the third country to recognize the Greek junta. In December 1968, a Cultural Protocol was signed to improve education for both minorities. The principle of reciprocity was literally ingrained in this protocol.[33]

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29 Ibid.,, 286.

30 Hristos İliadis, (cev) Lale Alatlı, *Trakya Tehdit Altında: Gizli Yazışmalar,* BAKEŞ Yayınları, 2020, 34-36.

31 Ibid., 35.

32 Aarbakke *The Muslim Minority*, 2000, 177

33 "This commission acknowledges that these recommendations do not provide one minority with opportunities to the disadvantage of the other and draws attention to the significance of respect to reciprocity." , "The procedures specified in the above paragraph will be implemented on the basis of reciprocity", Türk-Yunan Kültür Komisyonu Ankara ve Atina Toplantıları Protokolü (1968), available online at : https://gtgb.gr/brosurler/ankara_atina_protokolu.pdf, last retrieved 12.06.2021.

Consequently, additional books were sent from Turkey to Western Thrace to improve the teaching and learning of Turkish language.[34] Teaching of Greek language was made compulsory in each and every minority primary schools.[35]Another significant development in minority education was the completion of the construction of second minority secondary school in Ksanhti. It was built by the teacher, politician and philanthropist Muzaffer Salihoğlu in 1965.[36]

On the other hand, in order to reduce the influence of Turkey in minority education, the junta established a teaching college - the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki- to train minority teachers for minority primary schools in 1968. Characterized by its poor level of education, particularly concerning Turkish language classes which were three hours per week, the teaching quality of the graduate teachers, beginning from early 1970s, was a major complaint of the minority. It was closed by the Tsipras government in 2011 to appease the minority.[37] In contradiction with the spirit of 1968 Cultural Protocol with Turkey, the junta regime dismissed a number of minority teachers and imposed on them a lifelong ban on teaching on the false allegations that they were agents of Turkey.[38] In early 1970s, the mistreatment of minorities approached to the level of reciprocal diplomatic warnings.

In 1972, Papagos law identifying the minority primary schools as Turkish was abolished and the signs were replaced with 'M/kon' which meant either Muslim or Minority school. Aarbakke argues that this could be the retaliation either for the Turkish imposition on the Greek minority schools of Istanbul to cite the Turkish Oath [*Andımız*]that began with "I

34 Turkey is stated to have denoted 12 million textbooks in 1968-1969 school year. Sebahattin Galip, "Hükümet İlkokullara 12 milyon Ders Kitabı Hediye etti", *Azınlık Postası,* 26 September 1984, cited in Huseyinoglu, "The Development", 2012,188.

35 H.J Psomiades, *The Eastern Question: The Last Phase. A Study in Greek-Turkish Diplomacy ,*Thessaloniki, 1968, 83, cited in Meinardus, "Muslims: Turks, Pomaks" 2002, 91.

36 Interview with Mustafa Tahsinoğlu and Hikmet Cemiloğlu, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

37 https://balkangunlugu.com/2011/05/soepa-resmen-kapatld/, last retrieved 20.10.2019.

38 Interview with two dismissed teachers Mümtaz and Mustafa, Komotini, summer 2012.

am a Turk, I am honest…" in 1971, or, for the removal by Turkish authorities of the "I megáli tu yénus scholí. Yénos" [The Great School of the Nation] inscribed marble slate from a minority high school in Istanbul.[39] Oran, on the other hand, states that the slate was removed as a retaliation for the removal of the Ottoman inscription from the Clock Tower in Ksanthi.[40]

The previously elected administrators of the waqfs were dismissed and replaced with appointed ones. Some of the remaining Ottoman cultural heritage were also destroyed. Tabakhane Mosque in Ksanthi, for instance, was pulled down allegedly due to town planning a day before the Sacrifice Fest of 1972 without the completion of the legal notice period.[41]

The following year, the Athens Consul Gürün visited the related Minister Cavalieratos to inquire into the destruction of the mosque. The Minister explained that it was pulled down due to the town planning and 800 thousand drachmas was given to build another mosque elsewhere in the town. Reiterating the insufficiency of the amount to build another mosque, Turkey asked Greece to fund the construction of another mosque. In his response, Cavalieratos stated that two Greek Orthodox churches were pulled down in Istanbul due to planning during the Menderes period.[42]

A number of rural narrators stated that the junta rule had two opposing impacts for the minority. Agriculture and infrastructure were improved, enabling the shift from subsistence to agricultural surplus.[43] This

39 Aarbakke, " The Muslim Minority", 2000,180

40 Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde*, 1991, 125

41 Abdürrahim Dede*, Tarih ve memleketim, İskeçe'deki Türk eserleri.* Istanbul, Batı Trakya Dayanışma Derneği, 1984, pp:9-11; "48 Sene Oldu, Tabakhane Cami Bugün Yıkıldı", *Trakya'nın Sesi*, Minority Newsportal, https://trakyaninsesi.com/haber/29383/48-sene-oldu-iskece-tabakhane-camii-bugun-yiklidi.html, last retrieved 22.12.2020.

42 Gürün, *Bükreş-Paris-Atina,* 1994, 186.

43 Interview with my father Mehmetali, Ali, Mahir, Fuat, Yalanca; Basri, Domruköy, Hediye, Müselimköy; Sebahattin, Narlıköy; Yusuf, Melikli, Naşide,Öksüzlü; Hacer, Balabanköy, summer 2012.

is in contradiction with the argument that agricultural income during the junta period fell almost by half.[44] The prices of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and machinery and tractors are claimed to have escalated whereas prices for agricultural output subsided. Danopoulos relates it to the oligarchic structure created by the junta as only the preferred food wholesale companies and persons were granted purchasing rights.[45]

The shift from subsistence farming to surplus farming was achieved through expropriations in 1930s, 1952, and 1960s, rise of productivity through agricultural modernization and the concurrent migration both abroad and to urban areas.[46] Previously, cultivation was highly labor intensive and involved both people and oxen. Almost all tasks such as plowing, sowing, harvesting were done by hand. The agricultural produce was barely enough to feed the family and farm animals.

Agriculture was a family job involving all members from the elderly to children. It was also collaborative labor involving relatives and/or neighbors and paid laborers in cases of abundant harvest and vast cultivated lands. In the busy seasons of hoeing and harvesting, neighbors and relatives helped each other on the fields in turns, a tradition called "badaş[47]" in the vernacular language. Irrigation, on the other hand, was a male job as it required placing long and heavy pipes in the ditches. Husbandry was still a significant source of income. In the lowland villages, immigrant families from the highlands were usually the poorest ones with little or no land. They made their living from husbandry, worked as daily laborers and herders for the local Muslim Turks and Greek Orthodox.

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44 Constantine P. Danopoulos, "Military Professionalism and Regime Legitimacy in Greece, 1967-1974", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983), 485-506, 496.

45 Stephen Marks, "Greece: The Junta Stumbles", *International Socialism* (1st series), No.65, Mid-December 1973, pp.10-15.

46 Socrates D. Petmezas, "The long term development of Greek agricultural productivity in a Euro Mediterranean perspective (1860-1980)", paper presented in the 6th Conference on the European Historical Economics Society, held in Istanbul , September 9-10, 2005.

47 "Badaş" is a rarely used word in Turkish language which means *to work together,* online Turkish dictionary, https://kelimeler.gen.tr/badas-nedir-ne-demek-29905, last retrieved 09.08.2021.

Agricultural surplus enabled lowlanders to improve their houses. The typical rural house was one-storey with a veranda adjacent to the yard and garden with two or three rooms. The walls were of mud bricks, the ceilings low. The courtyards were enclosed with bushes. There was a pump or a water well in each. In mid to late 1960s, water pipes were laid, and each household had fountains inside the house, in the yard and garden. The surplus would enable many families to send their children to Turkey for high school and university education in the next decade and later.

After 1960s, agriculture became increasingly mechanized. However, in 1960s, the ailing rural income due to a crisis in tobacco market triggered a migration wave to Germany as guestworkers. [48]The first immigrant minority males to Germany were poor highlanders and lowlanders. Some returned, bought or built new houses and purchased land in the village with their savings and continued agriculture. Many remained in Germany after they brought their families. They returned to the village when they retired while their children remained in Germany.

All these changes facilitated a gradual change in the village society. The traditional form of the rural community then was the extended family. It consisted of three to four generations. The couple used to marry their sons to the same house. The grandchildren sometimes had not only grandparents but also great-grandparents in the same house and/or yard. It was a patrilineage. However, there were also matrilineage families who had only one daughter or married one of their daughters to their house. Immigration to Turkey and Germany resulted in the gradual dissolution of the extended family. The elderly remained in the village when their sons moved out with their families. After around five decades, this would result in ageing and depopulation of some lowland villages.

On the other hand, the junta introduced a new regime of surveillance for the minority which developed into an oppressive and discriminatory practices against them. The cases of espionage had reached such a level that everyone in the village began to suspect from each other as a

48 Meinardus, "Muslims, Turks, Pomaks", 2002, 84.

potential informant of the police. My father narrates the extent of the level of espionage during the junta period in the village:

> Through their final years in power, the junta banned construction and repair of houses. It was even banned to build a wall around the yard… We were only allowed to line up bricks up to a specific height (1-1,5 meters) and we were supposed to whitewash them… On an evening I lined up the bricks to delineate the yard from the main road and whitewashed them. On Monday early in the morning, we were shocked to see the police in our yard, inspecting the brick-made wall without cement.

Indeed, as Aarbakke indicates, "Most of the discriminatory measures which would plague the minority for years were established during the military dictatorship".[49]In fact, the surveillance regime was not only meant for the minority but for the entire nation. For instance, the mainstream Greek Orthodox were required to have certificates of "civic liability" to open businesses, to get driving and hunting licenses whereas previously only communists were subject to such restrictions.[50] The civil servants in government offices were watched by secret agent civil servants who reported to the government.[51]

The ban on the purchase of land and property was introduced between 1965 and 1966 by the implementation of the Law 1366/1938 enacted by the Metaxas dictatorship which restricted the transactions of property by making it contingent on the approval of a Commission.[52] Consequently, everyday life necessities such as permits to build and repair houses, getting driving license for cars, tractors, and bank loans were

49 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000,178

50 Ibid., 179.

51 Ibid.

52 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 178

curtailed for the minority.[53] On the other hand, Christians were encouraged to buy immovables of Muslims with long term low interest bank loans.[54] The implementation of this discriminatory law is considered to be retaliation to the ousting of Greek citizen Greeks from Istanbul, and the consequent decline in the population of Greek minority in Istanbul.[55]

Every single transaction of minority members from applications for hunting and driving licenses to their travels was watched, administered and restricted by the perfect surveillance mechanism of *Office of Cultural Affairs* based in Kavala and its branch offices in Ksanthi, Rhodope, and Alexandroupolis.[56] These offices were later put under the supervision of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The state officials in charge were initially appointed by the military regime, later by the successive governments.

Until 1994, the Offices of Cultural Affairs worked in close cooperation with the government-appointed prefect and prefectural administration. This tripartite state mechanism was responsible for the implementation of the discriminatory and oppressive minority policy including among others the acquisition of property, bank loans driving licenses, as well as employment.[57] All levels of state were engaged in the implementation of this minority governance; the police, civil servants, rural guards, and even tobacco reticle managers.[58]

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53 Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlşkilerinde,* 1991, 262; Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority,* 2000, 178;

54 Ibid.

55 Anastasia N. Karakasidou, "Vestiges of the Ottoman Past: Muslims Under Siege in Contemporary Greek Thrace", available online at: https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/vestiges-ottoman-past-muslims-under-siege-contemporary, last retrieved 15.06.2021.

56 İleri 306/19.08.1983, Akın 895/22.01.1987, Trakya'nın Sesi 520/07.09.1995, and Greek left wing newspapers, articles in Rizospastis 28.03.1989, "The life of the minority is a sob…" by Stamatis Hatzistamatiu and Avyi 13.10.1996, "Hostages of the Foreign ministry in Thrace" by Yiorgos Apostolidis, cited in Aarbakke, The Muslim Minority, 2000, p.178, footnote 9.

57 Dia Anagnostou, "Breaking The Cycle of Nationalism", 2001, 105.

58 *İleri*, 28.02.1976, nr.30.

They worked like a separate secret state responsible only for the minority by obtaining information through the networks of espionage in villages and towns; particularly through the village coffeehouse owners, (agent) peasants, the Greek Orthodox rural guards and the local patrols about everyone and everything in the village. They filed cases against the villagers for trivial cases such as parking their tractor in front of their gates, water leaking from a garden to the road, and the village grocer for placing the canned food next to the potatoes.[59] For instance, my paternal grandfather opened a grocery store in 1970 and had to close it down two years later because he was regularly intimidated by the local patrol and sued for trivial reasons.

During the junta period, coffeehouse owners became secret agents of the Greek state.[60] The local patrol car stopped in front of the coffeehouses regularly and asked the owner to approach. Then the police asked questions about who visited the village that day or recently, who went away and where, whether anyone repaired or started building a new house. When the owner returned, he told the curious dwellers that the police asked for cigarettes.[61]

The coffeehouse owners therefore were not respected by the rurals. They used to be the center of information, communication with the kin who lived abroad, espionage and gossip in the village. Since late 1950s until mid-1990s when village households were allowed to possess telephones in their houses, the public telephone was in the coffeehouse. Whenever a villager received a call, usually from abroad- Turkey or Germany, or needed to give a call in an urgent situation, the coffeehouse owner would eavesdrop the entire talk. Afterwards he would share it with the local patrol, with some of the coffeehouse dwellers and others.[62]

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59 Personal observations; rurals narrations.

60 Haki compares it with the French rule in Algeria when local coffeehouse owners were made secret agents. "Kahveciler", *İleri,* 2 May 1986, nr.430.

61 Ibid.

62 Personal Experiences; rurals' narrations.

Coffeehouse owners were usually obliged to be agents for the local police. In fact, coffeehouses were targeted by the Ottoman Sultans and European Kings for the potential risk they posed against authority.[63] Whether the then Greek governments considered them potential centers for mobilization or a pragmatic source of acquiring information is questionable. However, given the passivity of the Turkish-Muslim minority, the latter seems more viable.

Those who refused to work as secret agents were threatened with lawsuits and other means. The coffeehouse owners who refused had to spend a lot of money for the fines and lawyers as they were sued anytime upon any allegation.[64] Ordinary minority males were also asked to be informants for the police. Some accepted the offer and got involved in this network of espionage either because they wanted to seek self-interest, or they were scared to refuse. Of special significance was those who lived in Turkey. This information would then be usurped to deprive locals of Greek citizenship based on Article 19. An elderly participant, Haydar, narrates;

> When I was a member of the Township Council, a senior police from Gümülcine asked me to come to the local patrol and offered me to work as a secret agent. I declined. He tried to convince me and when I insisted on my attitude, he swore at me and told me to get out.[65]

63 Cengiz Kırlı, "Coffeehouses: leisure and sociability in Ottoman Istanbul", *Leisure Cultures in urban Europe*, *c.1700-1870: a transnational perspective,* (eds), Peter Borsay, Jan Hein Furnee, Manchester University Press, 2015, 161- 181, 167.

64 *İleri*, "Kahveciler", 2 May 1986, nr.430.

65 Interview with Haydar, Yalanca, summer 2012.

When I asked whether the police intimidated him further, he replied;

> No. The police has not intimidated me ever since. They understand honest men. Anyone who works for them can also work against them (for the other party) when circumstances change.[66]

Minority rurals were not allowed to become rural guards. All rural guards were local Christians appointed by the government. They were entrusted with safeguarding pasture lands. However, their 'national duty' was to oppress the rurals and impel them to immigrate. The rurals treated them with utmost respect because they were scared of getting into trouble with any authority.[67] Many involved in clientelistic relations so that they could plough and irrigate their lands safely. The village guards were invited to barbecue parties, weddings, offered ouzo or coffee in the village coffeehouse. The local patrols were treated the same way. Some males had patron policemen. They would offer them dairies such as milk, butter, cheese, eggs, vegetables and fruit from their gardens and drinks and meals in local taverns in return for their patronage. These kind of clientelistic relations were useful in obtaining a driving license, getting a license to repair a house, and even elimination of traffic fines.[68]

The minority were also denied bank loans to buy land or tractors.[69] The only way to deal with such discriminations were by way of clientelistic relations. Ali narrates their experience of applying for a bank loan to buy a trailer for his tractor in 1969, which reveals the discriminatory and humiliating attitude of the then Greek bureaucracy towards the minority.

> If you had your man inside, your transaction was handled. Otherwise, civil servants told you to go and come again tomorrow. When it was our –the Turks' turn, the civil servant would take a

66 Ibid.

67 *İleri*, 28.02.1976, nr.30.

68 Personal Observations and narrations in Yalanca.

69 *İleri*, 28.02.1976, nr.30; Narrations in the region.

> coffee break, go to the toilette, and make us wait for hours. In 1969, my elder brother and I went to the local agricultural bank to apply for a loan to buy a trailer. At first, he pretended not to notice us and dealt with others who were waiting behind us in the line. Two hours passed. We went to the manager to complain. The manager threatened us with calling the police. The closing hour came, and we returned to the village. The next morning we went again. The same civil servant told us 'Look at me! Never complain me or another civil servant to the manager again. We are a family here and who are you? Will he believe us or you? As expected, we weren't given the loan.[70]

Transition from peasantry to petite bourgeoisie was successfully curtailed. The ones who dared to exit peasantry by way of opening restaurants or grocery stores were intimidated by the police in the following decades even after the fall of junta (in 1974). Those who wanted to quit agriculture immigrated to Germany where they became blue collar workers and to Turkey where they became petite bourgeoisie and/or workers. Mansur narartes his (failed) endeavor to run a restaurant in Yasiköy in 1970s.

> I hired a shop and turned it into a restaurant. The locals used to like the food I cooked. Local Turks and Greeks would frequent my restaurant with their families especially at the weekend. I made good money. I loved cooking and serving people, conversing with them, making them happy. After a few months, the police started to inspect the restaurant frequently. One night, as I was closing it, writing notes and making calculations, a policeman came again. He asked me why I wasn't wearing my white apron which was a rule and I replied that there was nobody and I was closing. He filed a lawsuit against me. When I was called to the Court, I learnt that he based his allegation on lies; that the

70 Interview with Ali, Yalanca, summer 2012.

> restaurant was full, and I wasn't wearing a white apron. I hired good lawyers and never lost the cases. However, a policeman asked me one day why I insisted on running the restaurant despite the cases for years and threatened me implicitly with other means. At that point I got scared. I decided to close. I was very upset. I saw the restaurant in my dreams for years.[71]

In 1982, my paternal grandfather rented his shop under the house to a local man who used to work on ships before. He opened a coffeehouse. He also cooked and served food such as meatballs, salads, grilled meat. This is typical of coffeehouses in Greece. He became renowned in the neighborhood for his delicious meatballs and started making good money. However, he could not withstand police intimidation and closed it down two years later. He immigrated to Germany with his family and became a factory worker.

§ 8.3 Rurals' Experiences of the military conflict in Cyprus

The Cyprus dispute began to traumatize the Western Thracians rurals and town dwellers in early 1960s upon the re-emergence of the intercommunal conflicts. The rurals were particularly terrorized by the slaughtering of Turkish army doctor Major Nihat İlhan's wife and three children in their house.[72] They were scared that the same fate could be awaiting them. The murder of the Turkish Army pilot Cengiz Topel after he was captured by the Greek Cypriots aggravated communal fear. As an

71 Interview with Mansur, Yasiköy, summer 2012.

72 http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/banyo-katliami-kurbanlarinin-babasi-oldu-40288056, last retrieved: 20.11.2019.

expression of their grief, many male babies born in that year and afterwards were named after him. 'Cengiz' was a popular name for baby boys born in 1960s.[73]

During the night curfews in 1963 and in the summer of 1974 three to four families in the village gathered together in the evening and spent the night together. The females slept inside the house whereas the males kept awake near the doors or on the roofs. Scared even to go to the toilette in the yard, many used special pots for toilette needs during the night. Along with the fear and anxiety was also the sense of solidarity and unity. Although it is a traumatic time they'd never like to experience ever again, the memoirs of the night curfews are still recalled and narrated.

8.3.1 *Narratives of Muslim Conscripts in the Greek Army*

Conscription was made compulsory for the Muslim minority in 1960. The length of military service varied from 24 to 28 months until late 1980s. The narratives of elderly males about their military duty in Greece reveal that they seldom experienced oppression, intimidation or discrimination prior to early 1970s. The narrators revealed that they were held in high esteem due to their non-affiliation with communism whereas the Bulgarians were usually the vilified.[74]

For many Muslim conscripts, military duty was kind of a school where they learnt the Greek language, the first time they travelled away from home, and stayed and trained together with their Greek Orthodox counterparts. Muslim conscripts were reportedly on very good terms with their Greek Orthodox colleagues although there were some fanatics who intimidated them. They tried to turn a blind eye to them and avoid

73 Özkan Hüseyin, "Kıbrıs ve Batı Trakya Türkleri", available online at: http://www.bursaarena.com.tr/kibris-ve-bati-trakya-turkleri-makale,2498.html, last retrieved 20.11.2019; Personal Observations.

74 Interview with Fuat, Ali, Yalanca; İlyas, Mümtaz, Gümülcine, summer 2012; Basri, Domruköy, summer 2015.

arguments. The cliché question that has been ever since asked to the Muslim soldiers in military duty has been: 'Would you shoot the Turkish soldiers if Greece and Turkey were engaged in a war?'[75]

Confronted with the question during his military duty in 1968, Fuat replied the Greek Orthodox conscript with another question 'Why don't you ask this question to your father?' The Greek Orthodox soldier asked why. He immediately replied: 'What was your father doing when mine was fighting in the Greek army against the Italians in 1941 at the Albanian front?' The Greek soldier was stunned. The Commander who was secretly listening to the talk entered at the scene and scolded the Greek Orthodox soldier for asking the Muslim soldier such a question.[76]

During the military service post mid-1970s, however, some male narrators stated that they experienced discriminations while doing military duty. While doing his military service in 1972-1973, an elderly male informant narrated that once he was playing backgammon with his Commander in charge. Whenever he had poor dice, he said 'How can we take Cyprus with these dice?' He kept silent. One of his Muslim friends around later asked him how he did not lose his patience during the game. 'This is what he wanted me to do… but I did not fall into the trap' he said.

When the Commander-in Charge was leaving the battalion, he shook hands with everyone in order to bid farewell, but the informant did not offer his hand to him. To his surprise, though, he asked the informant where he wanted to complete the rest of his military duty. Although he gave no reply, he sent him to the closest area to his home[77], probably as a gesture of apology.

Nihat, who did his military duty in the same period, narrated that he experienced no discrimination while doing his military duty in Ioanina in 1978. He told me that he had a very friendly and sensitive commander-in charge who tried to send him home without informing him of his father's death and even gave him money to travel home:

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75 Ibid.

76 Interview with Fuat, Yalanca, summer 2012.

77 Interview with Hikmet Cemiloğlu, İskeçe, summer 2012.

> One day my Commander summoned me and told me he gave me permission to go and visit my family during Christmas. I rejected it saying that it was Christians' holy week, and that I was a Muslim. When the Commander insisted, I said that I had no money to go home. The Commander gave 2,000 drachmas from his pocket to me. I was stunned. Then I called the village coffeehouse to inform about my coming home. The coffeehouse keeper told me that my father had passed away and they were waiting for me for the funeral.[78]

The common complaint of the elderly university graduate narrators was that they were not assigned duties according to their profession. İbram, for instance, tried every means to serve as a medical doctor. He wrote a letter of complaint to the Ministry of Defense on behalf of his mother (who could not read or write in Greek language) stating that it was outright discrimination to keep his son away from his profession and asking to remedy the situation. The Ministry sent her a letter of response saying that the case would be investigated. 'Nothing changed' he remarked. 'I tried every peaceful means but the power I was struggling against was simply too big.'[79]

They were not given arms for training, exempted from night shifts, tasked with simple chores such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of animals. However, not all were unhappy with their duties. In fact, some of them were even content with doing simple chores as revealed by İbram:

> One day I asked the commander in charge, 'Why don't you give me arms, aren't I a Greek citizen?' The commander said I was right. A short while after we were all given arms, but then the Muslim soldiers were also ordered to keep guard at night. My friends were frustrated with me![80]

78 Interview with Nihat, Yalanca, summer 2012.

79 Interview with Ibram, Komotini, summer 2012.

80 Interview with a middle-aged, university graduate male narrator, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

In 1974 the war in Cyprus put the Muslim conscripts in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, they had a great advantage over their Greek Orthodox counterparts because they were not sent to fight in Cyprus. This guaranteed them survival by being excluded from the battalions sent to fight in Cyprus. On the other hand, their (assumed) ethnic identification with Turkey triggered serious concerns of retaliation by their Greek Orthodox fellows and Commanders.

Nonetheless, no incidence of physical violence was mentioned. A narration reveals that the Commander gave home visiting permission to Muslim conscripts on the condition that they flee to Turkey.

> I deserted when I had completed the 20th month of my military duty in the barracks a short while after the eruption of armed conflict in Cyprus. The Commander rounded up the Turks and said: 'I'll give you a break to visit home only on the condition that you flee to Turkey.' At first, we were scared and nobody dared ask for a break to go home. After a while he summoned us again and told us not to hesitate to ask him for a visit to home. We were charged with corvee labor; cleaning, washing the cauldrons… we did not mind them… but… we were intimidated and eventually got demoralized by the corporals' frequent insults and questions of whether we would fire our guns against the Turks in case of a war. I asked for a break and went to my village. My father borrowed 5,000 drachmas from a friend and gave it to the taxi driver who would take me to the border. Eventually, I took refuge in the motherland.[81]

On the other hand, my father, who was doing his military duty between 1972 and 1974, stated that home visits were cancelled due to conscripts fleeing to Turkey. He narrated an entirely different experience of his military duty during the armed conflict in Cyprus in July 1974. His

81 Narration of a Muslim male in Abdurrahim Dede, *Azınlıklar Ezilmemeli: Batı Trakya Türkleri*, Batı Trakya Türkleri Dayanışma Derneği Genel Merkez Yayınları, Yayın No:1, Istanbul, 1980, 12-13.

narrations illustrate the perceived threat and fear by the Muslim conscripts, and the attitude of the military authorities. Below is the long narration of the time their battalion were ordered to prepare to go to Cyprus to fight.

> On 20th July, I was helping the cook in the kitchen when the Sergeant announced: 'Unfold the tents, make your preparations. We are going to Cyprus to fight.' We were stunned. We were so scared that we were going to the toilette every five minutes, urinating frequently due to fear. We loaded the tents and blankets, got on the lorry and went to the town center. We got into a line behind the Sergeant with our arms on. It was summer... hot…people had gathered together in the town crying their hearts out.... Then the Sergeant announced: "All Mohammedans![82] Leave the battalion and come to the front!" We were 25 Muslims altogether. We were ordered to hand in our weapons and helmets, but we weren't asked to take off our summer uniforms. Those passing by were asking us why we were separated. We murmured in response that we were Mohammedans.(Muslims) We were ordered to get in the military lorry and taken to a camping site in a forest. In the morning when I woke up, I approached Zeki, who was preparing tea on the stove and asked for a cup of tea in Turkish. 'Stop speaking Turkish...They'll kill us both' Zeki replied angrily. 'Nobody is around… You don't need to get scared.' I replied, again in Turkish. He turned his back to me and pretended I was not there. He refused to give me tea and told me to get out uttering 'Don't speak Turkish!' In the camp were the tankers' crew, who tended to be fanatic, and our 25 member group. We were ground troops. Others were asking each other

82 In the period, according to my father, Mohammedan, meaning the follower of Muhammed was used instead of 'Muslim.' The same wording was written in Muslims' ID cards until over a decade ago when religion title was abolished in ID cards as a requirement of the EU.

why we were not dressed in war uniforms. Some were commenting- because our names were Turkish- that we were Turkish prisoners of War from Cyprus. We were so scared…

There was a hunchbacked fellow, İdris. He was from a Ksanthian lowland village. He spoke Greek almost like a native. The next day at noon, I noticed him crying like a child. Another fellow, Hafız, used to tell him that due to his posture he could avoid military duty. He once proposed him that he pretended to be suffering from epilepsy so that he could postpone his military duty repeatedly until old age. He declined the suggestions. Completing military duty was an issue of honor for him, like for most of us. After a while, the Sergeant approached me and asked me why he was crying. I told him that he had missed his family. The Sergeant ordered me to persuade him to stop crying. When I approached İdris, he told me that he'd heard some Greek soldiers speaking about what to do with Muslim conscripts. 'One of them proposed to hang us, the other to execute us by shooting'. I was terrified to hear that, but I pretended to be brave and kind of bossy as I swore at him and told him that they could not dare do that and anyone who believed they could was nothing but a coward! He stopped crying. Eventually I managed to calm him down.

The next day, we were sent to a Macedonian village, and a day after to Florina. On the third day we were told that we were leaving… For a while we were on the move from one village to another. Our next stop was Kozani near the Albanian border. In the meanwhile, some other Western Thracian minority conscripts joined us. Finally, we arrived at the military quarters in the village of Petrana. In the morning, we lined up and the Commander in charge greeted us. All of us looked desperate and scared… I and many other comrades had lost our appetite and barely ate anything. After the military salutation, the Commander in

> charge, whom we later learnt was a Greek Cypriot, gave us a speech, a speech that I'll never forget as long as I live…:
>
> 'I see you (Muslims) look sad, desperate and weak…Look at me! As long as we wear the same uniform, we are all Greek soldiers, and we are equal. Nobody can intimidate or insult you! I am glad you have arrived. I am tired of these ignorant villagers. They neither understand or obey orders, and they steal. In the morning when we all wake up, we'll have breakfast and do exercise together. You must be hungry..."
>
> Then he called the cook and ordered him to quickly prepare a good meal for us. He was a great Commander, a great man, who treated us well during our stay in the village.[83]

In the following excerpt, encounters of Muslim soldiers with the exchanged Greek Orthodox villagers from Anatolia reveal that in 1974, almost five decades after the Population Exchange, they spoke Turkish among themselves. The ironical reaction of the Muslim soldiers, on the other hand, is fear of hearing their mother tongue Turkish and declining the friendly offers of the Turkish speaking locals for coffee. The kind of paranoia could be apprehensible in the circumstances, but it used to be a common characteristic of the minority prior to 2000s. The narrations also expose the fluidity of the concepts of nationalism, citizenship, emotional belonging and homeland and underscores the existence of humanism even in the conditions of war.

> The next day during our free hours, me and a fellow were walking to the village when we were stopped by an old man who asked us where we were from in Turkish. We said we were from Gümülcine. 'I am from Bursa' he continued in Turkish. 'In Bursa, I was one of Atatürk's warehouse guards'. We were stunned…He

83 My father's narrations of his experiences during his military duty.

offered us coffee and a talk…but we were scared. We turned down his offer and walked on. A while later, we heard an old lady yelling in Turkish 'Damned (whore) daughter-in-law… She does not know Turkish…My son is away in the army… The goats have entered into the garden…My God, give me patience [84], 'Where the hell are we?' we asked each other… startled… we returned to the barracks. We stayed there for two weeks, preparing stretchers every day.

Our next stop was Drepana, another village in Kozani. Very often, almost every day we could hear Turkish songs either sung by the locals or played on tape recorders in the village. In the military quarters, civilians were packing military outfit. There were warm, nice American military coats. I asked the man in charge if he could replace my coat with an American military coat. To my surprise, he replied in Turkish; 'Of course my son, take one'. 'How do you know Turkish?' I asked… stunned… 'I am from Antalya' he said and continued. 'You're a handsome young man…Let me arrange a girl for you from our village. There are very beautiful Circassian girls in the village.' I said, 'Thank you, but I cannot. My father would be very upset.'

At some point, the conscripts were engulfed in the psychology of the time and began to view life as a win-lose game of survival and death. They learnt to take life as it was. The feelings of sorrow for the deceased during the war in Cyprus transcended ethnic borders, winners and losers.

We were terrorized at the outset of the war in Cyprus. After a while, we got used to it. Thanks God, none of us in the group were

84 The original version in Turkish: "Hınzırın orospu gelini… Türkçe bilmez, oğlum da asker, keçiler de bahçeye kaçmış. Allah'ım Yarabbim sen bana sabır ver.."

married. At least we did not have wives and children to leave behind even if we died. The last military quarters I stayed through the end of military service was Sidirokastro in Serez. When we had completed our military duty and given the required documents, we bought our tickets home at the train station. As we had plenty of time until the departure, I and Ali decided to do some shopping in the town. We were chatting while we were wandering along the road when suddenly a woman stopped in front of us. "Είστε Τούρκοι, φύγετε" [You are Turks, get out of here] she yelled at us angrily and walked away. All of a sudden, we lost heart. We stopped shopping and walked back to the train station. Later we learnt that a Greek military plane was shot down near Limasol and soldiers inside died who were from that town. The town dwellers were mourning. It is not easy….

8.3.2 *Narratives of rurals in homogeneous and mixed lowland villages*

Many participants over fifty years of age declared that the Cyprus war of 1974 was the worst trauma they had ever experienced in Western Thrace. However, they did not report any case of violence except for some cases of plunder and the suspicious death of a teenage boy. Apparently, a fourteen year old boy called Mümin in Karamusa was shot dead by a Greek Orthodox local in the summer of 1974. Apparently, he was wandering around a grove when he was shot with one bullet. The local police reported that it was a hunting accident. However, the minority locals believed it was murder and were terrorized.[85] It incited another trauma in the neighboring villages and has been narrated ever since.

85 Narrated in Yalanca, Karamusa and Yalanca.

Merdan stated that a number of wealthy Turkish-Muslim families' tractors and harvests were plundered in the mixed village Palazlı. A certain Durmuş Ağa, a large landholder, was a victim of plundering and immediately fled to Turkey with his family . The same fanatics could not break into his elderly mother's house because the local Greek Orthodox neighbors did not allow them. The plunderers were claimed to be some of the Sarakatsan settlers in the village.[86]

Basri narrates the arrestment of his two uncles on their return to the village (Domrüköy). The men had attended a mevlid (religious ceremony)in a Rhodopean highland village, but they did not take into account the night curfew hours and the length of time it would take them to arrive in the village. They arrived at a late hour in the village and thus broke the night curfew. The police saw and arrested them and immediately. They were sent to a prison in Kavala. A Greek lawyer was hired who had them released after a week in prison.[87]

'Was it fear or joy? We got muddled in between'.[88] The excerpt by Dede seems to describe Western Thracians' ambivalent feelings on the day of Turkey's intervention in Cyprus on 20th July 1974. On the one hand, the Western Thracian Turks were feeling relieved that the ethnic conflict in Cypriot would be stopped and the kin (Cypriot Turks) would be emancipated. On the other hand, they were scared that the Greeks would retaliate and kill them. 'We had experienced economic and political discrimination before…but that was the first time we felt out lives were at risk…' Dede recounted.[89]

Dede narrates about his encounter with the local acquaintance Niko who was then a young conscript:

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86 The narrator and his family were living in Germany at the time. Interview with Merdan, Palazlı, summer 2012.

87 Interview with Basri, Domruköy, summer 2015.

88 "Korku mu desek…sevinç mi desek… bir başka olduk" Dede, *Azınlıklar Ezilmemeli*, 1984, 10.

89 Ibid.

> I was walking on the highway from İskeçe to Sünnetçiköy when Niko stopped and offered me a lift on his motorcycle. I hesitated a moment because we were in war and I was afraid he could kill me…but then I changed my mind and got on the motorcycle. Niko started swearing all of a sudden and started talking angrily 'Ever since we became independent, we got involved in wars every two decades. Our grandfathers, our fathers all experienced wars… Now that it's been 20 years since the end of the Civil War, and we've only recently consolidated our state, again we are going to war…Our population is barely 8 million…Our young even much fewer in number… Who is going to die? Of course the young… Neither the politicians…nor the wealthy…They'll give speeches over our deaths and then go on with their lives…God damn!![90]

The narration is indicative of the suspicion Muslims had towards the local Greek Orthodox neighbors , "I was scared he could kill me". Nonetheless, after a moment's hesitation, he accepts Nikos's offer for a ride. Nikos, on the other hand, seems to be an anti-militarist, pacifist and conscious young man weary of wars.

Dede narrates several incidents of intimidation, violence and surveillance by the local police. A local man in his 50s in Kurdhasanlı near Karasu, came to the author's house in tears. Apparently one of his sons was taken by force by a group of Greek fanatics. He went to the police to complain, he was beaten there on the allegation of slander. The author and his friends found a Greek lawyer who was able to find and save his son from the young Greek fanatics who had beaten him terribly.[91]

In another incident, a minority teacher on his motorcycle was stopped by the police during daytime and taken into custody on the allegations of espionage. He was beaten and tortured during the few days he

90 Ibid.,11

91 Ibid.

was kept in custody and released with a threat of death unless he emigrated to Turkey.[92]

On the other hand, the police safeguarded villages from possible fanatic attacks. During the night curfews in 1963 and 1974, one or more police officers were sent to minority villages on night shifts to safeguard them. In one incident, Nihat, along with a few friends, broke the night curfew and went to a tavern to drink. On their way back to the village, they were stopped by a group of soldiers on night guard. They warned them not to break the rule again and to be careful, and added in a friendly tone; 'We are here to protect you…In case of an attack by fanatics against you, Turkey will lay the claim of protecting the kin and invade Western Thrace'.[93]

Maide, an elderly female from Domruköy, recounted that as a young girl, she was scared of the Greek soldiers who were on duty to safeguard the locals:

> At dawn we went to the fields to pick up tobacco. We kept our heads down, scared to look around because soldiers were everywhere, even in the fields. Some of them said 'good morning' in a friendly manner, but we were even scared to respond to their salutation.[94]

Fear was mutual in the lowland and middle-line villages, particularly in mixed villages. The Greek rurals were also scared that Turkey could declare war to Greece and invade Western Thrace. In mixed villages there are narrations of Greek Orthodox neighbors who told Muslim-Turk neighbors "If the Turks defeat Greece and come here, you'll hide us, otherwise if we defeat the Turks, we'll hide you."[95]

Hediye narrates about a visiting Greek Orthodox family's son which illustrates the perception of mutual fear in a humorous way:

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92 Ibid.

93 Interview with Nihat, Yalanca, summer 2012.

94 Interview with Maide, Domruköy, summer 2015.

95 Cited in a number of narrations by rurals in mixed (Muslim-Greek Orthodox villages)

> In an evening in the winter of 1974, my father's Greek Orthodox friend and his family from the neighboring village came over for a visit. There were barely any cars then, but our fathers had motorcycles. The family's son, Yannis, a 14-year-old boy fell asleep on the rug. It was very cold outside, and my father told his friend not to wake up the child and that he'd bring him home in the morning. The family agreed and left. In the middle of the night, Yannis woke up to find out his family had left and started crying, 'Please take me home… You are Turks and you'll cut my throat and kill me here just like the Turks did in Cyprus.' We tried every means to soothe him but in vain. Eventually my father brought him home. I tease him whenever I come across him saying 'so years ago, we were going to cut your throat Yannis' and he laughs saying 'oh, dear I was just a child…'[96]

There are a number of narrations of spiritual creatures -also in the form of Turkish soldiers-who suddenly appeared in the village to protect them from possible attacks by Greek Orthodox fanatics. In Yalanca, for instance, there are narrations of 'very short (dwarf) old men dressed in green coats with white turbans wrapped on their heads' which the villagers called 'dedeler' (grandfathers) who stood at the entrance of the village near the graveyard to protect the village during the Cyprus conflict. They prevented the entrance of a group of fanatic Greeks coming to the village to plunder one night. Apparently one man among them went insane afterwards and was taken to a mental clinic.[97]

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96 Interview with Hediye, Müselimköy, summer 2012.

97 Narrations Yalanca, summer 2012. The same kind of an event was also narrated in Nasuhbey village in Turkish Thrace. It was a neighboring village to Edeköy where a week long massacre took place killing many inhabitants. The inhabitants of Nasuhbey village believed that the banditry could not enter their village because it was protected by the Bektaşi convent Karababalar's soldiers who wore green turbans. Sevgi, *Balkan Savaşlarında Edeköy Katliamı*, 2018, 165

Basri narrated that a group of young Greek Orthodox fanatics in the neighboring village had gathered together to attack a neighboring Muslim village. The elderly told them to quit the plan. They warned them that the graveyard in the entrance of the village they were planning to attack was filled with Turkish soldiers. They did not want to believe the elderly, but they sent three men from the group to check the graveyard. They came back startled, claiming they had seen the Turkish soldiers in the graveyard. Thus, they did not dare attack the Muslim village. The narrator claimed that the elderly in the Greek Orthodox village (Gratini) still narrate the event in the coffeehouse. As I was kind of shocked, I asked the narrator 'Could this be real?' and he replied 'Allah bilir'[God knows].[98]

§ 8.4 Parallel regimes: Democracy for Greece, Oppression for the Minority

The overthrow of the junta in 1974 brought back democracy to the country but not to the minority. The surveillance regime introduced by the junta remained intact. The situation of the minority had already aggravated following the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974. Life became even more difficult for the minority a decade later upon the declaration of the Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983 and the dramatic reduction of the Greek Orthodox minority population in Istanbul.

A number of basic human rights violations were imposed on the rurals such as land expropriations, curtailment of employment, ban on acquisition of immovables, repairing houses, driving licenses, bank loans, deprivation of citizenship, frequent interrogations and intimidation by the local police.[99] Those who repaired their houses despite the ban were

98 Interview with Basri and Maide, Domruköy, summer 2015.

99 Studies concerning the most oppressive period of 1974-1991 are plentiful. For more details see; Human Rights Reports, Louis Whitman, "Destroying Ethnic Identity- The Turks

usually informed to the police by the secret agents in the village. Then they were sued for not obtaining license to repair the houses. On the other hand, application for licenses were either denied or kept in limbo for ages. Those who were able to repair and extend their houses did it illegally or through bribery and clientelistic relations.[100]

Office of Cultural Affairs, the secret/deep minority government, was in charge of not only the administration of the discriminatory policies but also impeding the equal distribution of EC structural funds in Thrace in 1980s. Consequently, investments were made in the central towns of Ksanthi and Komotini and the southern Christian-populated zones whereas the minority populated areas of northern zone were excluded.[101] Blockade of economic development made the minority more dependent on agriculture and resulted in the transfer of savings to Turkey. Unable to invest in Thrace, people invested their money in real estate and banks in Turkey until mid-1990s. In the long term, this led to further seclusion.[102]

One of the most detrimental methods of oppression was the confiscation of minority land. For the people dependent on agriculture, this meant loss of their income sources. In 1978, 4,000 stremmata of land was expropriated for building an industrial site in the villages of Yahyabeyli, Makıf, Kafkasköy and Aşağıköy. 4,300 stremma were expropriated in Komotini surroundings for military zone and 3200 stremma were expropriated to build the Democritus University of Thrace.[103] 4,300 stremmata,

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of Greece", NY: Helsinki Watch, 1990; "Greece: Improvements for Turkish Minority; Problems Remain", 1992; "Greece: The Turks of Western Thrace",1999; Sule Chousein, *Minority Rights: Fact or Fiction,* Lampert Publishing, 2011; Maria Demesticha, "Minorities In the Balkans In The Era of Globalisation: The Case of the Turks in Western Thrace", unpublished MA thesis, Bogazici University, 2004; Vemund Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace", unpublished PhD, University of Bergen,2000.

100 Based on interviews and personal observations in the region.

101 Dia Anagnostou, "Breaking The Cycle of Nationalism", 2001, 107.

102 Ibid., 107.

103 Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde,* 1991, 241-243.

majority of which belonged to Muslim-Turks, were expropriated in Komotini for the provincial military zone. 1500 acres were expropriated to build settlement for Pontic Greeks from the Soviet Union.[104]

Land consolidation projects in the lowlands were usually carried out in a discriminatory fashion to the benefit the local Greek Orthodox. Ali narrated that in a land consolidation project in 1976, or 'anadismos' as is referred with the Greek word by the minority members, fertile minority lands were allocated to Greek Orthodox locals whereas they were given lands of lower quality from another village three kilometers away.

> We objected to the decision and wrote petitions to the Anadismos Committee several times. In the committee there was no representative from the minority. They did not even reply. The local communists of Yasiköy were also discriminated like us. A member of the Committee tried to convince others to stop the injustice. However, they did not listen to him. He resigned because he told us that it hurt his conscience.[105]

A minority journalist, Dede, originally from a highland village, stated that the toughest oppression in the highlands was implemented right after the military conflict in Cyprus between 1974 and 1976. He reiterated that the oppressive measures only helped to strengthen the Pomak community's Turkishness. [106]

> The government initiated a project of forestation and planted frequent trees in several areas of highland villages. It was prohibited to damage the trees. However, husbandry was the main income source of the villagers then, and the goat herds inevitably ate the leaves and broke tree branches. The herders were frequently fined by the authorities. The villagers were fined for

104 Ibid., 243.

105 Interview with Ali, Yalanca, summer 2012.

106 Interview with Abdülhalim Dede, İskeçe, summer 2012.

other reasons such as the donkey waste on the pathways, the bad smell from the barns.[107]

One of the most cited difficulties in the highlands was living in a restricted zone. Travelling to the town or elsewhere was subject to permission from the local patrol. Owing to the lack of fertile and abundant land in the highlands, there was no land expropriation. As a highlander in Ketenlik stated; "The lowlanders suffered the most in 1980s because their lands were expropriated. We were more or less ignored in our isolated villages."[108]

To make matters worse, villagers were denied driving licenses, especially tractor licenses, which was necessary to cultivate the land. This ban led to tragicomic events as peasants were punished for ploughing their land on their tractors.[109] The Greek authorities claimed that Muslims failed the tests because they did not learn Greek. On the other hand, even Muslim males who did not have a language problem failed the test many times. Basri, for instance, who spoke Greek fluently, narrated that he obtained the driving license for the tractor in his tenth and for the car in his eight trial.[110]

The issue was brought to the Parliament by the then minority MP Hasan İmamoğlu in 1989, it turned out that there was a secret directive to approve only 5% of the applications by Muslims. When the government changed, the bureaucrats in Komotini contacted the new Minister Nikos Konstandopulos of the center-left party Sinaspismos whether they should continue with the secret directive. Konstandopulos was stunned. Then it was removed.[111]

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107 Ibid.

108 Narrations of Ekber; Hüsmen, Melih, Melike, Ketenlik, August 2016.

109 Interview with Basri, Domruköy, summer 2017.

110 Ibid.

111 Trakya'nın Sesi 510/14.06.1995; *Athens News* 11.12.1997, The Deputy Prime Minister of the previous government (PASOK) was responsible for these secret directives, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 205.

However, some minority members managed to obtain driving licenses through clientelistic relations and bribery. Haki contends that the wealthy minority families, minority members who worked at the Turkish Consulate, the Mufti Office and Community Boards and those who worked for wealthy Christians were able to get driving licenses.[112]

Haki took the test for driving license and failed a number of times but did not give up. Before the last time he took the test, a lawyer, also a member of the political party in power approached him one day and told him that he would pass the test on the condition that he stopped criticizing the government in his newspaper. Haki refused it saying that he was an independent journalist. To the lawyer's surprise, "If I was not, I would ask the MP İmamoğlu to solve this problem years ago" he replied.[113] Haki's struggle for obtaining a driving license illustrates the plight of minority members who refrain from clientelistic relations in their everyday life transactions.

Some rurals managed to drive their motorcycles without a driving license for a lifetime. Yusuf, for instance, stated that he regretted not having obtained a driving license. He had to ask his brother-in-law to plough his lands with his tractor all his life. He drove his small motorcycle within the village without a driving license until he passed away in 2014 at the age of 87. When, during the interview, I asked him 'Did you take the driving exam?' He replied,

> Well, no… We were denied driving licenses then, but my brother in-law Hasan bribed the authorities (quite a high sum) to obtain the driving license. I wish I had done the same. I've depended on him to plough my fields ever since.[114]

112 "İşlerini Becerenler" , *İleri* , 07.12.1979, nr.152.

113 "Ehliyet Dedikleri" , *İleri*, nr.268, 01.10.1982.

114 Interview with Yusuf,, Melikli, summer 2012.

When I asked him whether the traffic police had ever stopped him to ask for a driving license for his motorcycle, he replied 'Yes…The police stopped me a few days ago, but as he saw that I was very old, he let me go without a fine'.[115]

The traffic police usually stop young boys who drive their motorcycles fast. Those without a driving license are fined. Prior to 2000, some could evade the fine due to their clientelistic relations with specific policemen or local administrators.[116] Those who paid fines were sometimes humiliated by others who boasted about themselves saying 'Why didn't you tell me? I would have dealt with it. I am befriended with a certain police senior officer Yannis'. Clientelistic bonds also rendered power and respectability within the community.

Ali also claimed that those who obtained driving licenses in mid to late 1980s achieved it by their clientelistic relations. He was lucky to have obtained it before. However, discrimination involved a wide range of transactions including obtaining a plate for a vehicle.[117]

> I bought a pickup in 1984 and applied to the Prefecture for registration. For six months, I went there every Wednesday and each time I encountered a bureaucratic hurdle. Finally, I returned it (without having used) to the company which fully refunded me.[118]

Melda narrated that in late 1980s, a specific MP candidate asked her uncle to vote and solicit for him in the village. In return, he would get his driving license. He was declared to have failed the driving test a number of times before. The uncle kept his promise and guaranteed him a

115 Ibid.

116 Since 2000, however, Greece has been quite strict about traffic rules and it is impossible to drive without a license. Personal Observations and narrations in the region.

117 Interview with Ali, Yalanca, summer 2012.

118 Ibid.

number of votes. However, after he was elected, he did not keep his promise.[119]

The minority was excluded from state administration by denial of employment in public institutions. Until late 1990s, barely anyone was employed as civil servant, which has been the most popular job in Greece. They were not given license to open businesses. Until late-1990s, there was no factory, gas station or pharmacies owned by the minority.

The following narration is of a rare case of an individual attempt to apply for a civil servant position by Hediye, a rural female university graduate, in late 1980s. It also sheds light on the timid and self-interest seeking behavior of minority elite and the discriminatory attitude of the local Greek authorities.

> A civil servant had passed away in the municipality of Susurköy consequently, a vacant position emerged. As a Greek university graduate, I decided to apply for the position for which high school education was sufficient. The Mayor of Susurköy was from the minority whom we knew well. When I told the Mayor Hüseyin that I wanted to apply for the vacant position, he did not accept my application. He did not want to hurt me either. He was just scared that he would lose his position and started crying 'Please don't be offended… but I cannot accept your application because otherwise you'll put me into trouble with the Greek authorities. 'I submitted my application anyway. [120]

In the second part of the story, the narrator goes to the government-appointed Prefect of Rhodope, Karabelas, to complain about her refusal to the post.

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119 Interview with Melda, originally from Kalanca, Yalanca, summer 2012.

120 Interview with Hediye, Müselimköy, summer 2012.

> The Prefect kindly welcomed me into his office. However, while I was telling him about my application, he was constantly offering me drinks and food. When I stopped, he looked at me and said: 'Do you know why I gave you an appointment? It's because I really wondered how a Muslim woman from the minority had the courage to speak to me directly without resorting to middlemen?' Then he told me to go and tell Pavlidis about it. Pavlidis was the Head of Minority Affairs Office and was in charge of everything concerning the minority in Western Thrace. He was also very well known for his animosity against the Turks. I did not go to him. Neither could I take a protocol number.[121]

Turkish university graduates' diplomas were not recognized until early 1990s. Like the driving tests, minority graduates failed the required exams many times.[122] Many graduates were discouraged, gave up and migrated to Turkey or to Germany to seek employment. This led to a brain drain not only for the minority but for the region and the country. The remaining ones who were struggling to get their diplomas recognized worked on the fields, as waiters and other low-qualified jobs. Consequently, a social transition from peasantry to educated bourgeoisie was curtailed.

Minority education was turned into a drama by the Greek state post 1974, aggravating the already declining quality of education that started through the final years of junta. Minority secondary schools were particularly targeted.[123] Education was hampered by the late arrival of exchange teachers from Turkey due to bureaucratic hurdles, lack of proper books, introduction of the requirement that in the end of the

121 Ibid.

122 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 316-326.

123 *İleri*, nr. 723, 25.06.1993; Personal observations.

school year all pupils had to pass exams from all lessons in Greek language, including those taught in Turkish. As part of the curriculum was Turkish, many students failed these exams.[124]

A special exam was introduced as a requirement to enter minority secondary schools after primary school. In 1993, the entrance exam was replaced by a lottery system.[125] Despite all the burdens, parents did not send their children to Greek public secondary schools. The ones whose names were picked up in the lottery went to minority secondary schools. Others were sent to Boarding schools in Turkey. Secondary schools were either arranged by the Turkish Consulate or parents sent their children to schools where their relatives in Turkey lived. In the meanwhile, the quality of education in minority secondary schools triggered the parents to send their children directly to Turkey after primary school. As few students were able to graduate, Turkey initiated a special quota for them to enter Turkish universities.[126] Consequently, the range of educational migration expanded to include primary school graduate pupils in addition to university students.

Following the declaration of the Northern Turkish Republic of Cyprus in 1983, Ksanthi and Komotini Turkish Unions were banned for having the adjective 'Turkish' in their titles. The government spokesman Rubatis made a statement saying that there were no Turks in Western Thrace but only Muslims of various descents.[127] It was based on the reasoning that the use of the adjective 'Turkish' threatened public order as it referred to citizens of Turkey. [128] However, the associations offered cultural and sportive facilities ever since they were founded and never involved in any sort of illegal acts. Undoubtedly, the reason was political in nature and reflecting the Greek concerns of preventing Western Thrace from becoming a second Cyprus.

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124 Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority,* 2000, 158

125 Ibid., 159.

126 Ibid., 161.

127 Ibid., 345.

128 Lois Whitman, "Destroying Ethnic Identity- The Turks of Greece", New York: *Human Rights Watch Report*, 1990, 16.

8.4.1 *Deprivation of Citizenship*

The cruelest practice of the minority regime was undoubtedly deprivation of Greek citizenship enshrined in the notorious Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Law No.3370 enacted in 1955:

> A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality. This also applies to a person of non-Greek ethnic origin born and domiciled abroad. His minor children living abroad may be declared as having lost Greek nationality if both their parents and the surviving parent have lost the same. The minister of the interior decides in these matters with the concurring opinion of the National Council.[129]

The law was initially intended to preclude the return of communists (those particularly of Slavic origins) who fled Greece during or after the Civil War (1946-1949), and many of whom were condoned in the following decades.[130]

It was applied against the Muslim Turkish minority from 1960s until its abolition in 1998 to counterbalance the demographic decline of the Greek Orthodox population in Istanbul.[131] Two reliable sources indicate the total number of people deprived of citizenship between 1955 and 1998 in Greece as 60,000 and the number for those belonging to

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129 Whitman, ibid., p.11.

130 In 1982, based on the decision of Ministry of Interior, citizenship was restored to 1000 people who were deprived of citizenship this way. Dia Anagnostou, "Deepening Democracy or Defending the Nation? The Europeanization of Minority Rights and Greek Citizenship", West European Politics, Vol.28, No.2, March 2005, 335-357, 356.

131 Ibid., 338.

Muslim minority 50,000.[132] The lawyer Orhan Hacıibram stated that majority of these people were deprived of Greek citizenship after 1980. Deprivation of citizenship continued even after the state declared minority opening in 1991. My father and my aunt and my father's aunt, for instance, were deprived of Greek citizenship in 1991 and 1993 respectively.

The illegitimate nature of the law did not concern any international organization for decades. The UN and the then European Community or later European Union and all others turned a blind eye to such a racist and discriminatory citizenship law that victimized thousands of innocent people. The law was a blatant violation of basic human rights. It was in contravention of the Greek Constitution itself[133] and the international conventions Greece had signed[134] not to mention the Treaty of Lausanne.

Paradoxically, although Greece recognized the minority as a religious minority (Muslim), Article 19 was applied on the basis that they were of non-Greek ethnic origin. This reflects the indivisibility of Greek identity from Greek Orthodoxy. In 1990s, when the EU was imposing respect for human rights in her Copenhagen Criteria as a requirement on all candidates, ethnic cleansing dramas were on stage in Greece, who had been member for over a decade.

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132 Ibid., 339; The same number (60,000) is also given by Whitman, "Greece: The Turks of Western Thrace", 2.

133 Article 4.1: All Greeks are equal before the law, Article 4.3, withdrawal of Greek citizenship shall be permitted only in the case of voluntary acquisition of another citizenship or of undertaking service contrary to national interests in a foreign country.

134 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 15, which bars states from 'arbitrary' depriving someone of citizenship, Convention on the Prevention and Repression of Crime and Genocide (1954), 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), ratified by Greece in 1970, European Convention on Human Rights (ratified by Greece in 1974), UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic Minorities (1992), European Convention on Nationality (1997)

The basis for deprivation of citizenship was to have left Greece without the intention of returning, that is to say, to have sold all the property. However, the minority members deprived of citizenship worked and lived abroad (mainly Turkey) because they could not open businesses, educate their children properly, buy or repair their houses in Western Thrace. They maintained their property and familial ties in Greece. They visited their parents regularly and spent their holidays in their villages.

Ironically, among those deprived of citizenship were also minority members living in Greece. Semahat Haliloglu, for instance, lost his citizenship on July 21, 1989, when he was doing his military service. Two minority members were refused re-entry into Greece after visiting their son who was studying in Istanbul.[135] A middle-aged widow I met in Gümülcine in 2004 was deprived of citizenship while she was visiting her daughter in Turkey. The decisions taken by the Citizenship Commission hardly ever complied even with the ethnic based citizenship law. For instance, one such report over the deprivation of a seven-year-old boy in 1982 stated:

> He is an extreme Turkish nationalist. It's been proven that he has sold all his property and settled abroad forever. However, a few lines underneath, the report says: He does not have any registered property.[136]

The procedure depriving people of citizenship was no less unlawful. The police informed the Directorate of Citizenship that an individual and his family had deliberately left the country for an indefinite period of time and had no intention to come back.[137] However, the police was

135 Whitman, ibid., p.12.

136 Interview with Orhan Hacıibram, İskeçe, summer 2012.

137 Lois Whitman, "Greece: The Turks of Western Thrace", Helsinki Watch, NY, January 1999, 16.

usually misinformed by the local agents. It was often the case that neighbors or relatives who had a dispute with the person in question signed a document at the local patrol bearing witness that the persons who lived in Turkey had sold out their property and had no intention to come to Greece.[138] In some cases, relatives did it deliberately to deprive relatives in Turkey of inheritance.[139]

Those deprived of citizenship were seldom informed about it. They learnt about it randomly; either when they requested an official document from the authorities or at the Greek Customs while travelling to Greece. Some people learned about their deprivation of citizenship while trying to renew their expired passports at the Prefecture of Rhodope. Then they were offered a contemporary passport to leave Greece forever. Some women married to Turkish nationals had to consent to this to unite with their husbands in Turkey. [140]

My father learned that he was deprived of citizenship when he asked my grandfather to get an official document from the municipality of Iasmos in 1991. In May 1993, when we were traveling to Greece, at the Greek Customs, my aunt was told that she was deprived of citizenship. She was given two options; either she would have her passport detained by the police and enter Greece to live there as stateless for indefinite time or she would take her passport and go back to Turkey. The only condition for entrance was to agree to have your passport confiscated at the Customs and become stateless.

According to the 1999 Human Rights Watch report, the number of stateless persons in Greece in 1999 was between 1,000 and 4,000. Until December 1997, these people had no legal status. Consequently, they had

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138 Personal Observations; mentioned in a letter from Sadık Ahmet to the European Commission for Human Rights dated 18.11.1993, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 586

139 Personal Observations.

140 Case of a relative in 1994.

difficulty receiving social services like health care, education, pensions, while social security continued to take contributions from them. They were even denied protection under the 1954 U.N Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, which was ratified by Greece in 1975.[141]

My father immigrated to Istanbul together with my mother and me to open a business in 1984, which was not possible in Greece in those years. My aunt graduated from Istanbul University, Faculty of Pharmacy. Although she wanted to live in Western Thrace, she had to remain in Istanbul to open her own pharmacy, because university diplomas from Turkey were not recognized in Greece. A number of university graduates suffered the same fate. Denying the educated the opportunity to exercise their profession and depriving them of citizenship for having to work and live in Turkey was double victimization.

Deprivation of citizenship could only be legitimate if based on Article 4.3 of Greek Citizenship Law which legalized it for those undertaking service contrary to national interests in a foreign country. When my father told his deprivation of citizenship to a Greek lawyer he got acquainted while he was working as a Greek-speaking tourist guide in Istanbul, to his surprise, he was told 'You must have done something against Greece and deserved it!' However, many of the victims were aloof even from politics, although it is a basic civil right which does not require deprivation of citizenship. As mentioned in the following excerpt from a Greek newspaper:

> As known, the Greek administration may take away the citizenship of a Muslim who is absent for some period. According to information given to us from the Muslim side, in many instances individuals who play the role of double agents are involved in the cases of taking away the citizenship. They suggest, for example, that the

141 Whitman, "Greece:The Turks of Western Thrace", 17.

> citizenship is taken away from some individuals with the accusation that they are dangerous and organs of the consulate, while it is the case of some poor and illiterate workers.[142]

'Double agents' refers to the minority members involved in networks of espionage both for Greece and Turkey. Apparently, they were paid well and got all their transactions and businesses done without having to deal with discriminations or bureaucratic hurdles. The dilemma, however, was they could maneuver and switch sides, which was not easy for the (Greek and Turkish) authorities to find out.

The legal procedure to regain Greek citizenship was long and expensive because the victims had to sue the state. This required not only money but also courage and perseverance. Minority lawyers were usually intermediaries between the plaintiffs and the Greek lawyers who actually made defense at the Supreme Court in Athens. Therefore, few minority members resorted to legal ways. Some of those who agreed to have their passports confiscated at the Greek Customs and went to their villages resorted to clientelistic relations to regain their citizenship but had to wait for long years entrapped in the village. [143]

Many victims struggled to regain their citizenship to be able to visit their homeland, family and friends in Greece, to benefit from EU incentives, to defend their rights, or because they did not trust the future of Turkish economy. Given the longevity of legal action, minority members devised an interesting survival strategy. Germany became the life-saving destination. Before their passports expired, some went to Germany to have them prolonged.

Those who were working in Turkey, including my aunt, had themselves registered with their relatives and friends who were living in Ger-

142 Rizospastis 09.12.1992, Part 2 of a 3 day reportage by Nikos Bundukis, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority," 2000, 586.

143 This is how my father's aunt Refiye regained her (Greek) citizenship. She waited for five years in the village and could not see her children and grandchildren who lived in Turkey.

many. They went to Germany only to prolong their Greek passports before they expired. Others who were unemployed in Turkey went to Germany to work, live and regain their Geek citizenship. The irony is that the Greek Embassy prolonged their passports in Germany while they were refused entry to Greece. They did not dare go to the Greek Embassy in Istanbul out of the fear that their passports would be confiscated. They were stateless in Greece and Turkey, but Greek citizens in Germany.

My parents opened a grocery store in Munich which they ran together until December 1998 when the notorious Article 19 was repealed. They left me and my brother remained with my aunt in Istanbul in order not to disrupt our education. This was the second fragmentation of family after 1984. We have never united again except on certain occasions and for holidays.

The legal procedure took around six years due to a number of court delays. In May 1998, they won the case because Article 19 was repealed. I remember the evening in January 1998 when I was watching news on the Turkish TV with my late grandfather in the village. When we heard the citizenship law was repealed, my grandfather burst into tears out of joy. He was actively involved in minority politics and an ardent supporter of the late Dr Sadık Ahmet movement. My father and aunt had blamed his involvement in politics for their deprivation of citizenship for years. He was so upset that he refrained from politics afterwards.

Nonetheless, the state delayed registering them as citizens for another one and a half year. At this point it was brought to the minority lawyer Orhan Hacıibram. He narrated the dramatic procedure:

> Your father and aunt won the case against Greece at the Greek Supreme Court in Athens. However, the Greek state kept delaying their registration at the municipality. They consulted me at this point. I sent a notification to the Ministry of Interior with the Supreme Court verdict . A few months later they were registered at the Municipality of Iasmos.[144]

144 Interview with Orhan Hacıibram, İskeçe, summer 2012.

My father and my aunt were able to go to their homeland almost a decade later. My parents settled back in the village and built a nice house. My aunt continued to live in Istanbul where she was running a pharmacy and continues to visit the village frequently.

Western Thracians deprived of citizenship did not officially exist for years. They were like the protagonist in Aziz Nesin's story 'Yaşar ne yaşar ne yaşamaz' [Yaşar is neither alive nor dead]. In Turkey, they were given stateless identity cards together with residence permits which they had to renew every year. Acquisition of Turkish citizenship required a long and arduous bureaucratic procedure which could last up to a decade or more. The unemployed and the elderly had no health insurance. Therefore, they had to consume up their savings or borrow from relatives to pay for medical expenses. Western Thracian Solidarity Associations in Istanbul raised money to cover the medical expenses of the poor.[145]

8.4.2 *The Black List*

Undoubtedly, networks of espionage were not unilateral. Agents for Turkey informed Turkey minority members alleging that they were Greek agents . The category of 'Greek agents', or 'Yunan Hafiyesi' as was referred in the vernacular language, had a wide range, including political opponents and other politically non-affiliated persons whom they slandered for personal reasons. These declared Greek agents were then recorded in the notorious Blacklist (Kara Liste)*[146]*. Many considered it a shame although they had not done anything against Turkey and kept it a secret.[147]

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145 Personal Observations and Experiences.

146 Aarbakke, The Muslim Minority….", pp:380-388; Interview with İbram Onsunoğlu, Komotini; Abdülhalim Dede, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

147 Interview with İbram Onsunoğlu, Gümülcine, summer 2012.

> 'If I told my mother that I was on the Black List, she would disown me' remarked İbram Onsunoğlu, because 'Turkey is holy for us. We have strong emotional ties.'[148]

Like those who learnt about their deprivation of (Greek) citizenship at the Greek Customs, persons who were on the Black List were usually informed about it while travelling to Turkey at the Turkish Customs and were denied entry. On 4th November 1988, for instance, Halil Haki, owner and author of the minority newspaper *İleri* was travelling to Turkey to visit his children studying at the university when he was refused entry and told to go to the Turkish Consulate of Komotini to learn about the reason.[149] Haki learnt, to his surprise, that he was on the Blacklist. He made a second attempt to go to Turkey late December and was again refused. He started a hunger strike to protest but ended it a few days later allegedly due to threats against his children studying in Turkey.[150]

In January 1990, University Graduates' Association in Komotini, decided to issue a declaration condemning the Blacklist.[151] Turkish press did not remain insensitive to the issue and condemned the treatment of Haki and the Blacklist policy.[152] The then leftist periodical *2000'e Doğru* criticized the Blacklist sharply "Those who oppose Ankara are recorded in the *Forbiddens' List*. Turkish Minority Blackmailed by the Consulate".[153] When in late 1991 elections, the coalition of DYP and SHP came to power, the Blacklist was abolished and Haki was able to go to Turkey and visit his son in Ankara, almost four years later.[154]

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148 Ibid.

149 *İleri,* 04.11. 1988, nr. 532.

150 *İleri* ,20.1.1989, nr.540.

151 *İleri*, 26.01.1990, nr.581.

152 Oktay Akbal in Cumhuriyet 09.02.1989, Yılmaz Akkılıç in Olay 27.01.1989, in *İleri,* 24.02.1989, nr. 544.

153 İleri, 26th January, 1990, nr.581.

154 *İleri* 07.12.1992,nr.661.

§ 8.5 Elite-led Rural Protests

Protests as a survival strategy against land confiscations were initiated by the emergent class of university graduate professionals-the new elite- in 1980s, many of whom were from rural families. They were among the early graduates of minority high school in Komotini, who continued their education in Turkish universities later. The first time in 1966, and again in early 1980s, the Greek government passed legislation for the transfer of Greek citizen students at Turkish universities to Greek universities. 35 minority students who were studying in Turkish universities in late 1960s benefited from this and transferred to Greek universities. Among them were the lawyer and MP Mehmet Müftüoğlu, doctor Sadık Ahmet, lawyer Orhan Hacıibram, psychiatrist İbram Onsunoglu, lawyer Sebahattin Emin, all the prominent members of the new elite.[155]

The old elite, on the other hand, were the journalists, ex MPs, clergymen who were also in old age. Their education was also below university level. In mid-1980s, these two classifications became problematic because some young/ middle-aged university graduate professionals such as Dr Sadık Ahmet and lawyer Sebahattin Emin aligned with the old elite group. They were referred to as 'klika' by the journalist Haki, translated and referred as the 'clique' by Aarbakke, who also uses the categories of hardliners and moderates.[156]

The hardliners were portrayed as nationalist and adamant whereas the moderates composed of liberals and/or leftists more reconciliatory and courageous to criticize not only Greece but also Turkey concerning minority issues. Among the moderates were Halil Haki, owner of *İleri* newspaper, psychiatrist İbram Onsunoglu, lawyer Orhan Hacıibram.

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155 Interview with İbram Onsunoğlu, Komotini; Interview with Orhan Hacıibram, İskeçe, summer 2012.

156 Arbakke borrows from Alexandris's categories of hardliners, moderates and law-abiding Muslims Alexandris, A, "Political Expediency and Human Rights: Minority Issues Between Greece and Turkey." Minority Rights - Policies and Practice in South-East Europe, Christianborg, Copenhagen, 1990, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 185.

The prominent members of the hardliners were ex MP Hasan Hatipoğlu, owner of Akın newspaper, Ismail Rodoplu, owner of Gerçek newspaper and post 1988 Dr Sadık Ahmet, lawyer Sebahattin Emin and İbrahim Şerif, the current elected Mufti of Komotini. A significant caveat is necessary here. In this research, this kind of categorization adopted from Aarbakke does not mean to legitimize all actions of the moderates and criticize those of the hardliners. My intention is to reflect the difference in the mentality and approach of these two groups who had a significant impact on the struggle against the violation of minority's rights.

These elite groups had divergent views for dealing with minority issues. Whereas some sought to pursue an independent line, others insisted on Turkey's patronage. The moderates challenged some of the old elite and their conventional forms of struggle for rights that centered on newspaper coverage, writing petitions and waiting for change from an inefficient, nationalist and highly political bureaucracy. They paved the way for a unique way of struggle by organizing protests with reference to the discourse of universal human instead of the conventional discourse of Lausanne Treaty.

8.5.1 *The Victorious Inhanlı (Evlavo) Protest*

The Evlavo protest was the first large scale rural protest and the first won case against land expropriations in the region. As narrated by the lawyer Hacıibram, the lawyer of the villagers and the leader of the protest, 2,300 stremmata of land were given to two Muslim-Turk brothers during the Ottoman rule to graze their flocks. In that period, Muslims did not do farming but depended on husbandry. Upon the change of borders and successive agricultural reforms, their heirs (and descendants) cultivated the land. In 1973, during the junta period, this piece of land was registered as public land without any legal basis and on the allegation that the title deeds were invalid. Original title deeds were brought

from Ankara to prove their validity, but the Greek government refused to recognize them.[157]

The issue was in limbo for over a decade until it resurfaced in 1981. Apparently, the government was planning to build a 300-house settlement for the Pontic Greeks from the Soviet Union. Despite availability of public lands elsewhere, they wanted to build it there. This way they would kill two birds with a stone by altering the ethnic demography to the favor of Greek Orthodox in İnhanlı, which was the biggest and the most developed village of the Ksanthian plain. As they were claimed to be public lands, the landowners were offered no compensation. The heirs were composed of 250 households, and it meant loss of income for these families. [158] All were sent a legal notice to abandon their lands.

The villagers, represented by the lawyer Orhan Hacıibram, lost the trials of 15-16 March 1982. A large gendarmerie unit was sent to the village to make the villagers sign the documents banning the use of their land. The villagers refused. "At this point", Hacıibram narrated "because a legal decision was taken, we had no chance but to start a resistance against it." He narrates the successful twelve-day protest held in the center of İskeçe:

> The villagers came on their tractors and trailers. There were around forty persons. The number of women exceeded that of men. Under the clock tower, we opened our banners and chanted slogans. Our slogans were not nationalistic. We voiced our human rights, the right of villagers to their lands for survival. On the 12th day of the protest, the administration told us the expropriation process was stopped. Then we ended the protest. In the meanwhile, local Ksanthian Turks supported us sincerely by bringing food and standing with us. On the other hand, there

157 Interview with Orhan Hacıibram, Ksanthi, summer 2012; for a slightly different version of the land dispute, see Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 303; Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu,* 1991, 241-258.

158 Interview with Orhan Hacıibram, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

> were Greek fanatics who passed by shouting 'We are going to throw you out of this land and kill you if necessary'. All they wanted was to create ethnic tension, scare the Turks and make them leave.[159]

The villagers' protests received wide coverage in the minority, the Greek, and the international media BBC and Associated Press.[160] Several minority leaders; journalists, doctors, teachers, the Mufti officials were there for support. However, there were different voices between the old and the new elite concerning the method of protest. A member of the old elite, Hatipoğlu criticized the assembling of villagers and claimed that a memorandum should be given to the Prefect and then the crowd should be dissolved. Hacıibram criticized him for his hypocrisy as he sat in a coffeehouse to watch the events and approached the protesters to take a photo with himself at the front when they ended the march.[161]

The court verdict of 18 March 1983 cancelled the protocols and consequently the expropriation of the disputed land. The decision was based on the absence of clear specifications of the concerned area but not the wrongness of the previous decision.[162]

"If these lands were lost, it would demoralize not only the persons involved but the whole Western Thracian rural community and create a domino effect of migration" reiterated Hacıibram. Indeed, I remember the concerns the İnhanlı expropriation created even in villages as far as mine. It was the center of talks not only in the village coffeehouses but in houses among women.

159 Interview with Orhan Hacıibram, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

160 Ibid.

161 Trakya'nın Sesi 03.07.1982,nr.21, cited in Aarbake, "The Muslim Minority" 2000, 307.

162 Oran, *Türk Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu,* 1991, 258.

8.5.2 *The failed protest in Komotinian lowlands*

The land expropriations in late 1970s and early 1980s differed from those of 1930s and 1950s. Early expropriations (1928,1930,1952) were meant to Greekify Western Thrace in accordance with basic premises of nation-state formation. Yet, they also served humanitarian purposes of settlement, agricultural reforms, distribution of land to landless rurals. Those of 1970s and 1980s, on the other hand, were retaliations against the declining population of İstanbulian Greek Orthodox minority as a consequence of their mistreatment by Turkey that was epitomized by the expulsion in 1964.

The largest land expropriation was that of 3,200 stremmata of arable land to build the Democritus University in Komotini. Those were fertile lands in the strip between Komotini and Iasmos. Moreover, they far exceeded the required space for a university as the biggest university of Greece, Aristotle University in Thessaloniki was built on 640 stremmata. Muslim villagers' offers to give their infertile lands in the vicinity instead was refused by the government.[163]Even worse, the villagers were not given land in return for their expropriated lands. Neither were they paid sufficient compensation.

In fact, the 3,200 stremmata was expropriated for the construction of a university in 1977.[164] Like the Inhanlı rurals, the villagers sued the state but lost the case. In January 1982, the area in question was enclosed and in December construction work began. In the meanwhile, some old minority notables sent a committee to Athens and gave a petition to the then Foreign Minister Rallis including not only the expropriation issue but all problems of the minority.[165] As in the İnhanlı case, the Greek state was indifferent to the matter.

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163 Whitman, "Destroying Ethnic Identity,…", 1990, 35.

164 *Akın,* 18.12.1982, cited in Aarbakke,"The Muslim Minority", 2000, 308.

165 *Gerçek* 41/23.04.1980, cited in ibid., 309.

After this point, the minority could not organize a powerful resistance due to the schism between the old, adamant elite group and the new, dynamic, university graduate elite who were trying to devise an effective strategy for a protest like that of İnhanlı.[166]

A day after the construction work began, the notables and the villagers gathered in the mosque of Eşelçili village to discuss an action plan. However, the old elite group did not attend the meeting, and consequently the crowd dissolved. The new elite held a second meeting in the mosque on 2nd of January led by İbram Onsunoglu, Orhan Hacıibram and Mehmet Nuri, medical doctor and the Mayor of Bulatköy. They decided to organize a protest march and ask for returning the villagers the land in excess of the need for construction or to be given land from elsewhere in exchange for the expropriated.[167] The first protest march was thus held, composed of a thousand people including the villagers and the Communist Party MP Dimitris Sahinis, as the only Greek Orthodox supporter.

At this stage the issue of protest was turned into a power struggle by the old elite. It seems that the concerns over leadership and dominance over the minority outweighed the loss of lands that were essential for the villagers' survival. The group led by Hatipoğlu opposed the protest decision taken under the leadership of the new elite. Furthermore, they averted some İnhanlı villagers who wanted to join the meeting for support.[168] He ignored and humiliated the decision makers by claiming that the legitimate decision-making center was the Supreme Minority Council with the Mufti who was then abroad[169] although he was himself a strict secular.

In the meanwhile, the Prefect of Komotini was informed about the plans for protests. He informed the Mufti and the Mayor Mehmet Nuri

166 Interview with Abdülhalim Dede, Orhan Hacıibram in Ksanthi, İbram Onsunoglu in Komotini, summer 2012.

167 *İleri* ,nr. 281, 07.01.1983.

168 Trakya'nın Sesi 417/23.04.1992., cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 310.

169 Akın 810/28.12.1982, cited in Ibid.; Interview with Orhan Hacıibram who narrated the schism without mentioning names.

that no protest would be allowed, followed by a legal notice by the gendarmerie. Nonetheless, the new elite and villagers held another meeting and decided to hold the next protest on the 2nd of February.[170] The old elite convinced the villagers that a protest march meant rebellion against the state and would trigger violent events. They promised to settle the issue with their diplomatic methods.[171] They went a step further by telling the villagers that "minority issues cannot be resolved by a handful of communists".[172] The villagers were confused, discouraged and scared. They trusted in the old elite and the ad-hoc committee Supreme Minority Council to solve the expropriation issue.[173] As a result, they lost their lands forever.

8.5.3 *An expropriation attempt deterred by the appointed Komotinian Mufti*

In 1986, the government intended to expropriate 6,000 acres of fertile minority land between Sappes and Komotini to build an open-air prison. It was based on a secret presidential decree enacted in 1984. The huge area covered lands from the minority villages of Basırlıköy, Sirkeli , Ircan, Karacalköy, Kozlukepir and the Greek Orthodox village of Anthia. This would deprive 630 minority families of land and leave almost 15,000 minority rurals unemployed.

The Supreme Minority Council assembled and decided to organize a protest march against the decree. The appointed mufti of Komotini, Meço Cemali sent a telegram to Athens, stating that in the case of such an

170 İleri 283/21.01.1983; Trakya'nın Sesi 51/22.01.1983; Gerçek 79/25.01.1983; Akın 811/27.01.1983, cited in Aarbake, p.311.

171 Trakya'nın Sesi 51/22.01.1983, cited in ibid., 311.

172 Interview with Abdülhalim Dede, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

173 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 315; Interview with Abdülhalim Dede, Ksanthi, summer 2012.

expropriation, he would personally mobilize all the Muslims and march to Athens. The government retreated. Oran describes it 'as an unexpected move', implying the perceived illegitimacy of the Mufti among the minority. The role of the Mufti in minority's survival, a taboo subject among the minority and a barely touched issue in the concerned literature is elaborated in Chapter 9.

§ 8.6 The First Minority Mobilization in 1988

A protest march was held on 29 January in 1988 in the town center of Gümülcine upon the call by the Supreme Minority Council, with the participation of at least ten thousand minority members. The demonstration is unique in the history of the minority because it was for the first time they were united in solidarity and exercised agency on a massive level. It was a democratic, non-violent protest march of people against the closing of two historical minority associations, the Ksanhti and Komotini Turkish Unions, for bearing the title 'Turkish'. This was the last straw that broke the camel's back. A number of demonstrators were assaulted by the police. The march ended with submission of a petition to the Prefect over the ban on the two associations.[174] The protest received substantial media coverage in Greece. The Greek Right tended to interpret it as provocation by Turkey whereas the Left and the Liberals criticized the Greek government's minority politics.[175]

The major driving force behind the event was a reaction to both Turkey and Greece against their indifference towards the sufferings of the minority. The minority notables had previously sent a letter to the

174 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 349

175 Ibid., 349-350.

then Turkish Prime Minister Özal to bring up the grievances of the minority during the Davos talks. However, Özal made no mention of the minority.[176] Worse than that, to Papandreu's surprise, Özal, like himself, declared the mass demonstration of 1988 as 'provocation'.[177]

In fact, the first demonstration against the banning of the associations was held on 23th January in Frankfurt by the Western Thrace Solidarity Associations in Germany. Thousands of minority members assembled in Frankfurt carrying banners crying out 'We were born Turkish, We will die Turkish', 'We want our human rights to be respected' and left a black wreath in front of the Greek Embassy.[178] They lit he first protest fire. They had already been engaged in raising awareness of the discriminations against the minority in European platforms.[179]

On the other hand, in Turkey, Western Thrace Solidarity Associations' demand to organize a protest march in Istanbul was rejected by the Prefecture.[180] This might be due to then Turkish government's concerns that it might cast a shadow over the upcoming Davos Meetings with the Greek Premier and consequently the intended Turkish-Greek rapprochement that was probably significant in order to avert Greek vetoes against Turkey's accession to the then European Community.

The organization of the protest march is a controversial issue in the minority history. Although the looking glass history claims the decision was proposed and implemented by the old elite, the Supreme Minority Council, evidence suggests that it was first held on 26th January 1989 and was organized and announced by the moderate elite with the participation of around five thousand minority members. Although the number

176 Oran, *Türk Yunan İlişkilerinde*, 1991, 191.

177 Cumhuriyet, 1 February 1988, cited in ibid.,191.

178 Ibid.,189.

179 Aydın Ömeroglu, *Belgeler ve Olaylar,* 1994,132.

180 Ibid.

of participants cannot be exactly known, there are photos of the demonstration taken on the same day in the Komotini town center.[181] Some narrators, on the other hand, claimed that the demonstration held on 26th January, was supported by Greek state, which sounds more like slander than reality.

29th January was later declared the "National Resistance Day". It was commemorated two years later on the same day that ignited a pogrom in Komotini. Ever since it has been commemorated by the minority associations and minority members in the form of seminars and talks in Western Thrace, Turkey and Germany.

§ 8.7 The Independent Movement and Dr Sadık Ahmet

Although it is beyond the scope of this research, among the minority members, voting decisions have rarely been based on political orientations. The tendency has been voting for the party with the highest chance of victory. Clientelistic relations and acquaintance with MP candidates are other significant factors that shape voting decisions. Nonetheless, the minority has elected representatives in almost all parliamentary elections. MP candidates from the minority traditionally ran for elections within the ballots of Greek political parties.

In 1988, for the first time, an independent ticket was established in Komotini and Ksanthi to run for the upcoming parliamentary elections. The idea was to voice the minority free of any political party restrictions. In Ksanthi, the independent ticket 'İkbal' -was established by the late Mehmet Emin Aga (elected Mufti of Ksanthi between 1990-2006), Kadir Ali Yunusoğlu, Mustafa Çakır and Rasim Murcaoğlu. The independent

181 Abdülhalim Dede, "Stalin Zihniyeti ile 26 ve 29 Ocak" , *Azınlıkça*, Nr.19, February 2006; a series of video interviews on entitled "The Unknown History of Western Thrace", journalist Evren Dede with İbram Onsunoğlu, October 2019, available online at: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Evren+Dede+Onsuno%C4%9Flu+r%C3%B6portajlar%C4%B1, last retrieved 02.05.2022.

ticket 'Güven' was formed by the medical doctor Sadık Ahmet, theologian İbrahim Şerif, journalist İsmail Rodoplu and the lawyer Sebahattin Emin.

All were from rural families except Şerif. Ahmet and Emin graduated from the minority secondary school in Komotini, entered university in Turkey and transferred to Greek universities in Thessaloniki in 1966 following the relevant Greek state decision. Rodoplu was the first elected independent MP at elections held in June 1989 because Sadık Ahmet was not allowed to run for the elections due to a bureaucratic problem concerning his application forms. However, he was elected as the independent minority MP at the next elections (April 1990) together with Ahmet Faikoğlu from the Fortune list.[182]

The independent movement gained significant support from the minority as well as from the kin-state Turkey whereas it was considered a threat to national unity by Greece. Sadık Ahmet was the dominant figure in minority politics since late 1988s until his death in a car accident in 1994. Whereas he got a wide popular support from the minority rurals, he was also criticized by opponents, the new elite members, for being too stubborn and prioritizing his self- popularity rather than the interests of the minority.[183]

Sadık Ahmet's active involvement in minority politics started with a signature campaign. In fact, it was first proposed by the Western Thracian Association in Düsseldorf to the University Graduates Association in Komotini.[184] However, the minority elites lacked the courage to implement it as it was kept in limbo for a long while. As a result, Sadık Ahmet decided to run the campaign on his own initiative.[185]

On 9 August 1986, the police stopped him on his way and found in his car the petition entitled 'Grievances and Requests of the Western Thracian Turkish-Muslim minority living within the borders of the Greek

182 Hikmet Öksüz, "Representation of the Western Thracian Turkish Minority in the Greek Parliament", *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, Annual 7, 2002 ,107-152, 136.

183 Interview with İbram Onsunoglu; A.Dede. For more details, see Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 364- 503.

184 Ömeroglu, *Belgeler ve Olaylar,* 1994, 145.

185 Ibid., 140-150

Republic' with 1,300 signatures. As a medical doctor, he did not collect the signatures in a professional way. A number of rurals signed also for members of their family like their wives. He was immediately arrested and accused of engaging in acts that impair the reputation of the state, spreading false information and causing unrest among public. However, he was released by the public prosecutor of Evros. Dr Ahmet continued to collect signatures after his release. He submitted an English version of the petition to participants in a colloquium on Democracy and Human Rights in Thessaloniki on 25 September 1987. [186]

At this point, the public prosecutor of Evros decided to try him in court. The series of his trials after this incidence and his imprisonment heroized him among the minority. Moreover, the national and international interest in the trials received publicized the minority problems to the world. The naming and shaming of Greece, particularly in the European Community, was a motive that pushed her to change the state policy on the Turkish-Muslim minority.

Dr Sadık Ahmet has a profound place in the collective memory, particularly for the elderly males as they were more interested and involved in politics compared to females. Despite his probable mistakes, he undoubtedly contributed to the creation of international awareness and consequently to the democratization of minority governance.

In this research, I deliberately avoided any question on political matters including him because politics is out of the scope and my identity as an insider would be an obstacle against expressing real thoughts. Nonetheless, a number of my narrators believed he contributed a great deal to the democratization of minority regime by voicing the injustices done to us for decades. Yet, there were also respondents who criticized him.[187] For instance, Hediye praised his courage, but also reiterated that he had an overtly nationalistic attitude:

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186 Ibid.

187 Interview with İbram Onsunoğlu; Abdulhalim Dede. It was claimed that he had become almost like a dictator after the trials and had a number of opponents recorded in the Black List. Onsunoglu stated in he threatened people in the highland village Hloi that

> I had the chance to meet him several times in friends' circle. We had opposing political orientations. I have always been a leftist. Sadık Ahmet, on the other hand was a strict nationalist. Nonetheless, his contribution to the democratization of the minority policy is undeniable. Our community who barely had unity and solidarity needed a madly bold man to unite them to stand up for their rights. That was him.[188]

§ 8.8 The Pogrom of 1990

The pogrom against the minority in January 1990 was the first inter-ethnic confrontation in Western Thrace. Provoked by the local Greek media, supported by the Greek Orthodox Regional Metropolitan Damaskinos, it was carried out by Greek Orthodox fanatics and watched by the Greek police.

The events leading up to the pogrom started with the announcement of the Supreme Minority Council to commemorate the demonstration of 29th January 1988 with a prayer (mevlid) in the Old Mosque on 29th January. On 27th January, a declaration published in the local nationalist Greek newspaper Hronos by a group called "Thracian Anti-pacifists" (*Thrákes íriniste*s) was asking the local Greek Orthodox to assemble in front of the old Mosque.[189]

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anyone who did not vote for him would be jailed after entering Turkey. Onsunoglu blamed Turkey for giving him unconditional power. In his words, "Turkey idolized him and the people worshipped him like they worshipped idols in the time of Muslim Prophet Muhammed"., Komotini, summer 2012.

188 Interview with Hediye, Megapisto, summer 2012.

189 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 431.

The next day, on 28 January, local Greek radios spread the news that in the public hospital the Greek Solakidis was killed by a Muslim patient during an argument and hailed the local Greek Orthodox to prevent the commemoration by the Muslims. Allegedly, a fierce argument took place between the 49-year-old Muslim farmer Hasan Salih and the 52-year-old customs officer Angelos Solakidis. Salih hit him several times with a stool on the head and Soladikis fell into coma. It seems that the local Greek media diverted the news of an unfortunate event in the public hospital to provoke the pogrom. In fact, Solakidis had not died on that day, but much later on 21st February.[190]

Mobs of Greek fanatics gathered early in the morning and attacked the group of minority members who had gathered for the prayer. They plundered minority-owned shops whereas no Greek-owned shops were attacked. Later it was found out that all the Greek shops had stickers of Greek flag on their windows, which means that it was a pre-arranged attack, not an instant provocation.[191]

According to the Helsinki Watch Report of 1990, twenty-one people were injured, and over 400 minority-owned shops were damaged. The elected Mufti Mehmet Emin Aga was hit on the head with an iron bar. The police watched the mob but did not interfere.[192] My late paternal grandmother was among the protesters. He told us that he hid in a nearby kiosk when the police entered in the crowd to beat up the Turks. A relative was clubbed by the police and suffered stomach aches for a while.

Human Rights Watch report claimed that the government did not pay the indemnities for the plundered shops although it had promised to.[193] Aarbakke, on the other hand, stated that in reply to the question of indemnities by Turkey, the Greek government stated that the victims

190 Ibid.,.434.

191 Narrations of victims and other minority members in 1990.

192 Whitman, "Greece: The Turks of Western Thrace", 20.

193 Ibid., 21.

could apply to Greek courts.[194] Haki wrote that only seven minority shop owners had applied to the Greek courts for indemnities.[195] The low number of plaintiffs illustrate the submission, learned helplessness, and fear of the state authority.

The pogrom aggravated the relations between Greece and Turkey. The Turkish Consul in Komotini, Kemal Gür was declared 'persona non grata' and expelled from the country for having referred to the minority as 'our kin' in a letter he wrote to Greek authorities demanding the indemnification of damaged shops. Turkey retaliated by expelling Ilias Klis, the Greek Consul in Istanbul. Oran describes the 29 January events as a 'mini-pogrom', [196] a late retaliation of the 5-6 September 1955 pogrom against the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul.

§ 8.9 The Long Awaited Minority Opening

The pogrom incited immediate concern within Greece. As usual, it was the left who ran to the region to investigate the situation and assemble for a solution. Two days after the pogrom, a group of representatives from *Sinaspismos* led by Maria Damanaki visited the damaged shops in Komotini. In the course of their meeting with the local politicians at the town hall, an angry mob of fanatics gathered outside to protest Damanaki and called her a traitor. The group could not meet the minority representatives under such circumstances and had to abandon the town hall under police surveillance. [197]

Nonetheless, leaders of the three largest political parties assembled to discuss the situation. A permanent and profound solution was

194 *Eleftherotipia* (Greek newspaper) 02.03.1990, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 433.

195 *Ileri* , nr.864, 24.01.1997.

196 Ibid.

197 Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde,* 1991, 192-193.

sought for which required consensus of all political parties, because the ethnic unrest was not a result of the government's policies, but of the long persistent state policy.[198] They acquiesced on the risks and the required changes of policy concerning the minority. The risks were demographic, political and economic. The increase in minority population could be a pretext for Turkish irredentism as was the case in Hatay where Turkish population was 30%, and Cyprus 18%.[199]

They reached an agreement on the elimination of discrimination and institution of (benign) state control in the region. In order to control demographic change, it was agreed to settle Pontic Greeks in Western Thrace, to increase the living standards of ethnic Greeks to keep them in the region. Locals would be supported to buy Muslim lands. Urbanization of Muslims would be promoted by improving minority education and employment opportunities outside the region. Administration of waqfs would be democratized to restrict the involvement of Turkish Consulate. Finally, the Mufti's judicial powers would be limited by imposing Greek courts as a check system.[200]

A year later, the Prime Minister Mitsotakis visited the region and declared a new program promising elimination of past discriminations and rectification of the past mistakes on the basis of 'legal equality-equal citizenship' .[201] He addressed the minority as 'Muslim' in his speech, yet, underlined the existence of three sub-groups, Turks, Pomaks and Roma. The minority got excited and hopeful about the promised end of discriminations. However, Mitsotakis's reference to minority as Muslim with three sub-groups was interpreted as an attempt to divide them.[202]

198 The governing party (ND- New Democracy) represented by the then PM Kostas Mitsotakis, Andreas Papandreu (PASOK) and Kharilaos Florakis (Synaspismos), cited in Meinardus, 2002, 91.

199 Ibid.

200 Eleftherotypia, 2 March 1990, cited in Meinardus: 2002, 91-92.

201 Anagnostou "Deepening Democracy…", 2005, 344.

202 Ibid.

The new policy (legal equality- equal citizenship) failed to bring about the expected changes until late 1990s due to the lack of domestic political determination. Mitsotakis was in favor of abolishing the discriminatory Citizenship Law Article 19, but he did not receive enough support from his party. Therefore, he could not embark on it because he needed their support for the next elections. In 1993, Mitsotakis lost the elections. PASOK came to power once again in 1993, who was '[…]less receptive to issues regarding minority affairs'.[203] The government would be occupied with the Macedonian issue anyway.[204]

It was in fact the European Union that induced the democratization of Greek minority policy from mid 1990s on. However, as the EU criteria for membership placed more significance on human rights criteria for candidates compared to that of existing member states[205] the EU involvement was more a consequence of pressure created by lobbying than a self -induced concern. In this regard, Turkey's initiatives were effective in bringing several injustices against the minority to the CoE.

Article 19 was repealed on 11 June 1998 as a result of pressure from the CoE, especially after Greece signed the European Convention on Nationality (1997).[206] However, it did not apply retroactively. The abolition of Article 19 aroused strong reactions from the Greek community in Thrace, local authorities and the Orthodox Church, which referred to it as 'national betrayal'.[207]

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203 Ibid., 345.

204 Ibid.

205 "Monitoring the Monitors: EU Enlargement Conditionality and Minority Protection in the CEECs", James Hughes & Gwendolyn Sasse", JEMIE (*Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe)*, Issue 1/2003,1-37; Carter Johnson, "The Use and Abuse of Minority Rights: Assessing Past and Future EU Policies towards Accessing countries of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe", *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights,* 27–51, 2006.

206 Anagnostou "Deepening Democracy", 2005, 348.

207 Ibid., 350.

On the other hand, during the talks at the Parliament, it was argued that the abrogation of Article 19 was necessary to '[…] deprive Turkey, the minority and other European states of another reason to criticize Greece'.[208] Those who advocated it on the basis of human rights, democracy and compliance with European norms and principles were representatives of KKE , Sinaspismos, and the three minority deputies Birol Akifoglu, Galip Galip, Mustafa Mustafa.[209]They proposed that it should be applied retroactively. However, it was rejected. Instead it was decided that those who wanted to regain it should apply for naturalization.[210]

The minority mobilization, international concern for the trials of the late Dr Sadık Ahmet, human rights reports of Human Rights Watch, the indemnities the ECtHR made the Greek government pay minority members for the violation of basic human rights[211] eventually obliged the Greek state to democratize the minority policy. Democratization was further supplemented by the Europeanization reforms that required decentralization in local government. Subsequently, the previously government appointed Prefect and the Prefecture Council were elected by popular vote that included the minority.

Post mid-1990s, land consolidation projects became more inclusionary and democratic. The minority rurals benefited more fairly from land consolidation projects. The rationale behind these projects was to increase agricultural productivity by consolidating small pieces of land scattered around in different places. Instead of cultivating, for instance, two pieces of three-to five stremmata of land separately, the rurals are given ten stremmata as one piece. This way it is less costly and more efficient to irrigate and cultivate it.

208 Ibid., 351.

209 Birol Akifoğlu,ND; Galip Galip ,PASOK; Mustafa Mustafa,Sinaspismos.

210 Anagnostou, 351.

211 Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, "Strasbourg Court Jurispundence and Human Rights in Greece: An Overview of Litigation, Implementation and Domestic Reform", pp:1-73, p.57, available online at: http://www.eliamep.gr/eliamep/files/Greece.pdf.

Ali narrated that as opposed to the unfair land consolidation project in 1976, the rural Turks were proportionately represented in the anadasmos[212] committees in 1998.

> The representatives were elected by villagers in a meeting. That project was carried out with fairness, and solidarity with our Greek Orthodox neighbors. If in the past we were not discriminated that much, if life was like today, I'd have never immigrated to Germany to work. I would have expanded my lands and lived my life in the village happily until death. [213]

With the elimination of the ban on purchasing immovables, and the concomitant exodus of the young and educated Greek Orthodox locals, particularly Sarakatsans from the region to the big cities like Thessaloniki and Athens, some of the lands that were once expropriated and sold by immigrants to Turkey lands were purchased by local Muslim Turks. By an interesting twist of fate, land ownership once again changed hands.

The young people became more involved within the mainstream society. For instance, several young men were transferred to Greek football teams.[214] The number educated professionals and entrepreneurs proliferated. In 2010, military career prospects were opened for minority members.

A number of minority university graduates benefited from special quotas introduced to remedy past discriminations by the Greek state for civil servant positions at the local government, especially at Citizen Service Centers (KEP) of municipalities. In 1973, for instance, there were 6

212 Αναδασμος (Greek) , Redistribution of land.

213 Interview with Ali, Yalanca, summer 2012.

214 http://www.azinlikca.net/yunanistan-bati-trakya-haber/item/7656-yassikoylu-samet-pas-giannina-ya-transfer-oldu.html, last retrieved 08.02.2018.

lawyers, 3 practitioner doctors, one dentist, one vet and four engineers in Western Thrace.[215]

A number of doctors, dentists, pharmacists, physio-therapists, lawyers opened their offices in the town centers. Some Economics and Management graduates opened accounting offices and/or were employed in banks including the Turkish Ziraat Bankası in Komotini.

The relaxation in state attitude towards the minority can also be traced in the experiences of the minority conscripts in the Greek military. Contrary to the previous periods, university graduates are assigned to posts related to their professions. For instance, management graduates were responsible from the management of the canteens. Dentists and doctors regardless of whether they studied in Greece or Turkey exercised their professions during their military services.

My brother, who was a bit anxious before he went to do his military duty in Greece, as he didn't speak Greek much narrated that he was faced with no discrimination but quite a friendly attitude. When I met him 3 months later on a weekend in 2009, I was surprised to see him speaking Greek fluently. He told me that he had made friends with Greek Orthodox colleagues via English and that the Sergeants gave him an explanation in English when he could not understand the order (in Greek). He told me this is how he made progress in Greek language. He was even more delighted when he sent us his photos as a member of the Christmas Band (playing the guitar) which he narrated excitedly:

> One day I heard the accordion when I was in my room and asked a (Greek Orthodox) friend about it. I was told that a band from conscripts was going to give a concert on Christmas evening. I asked if I could join as I played the guitar professionally. He took me to the Captain who expressed his gladness over my demand to join in. After several rehearsals, we gave a concert on Christmas Eve, an occasion to which the senior military officers had participated. We were awarded with chocolate and whisky

215 Gürün, *Bükreş-Paris-Atina*, 1994, 211.

> in the end. I felt…well... very happy… because as a Muslim I played in the band on their (Christian Orthodox) holy night. This also made me feel as part of the group… as if we were united with music.

Europeanization had two opposing impacts for the minority. On the one hand, it helped consolidate the declared democratization policy by ensuring respect to human rights, and equal participation in local government particularly by decentralization reforms of 1997. On the other hand, complete removal of trade barriers resulted in decline in agricultural revenues.[216]

For instance, as processed milk from EU member states began to penetrate into the Greek market since early 1990s at cheaper prices than the natural milk obtained from husbandry in the lowland villages, for the-ordinary households that possessed one or two cows, it became too expensive to keep and breed them. Only those who owned over three cows were able to make some profit. However, because immigration to Germany (as well as Turkey) had swept away many of the young and middle-aged and the remaining households either were composed of elderly pensioners and nuclear families with children at school, husbandry almost ended.

Furthermore, due to the loss of income from tobacco, the main source of income in middle-line and highland villages, around 400 families stopped tobacco cultivation in 2021.[217]

Pursuant to the lift on the construction of new houses and purchasing immovables and that of mortgage and bank loans in early 1990s, minority villagers in overall region of Thrace started to build new houses and/or enlarge the existing ones. New and separate houses were built for

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216 Anagnostou, and Anna Tryandafyllidou, "Regions, Minorities and European Integration", 2013, 12.

217 https://azinlikca1.net/yunanistan-bati-trakya-haber/item/35278-bati-trakyada-bu-yil-400-aile-tutun-ekmeyi-birakti?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0-3O_kHQSo6tVKiOuF0ipEh3u0aTCeyG-MdzFi0cny8i438aYBBjge4HwI, last retrieved 02.05.2021

newlywed couples, in fact for the sons. This period coincided with the end of cow-raising as milk from EU member states began to arrive in Greece with very cheap prices. Many barns in the yards in lowlands were thus turned into houses. In the village, new and luxurious houses were first built by the guest workers in Germany. Soon it created domino effect and the locals engaged in a 'housing craze'. This owed mostly to emancipation from the decades long state suppression and partly to the consumption trend fueled by jealousy, competition and the desire to show off.

9

Politicization of Religious Institutions and Actors

§ 9.1 Politicization of the Mufti Institution

The Mufti institution was of utmost indifference to Turkey until 1980s insomuch that the Prime Minister İnönü in his visit to Athens in 1930s, asked the then Greek PM to abolish the implementation of Sharia in Western Thrace, so that the minority could modernize and integrate into the Greek society.[1]

Undoubtedly, the young Turkish Republic was aspiring for the secularization of the Western Thracian minority. From a realist perspective, first and foremost, Turkey's anti-religious stance in this period was reflecting more her security concerns than the dissemination of the values and virtues of the Turkish Revolution beyond the borders into a Muslim-Turk community, remnant of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey was uneasy about Greece hosting the expelled Ottoman notables and clergymen because they were potential threats to the new Turkish regime geographically in close proximity. Consequently, Turkey supported the dissemination of secular reforms and values in Western Thrace through the modernist faction, an effort which culminated via ed-

1 Demesticha,"Minorities in the Balkans", 2004, 75.

ucational reforms in 1950s. Ömeroğlu claims that in that period of Turkish-Greek rapprochement, Turkey could have embarked on a regulation of Mufti election.[2]

The death of the Komotinian Mufti Hafız Hüseyin Mustafa in 1985 incited the controversy over Mufti election. The death of the Ksanthian Mufti Mustafa Hilmi a few years later aggravated it. Ever since, there have been two Muftis in the provinces of Ksanthi and Komotini, an official (legal), and an "elected" one, who is not recognized by the government but is regarded the legitimate Mufti by the minority.

The events that pushed the Mufti institution into the political arena owe to a number of developments. The most significant was arguably the post 1980 coup Turkish regime's change of attitude to Islam. After all, they embarked on a Turkish-Islam synthesis as a panacea against the perceived threat of communism. However, even before that, by mid 1970s, the Turkish Consulate, who previously regarded the Mufti institution the anchor of the traditionalists, changed behavior by breaking the previous barriers to put an end to the modernist-traditionalist schism for the sake of solidarity. Thus, the Mufti institution along with the traditionalists unified with the modernists and the Turkish Consulate[3], at least on the political level even if not in mentality.

The second development behind the politicization of the Mufti institution was the third actor in the triadic nexus, the minority elite. The hard-liners and Turkish Consulate of Komotini were claimed to be in a kind of dyadic relationship, influencing each other and in some cases misinformed by the hardliners.[4] This kind of a polarization led to the proliferation of the intrigues and whims within the elite.[5] It resembled the previous *traditional* versus *secular* schism.

As a matter of fact, Mufti was never elected by popular vote in Western Thrace. He was already put under state control in the first minority

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2 Ömeroğlu, *Türk Devriminin,* İstanbul, 2012, 220.

3 Ibid., 71-72; Interview with A. Dede, 2012.

4 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 331.

5 For more details about the intrigues and whims see Aarbakke,"The Muslim Minority", 2000,328-338.

treaty for Muslims in Greece; the Treaty of Constantinople (1881). The treaty confirmed a Head Mufti and four Mufti Offices. In the region of Thessalia, the then Mufti offices were in Larisa, Farsala, Trikala, Volos, and the Head Mufti in Karditsa. The Treaty also determined the Mufti a public servant with a salary from the state and to be commissioned by the regional prefect. The Mufti did not have a judiciary function but was a consultative body on issues pertaining to family law, religious institutions, pious foundations and the Muslim minority schools. (Aarbakke 2000: 327)

Following the loss of Macedonia in the end of Balkan Wars, the size of the Muslim minority shrank. The remaining Muslims' minority rights were enshrined in the new Treaty of Athens (1913). The scope of the previous righs were enriched by the enactment of the Law 2345/4.06.1920 entitled "Concerning temporary Arch-Mufti and muftis of the Muslims in the state and concerning management of the Muslim Community property"[6], which for the first time granted Muslims the right to elect the Mufti by male suffrage.[7]

Furthermore, a spiritual link was established between the Muslim minority and the top Islamic clergy of Istanbul through the Head Mufti like that of between the Patriarch and the Metropolitans. The succeeding Sevres Agreement (1920), annexing Western Thrace to Greece, integrated the previous minority rights including the right to elect the Mufti. However, it was never put into force. Therefore, the provision concerning the election of the Mufti was never implemented.[8]

In other words, the Mufti was never elected by popular Muslim male suffrage. The final agreement between Greece and Turkey, Lausanne, on the other hand, did not include any specific provision regarding the election of the Mufti, probably due to the secular mentality of the then Turkish representatives. Greece asserts that Lausanne is the final treaty, and invalidates the previous ones. Turkey and some of the minority elite, on the other hand, claim the contrary.

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6 Ibid.,327.

7 Ibid.,328

8 Ibid., 327; Tsitselikis, "The Legal Status of Islam in Greece", 2004, 416.

Greece does not allow election of the Mufti on the grounds that his jurisprudence functions make him a judge, henceforth a government official paid by the state. Therefore, according to common law, judges cannot be elected. This is a valid argument within the frame of universal law. Furthermore, Greece is concerned that in the case of a popular election, Turkey will intervene in elections, have their favored candidate elected, consequently violate Greek sovereignty.[9]

As a matter of fact, the Mufti was paid regularly by the state and was never elected by popular vote in any other region of Greece even prior to the Population Exchange.[10] The mufti candidates were proposed by a group of Muslim notables in the town to the regional prefect who decided among them. Then the decision had to be approved by the Minister of Education and Religion. Finally, the approved candidate was appointed Mufti by the Greek state.[11]

The same procedure was applied after the death of the Mufti of Komotini, Mustafa Hüseyin Efendi in June 1985. The minority Administrative Board *(Cemaat İdari Heyeti)* members, minority MPs, medreseteachers held a meeting to decide on Mufti candidates and submitted the list to the (Christian) prefect. After the prefect's approval, the candidate was then approved by the Ministry of Education and Religion and appointed by a presidential decree. [12] The late Mufti Mustafa Hüseyin Efendi assumed office the same way except that the elite group had decided on him as the only candidate.[13] When the Mufti of Ksanthi passed away in 1949, the new Mufti, Mustafa Hilmi Aga took office in the same way.[14]

After the death of the Komotinian Mufti, contrary to the conventional way of Mufti assignment, the Greek government directly appointed

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9 Tsitselikis, "The Legal Status of Islam in Greece", 2004, 418.

10 Aleksandre Popovic, *Balkanlarda İslam,* İnsan Yayınları, İstanbul, 1995, 306. For instance, in early 1910s, the Mufti of Larissa received a salary of 250 drachmas from the Greek government.

11 Tsitselikis, "The Legal Status", 2004, 416.

12 Ömeroğlu *Belgeler ve Olaylar* , Avcı Ofset, İstanbul, Birinci Baskı, 1994, 71.

13 *Trakya,* 28.06.1948, s.14.

14 Gerçek 172/14.07.1987, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 300.

Rüştü Ethem as the new Mufti.[15] However, due to pressure from minority notables, Ethem resigned the next day. The Minority Supreme Council and the Sermon and Guidance Committee decided to demand the election of the successive Mufti by minority popular vote. This was demanded for the first time in minority history in 1986. It probably was not a sudden enlightening of mind for democratization.

A petition was prepared with 19 signatures belonging to Muslim scholars for promulgation of the Law 2345/4.06.1920 based on the Treaty of Athens which allowed for the election of the Mufti by Muslim male suffrage. It was submitted it to the local prefect by a committee of three scholars: Tevfik Hüseyinoğlu, Meço Cemali and İbrahim Şerif. The government ignored the petition and appointed Meço Cemali as the deputy Mufti.

The Supreme Minority Council and the Sermon Committee, dominated by the hardliners, objected to the appointment of Cemali Meço as the Deputy Mufti. MPs Müftüoğlu and Faikoğlu were asked to bring the issue to the Greek Parliament. However, their endeavors in the Greek Parliament were futile. They started a defamation campaign by taking the Ksanthian Mufti's support against the new Mufti Cemali in their newspapers *Akın, Gerçek* and the periodical of Sermon Committee - *Hakka Davet.* Supporters of Cemali Meço were labelled as collaborators of the Greek state and regarded potential traitors.[16]

The moderate elite group supported the idea of Mufti election by popular suffrage. However, they did not approve the way the issue was handled.[17] This group included the MPs Ahmet Faikoğlu, Mehmet Müftüoğlu, the former MPs, Celâl Zeybek, Hasan İmamoğlu, Ahmet Mehmet, former MP and head of the pious foundations Hafız Yaşar, and some Muslim scholars. (Ömeroğlu 1994:76)

In an effort to seek a solution, the MP Müftüoğlu submitted a question to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. However, he was

15 Gerçek 134/21.04 and 135/29.04.1986, ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 335.

told this had been the conventional way of Mufti assignment throughout the minority history. [18]

The controversies over the Mufti election were heated again when the Ksanthian Mufti Mustafa Hilmi died in February 1992. The hardliners and the Sermon Committee evoked the Law 2345/1920 enacted as supplementary to the Athens Treaty. The Greek government did not make an incremental change in behavior and appointed the deceased Mufti's son Emin Aga as the new Mufti.[19] In fact Emin Aga wanted the position and he had been active in the post for a long time since his father was very old.[20] However, he was hesitant to accept it as he was involved in the alliance for Mufti elections. After he got their consent, he accepted the appointment.[21]

In the meanwhile, contrary to the expectations, the Greek government declared Meço Cemali, the deputy Mufti of Komotini, after six years of service as the deputy, as the official Mufti of Komotini. The Ksanthi Mufti had to resign, stating that he had accepted the position temporarily until Law 2345/1920 was implemented.[22] This led some members of the moderate group such as the MP Faikoglu, himself a scholar and MP from PASOK, and Hafız Yaşar, Head of Waqf Administration to switch sides and ally with the hardliners. [23]

As a reaction, the Minority Supreme Council, presided by Hatipoğlu and Faikoğlu, summoned and declared an alternative Mufti election to be held on 17th August 1990.[24] Thus, during the Friday prayer in all of the mosques of Ksanthi , Emin Aga was elected out of four candidates by males raising their hands. The same kind of election was organized in Komotini after a few months and İbrahim Şerif was elected the

18 Ömeroğlu, *Belgeler ve Olaylar,* 1994, 81.

19 Ibid.86.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 91.

22 Ibid.,92

23 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 506.

24 Ömeroğlu, *Belgeler ve Olaylar,* 1994, 93.

Mufti of Komotini. [25] The nationalist Greek press criticized Turkey for breaching Greek sovereignty and accused her of trying to create a second Cyprus.[26]

Unlike the appointed Mufti Cemali Meço, Serif had graduated from a theology school in Turkey. As opposed to Cemali who was aloof from politics, Serif was an active political figure. He was one of the MP candidates of the Independent Ticket who had participated in elections and a member of the Sermon Committee and the owner of *Hakka Davet* periodical.[27]

Thus, Emin Aga and İbrahim Serif became the legitimate Muftis of Western Thracian Muslims. This kind of an alternative Mufti election has become the norm. By way of its implementation, the alternative elections fall short of fulfilling the criteria to be regarded democratic. Above all, participation rate in the elections was low. It was claimed to be around 20% of minority males by the appointed Mufti of Komotini and 10% according to a Greek source.[28] Turkish sources present the number of participants 12,000 men.[29] Its representativeness is questionable as the number of male voters compared to the entire adult males is unclear. In addition, 'open voting' (by raising hands) restricts free will in deciding for a particular candidate.

Furthermore, women are excluded from the voting although the Mufti institution concerns them as well. The elected Mufti of Komotini İbrahim Şerif, some minority journalists and Religion teachers agree with the flaws in the voting process. However, they state that they have no other option because the Greek state does not apply the law (1920) on Mufti election. In the previous elections in Komotini, to prevent a possible state intervention, they said that the election day was kept secret.

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25 The Official website of the Elected Mufti Office, http://www.gumulcinemuftulugu.info/default.aspx?Id=11, last retrieved on 20th December, 2015

26 *Filelefttheros* 04.01.1991, cited in Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 508.

27 Ibid., 509.

28 *Epohi* 06.01.1991, cited in ibid.

29 *Akın*, 01.01.1991, cited in ibid.

However, it was somehow learnt by the Greek authorities. The police surrounded the New Mosque in Komotini and blocked the entrance. They could have prevented the voting in all mosques if the election was declared openly.[30]

As regards the exclusion of women in voting, Şerif states that females would vote for the same Mufti candidate if they could. This response, however, cannot be generalized. It excludes single women, divorced women, widows, and neglects the fact that some educated women may opt for a different Mufti candidate than their husbands'. Consequently, adult Muslim females are ignored and subjugated. [31]

The Greek reaction to alternative Mufti election was replacement of the never implemented Law nr.2345/1920 on Mufti elections with Law nr.1920/1991. The new law authorized the General Regional Secretary to summon a committee of 11 men of prominent Muslims and the Greek Prefect and discuss over potential Mufti candidates. In the case Muslims did not attend, the prefect was entitled to give his opinion on possible candidates. Then the Mufti candidate had to be approved by the Minister of Education and Religion. The new law also proposed to open a new Islamic theology school, equivalent of university, to meet the community's need for Muslim clergymen. Greece was trying to offer an alternative to Theology schools in Turkey. [32]

The new law was immediately applied to fulfill the position of Mufti in Ksanthi as Mehmet Emin Aga had resigned. The prefect summoned 11 Muslim men; four of them township presidents, 1 town council adviser and 5 Muslim clergymen. The meeting was held under supreme secrecy on 22 August 1991. Ironically, although six Muslim members declared their opinions on Sabri Boşnak and only one on Mehmet Şinikoğlu,

30 Interview with Mithat; narrations of a local minority journalist; Interview with the elected Mufti İbrahim Şerif, Komotini, summer 2015.

31 Ibid.

32 Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority", 2000 510.

he was appointed as the new Mufti of Ksanthi. The prefect obviously ignored the opinion of Muslim representatives and humiliated them. [33] Aarbakke argues that;

> 'The Greek government thus negated itself and therefore created a credibility deficit in the eyes of the moderate faction of the minority while justifying hardliner factions' distrust in itself'.[34]

The appointment was condemned by all minority associations. To protest the decision, Mehmet Emin Aga started a hunger strike in front of the Ksanthi Mufti Office joined by a group of minority males. They were attacked by a group of fanatic Greeks.[35]

The final democratic proposal for the resolution of the Mufti issue was made by the PASOK government. A draft was prepared for an alternative Mufti election which resembles that of the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul. The draft foresaw the establishment of a fifty-member committee of prominent Western Thracian Muslim clergymen. The Mufti candidates would be asked to submit their applications to the prefecture, who would send them to the Committee. The candidate would be elected by this Committee. The threshold would be slightly over 50%. Otherwise, the election would be repeated.[36] Unfortunately, the draft was put on the shelf upon the outbreak of the economic crisis and the party's loss of power in the elections.

This was the last democratic proposal to solve the Mufti issue. It is a pity that it was not materialized. The 'elected' Mufti of Komotini, İbrahim Şerif, stated that they did not believe in the draft, or that the Greek state would ever allow Mufti election.[37] This is a conceivable response given the decades long stalemate and the state-imposed strains on the elected Muftis by trials. However, Şerif added that there was no

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33 *Eleftherotipia* 31.08.1991 cited in ibid., 513.

34 Ibid.

35 For details see 513-515.

36 Stelyo Berberakis, "25 yıllık Müftü sorunu bitiyor" , *Sabah,* 26 June 2011.

37 Ibid.

need for a Mufti election, and that the government should recognize themselves instead. This is an inconsistent attitude because it belies the now decades long discourse on the democratic election of Muftis.

The elected Muftis İbrahim Şerif and Mehmet Emin Aga were never recognized by the Greek government. They were prosecuted and penalized for impersonating a clergyman. After exhaustion of domestic remedies, the Muftis appealed to the ECtHR who judged in their favor. The right of a community to elect its religious leader was considered within the frame of religious freedom as enshrined in Artc.9 of the ECtHR and Greece was found guilty of breaching freedom of thought, speech and indemnified to pay compensation. [38]

Although the ECtHR judgements are legally binding, it does not enforce the state to change the concerned legislation.[39] Therefore, the status of the elected Muftis has not changed. On the other hand, the Greek government has de facto allowed them to remain in office ever since. Henceforth, the elected Mufti office has been institutionalized. When the elected Mufti of Ksanthi Emin Aga, died in 2006, Ahmet Mete was elected by raising hands on a Friday prayer in the mosques of Ksanthi. Unlike the previous Muftis, he was young. He started his Theology Studies at a Turkish university but dropped out and completed his Theology major at the Medina University in Saudi Arabia. He worked as a preacher and teacher of Qur'an teacher under the Ksanthi Mufti Office. In 2000, he was the imam in his own village Yassıören.[40]

This kind of a duality in the Mufti institution has impaired public confidence in the official institution of the Mufti. The discourse on the Mufti has evolved into "Our Mufti" referring to the elected ones, "The

38 European Court of Human Rights, Agga v. Greece, Applications nos. 50776/99 and 52912/99, Judgment of 17 October 2002 and Serif v. Greece, Application no. 38178/97, Judgment of 14 December 1999.

39 Geoff Gilbert, "The Burgeoning Minority Rights Jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights", *Human Rights Quarterly,* Vol. 24, Nr.3, August 2002, 736-780, 780.

40 http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/iskece-muftulugune-ahmet-mete-secildi-5707244, last visited 04.03.2019

Greeks state's Mufti", referring to the appointed ones. Arguably the elite discourse has been successful in the presentation of the appointed Mufti almost equivalent to an enemy, a collaborator of the Greek state. For instance, the official website of the official Mufti of Komotini have been hacked so frequently that they have decided not to restore it again.[41] Due to legitimacy-related and pragmatic reasons, many Muslims prefer public courts to deal with issues of family law. Nonetheless, the Mufti of Komotini is in a relatively better position compared to the Mufti of Ksanthi where the number of Muslims who appeal to the Mufti has tremendously decreased to around 20%.[42]

§ 9.2 Interview with the Official Mufti of Komotini

I took the decision for interviews at the official Mufti's Office at great pains. For a while, I was torn in between the feeling of guilt due to the decades long discourse that the appointed Mufti was a collaborator of the Greek state, did not serve the minority's benefits, and was against the secular identification of the minority as 'Turkish.' On the other hand, as a secular raised in Turkey, I had an irresistible curiosity to go to the Mufti Office to see the environment there, to learn about the implementation of Sharia, and to meet the Mufti himself.

Worried about possible reactions, I did not tell anyone of my intentions but gave a partial explanation to my father that I needed to learn about the implementation of Sharia for my dissertation and therefore needed to go the Mufti Office. As a man who holds science and knowledge in high esteem, he did not object to it. This relieved me a lot. Nonetheless, I disguised myself with a straw hat and sunglasses so that I would not be noticed by any acquaintance while entering and leaving the Old Mosque complex.

41 Interview with Mustafa Imamoglu, the secretary at the Mufti Office of Komotini

42 Interview at the Mufti Office of Komotini; Personal Communications in Ksanthi

Before the interview day, I had seen him a few times during my research in the large office where three clerks worked. In the morning, he used to leave his private office to take a break, walk to the yard with a traditional cup of coffee and a cigarette in his hands. Sometimes a young, retarded boy dropped into the office and asked the Mufti for money. "Father Mufti, please give me some money". Apparently, they were used to his intrusions because nobody displayed any sign of surprise or uneasiness. The mufti used to pat on his back and say, "I have no money my dear child." He said, "Ok then" and left.

After completing my research at the large office, I had a conversation and an interview with the official Mufti of Komotini Mr Cemali Meço who had accepted my request. There was a script written on his door asking Muslim females to enter with a headscarf, however I ignored it. I had already been there for five days without a headscarf, and no one asked me to put one. Unlike Maya Demetriou, I did not feel I was violating the rule.[43] As a secular Muslim, I was dressed moderately anyway. I wore a long skirt and a loose half sleeved t-shirt and wore my hair in a bun.

After I entered his office, he kindly asked me to sit and offered something to drink. I was a bit too shy to accept the offer as it evoked my traditional side according to which the young offer the elderly and the esteemed people something to drink. However, as he insisted, I asked for a glass of water.

In his old age, the Mufti looked exhausted and sorrowful. I introduced myself, my purpose and showed my student ID, although he had not asked for it. I began with a question about a land expropriation issue stopped by him that I had read in Baskın Oran's book about the minority. As mentioned in the previous chapter, against the state plans for expropriation of six thousand stremmata of land predominantly owned by minority rurals, he had conveyed to the government that he would personally organize a long march to Athens together with his congregation.

43 Demetriou, "Divisive Visions", 2002, 139.

"This is only 10% of my struggle for my community, my child" Mufti Cemali said and began to narrate his struggles for land expropriations of Muslim lands.

I was surprised to hear that because I naively thought it was the (only) good thing he had done for the minority, and I had learnt about from Oran's book, not from anyone in my surroundings.

He started narrating his involvement in the protest against the land expropriation in Evlavo;

> In 1982, during the Inhanlı events, I was among the first protestors against the government decision. I was a preacher in a mosque in Ksanthi then. I asked the Imam who was also my primary school teacher for permission first. After the prayer, I marched to the Clock Tower with my clock reciting from the Qur'an *Allah-ü ekber. (God is one and great).*[44]

Then he narrated his resistance plan for the expropriation of lands for the university.[45]

> I proposed to make three committees to lobby against the government's decision. The first would go to Athens, the second to Ankara, and the third to the Organization of Islamic Conference. However, I do not want to mention names, but some notables cooperated with the regional prefect and prevented the a successful protest campaign. The greatest obstacle emerged from within the minority unfortunately.[46]

His narration conforms with those of the moderates Halil Haki, Dede and Onsunoglu as was elaborated in the previous chapter. Yet, he

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44 Interview with the Mufti, 2012.

45 In 1982, 3200 acres of fertile land were expropriated predominantly from Muslim villages to build the Democritus University of Thrace.

46 Interview with the Mufti, 2012.

refrained from giving the names of hardliners by referring to them as 'some notables' in the courteous manner of a true clergyman.

He continued with his struggle against the repressive state rules on waqf administration which are mentioned in the final section of this chapter.

In the rest of the conversation, the Mufti dwelt on issues of religion, Islam. He underlined that his mission was to 'make his people love the creed of Islam'. He implicitly criticized the imposition on females to cover.

> I have never told a lady that she will go to hell unless she covers herself… I cannot... If I see a light in her, I give her books to read and let her decide it herself.

At this point I couldn't help wondering if the message included me as well…I was in his office with my hair uncovered. It might also be the other way round. He could have meant that hijab is not necessary to be considered a Muslim woman and that I was accepted as a Muslim in the office without hijab. Nonetheless, I was impressed by his liberal viewpoint about Muslim women. It complied with the basic premise of Islam that no one should be forced to practice.[47]

He criticized the clergymen and imams for distancing people from Islam by their assertive, arrogant and know-it-all behavior. "Their sermons rest only on dichotomy of heaven and hell" he remarked.

> If an imam says 'you will go to hell if you do this', the person will react by saying or thinking 'Even if I go to hell this is none of your business'. However, it is profane to threaten people in this way.

[47] Bakara Surah, 256. Verse, Turkish Translation of the Qur'an, https://www.kuran-meali.com/AyetKarsilastirma.php?sure=2&ayet=256, last retrieved 05.04.2020.

> Islam promotes love and understanding which cannot be achieved through force or threats but through friendliness and guidance based on knowledge which can be achieved through good communication and good books. Therefore, the imam or the theologian should have mastered the scholarship of Islam in order to interpret the Quran.[48]

In 2012, the Muftiate was working on projects to give Islam a place in the public space. In the town of Komotini, where slightly more than half of the population was Muslim, Islam had no presence in public places. In 2011, the Mufti office asked for permission from local authorities to spare a tiny room for Muslims to pray within the Komotini public hospital. Indeed, the public hospital was always decorated with Christian symbols all around; the portraits of Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, the holy Cross hanging over the Christian as well as Muslim patients. Unfortunately, their request was declined.[49] Likewise, their request from authorities for a prayer room in the prison was refused. However, the administration allowed the distribution of copies of the Qur'an, prayer rugs and rosaries to Muslim convicts of various nationalities.[50]

48 Interview with the Mufti, 2012.

49 The hospital administration agreed to spare such a room for prayer only recently upon the request from the Deputy Mayor of Komotini, Sibel Mustafaoglu. http://www.edirnehavadis.net/yasam/3674-guemuelcine-hastanesi-mescide-kavustu, last retrieved 01.01.2016.

50 Interview at the Mufti Office.The recorded crime rate among Muslim minority is claimed to be very low although statistics are not available. Personal Communications with several Minority Lawyers and observations.

§ 9.3 Interview with the elected Mufti of Komotini

The elected Mufti of Komotini and that of Ksanthi have offices with secretaries. They have personnel in their service to teach the Qur'an and to give sermons at mosques. They are active agents in minority politics. They are members of the Supervisory Board, the previous ad-hoc Supreme Minority Council whose name was changed in late 1990s to Advisory Board. They are considered to be the legitimate Muftis by many imams and minority members.

The elected Mufti Offices function like Public Relations Offices on a range of issues from Islam and everyday life. They successfully import the novel trends such as the 'Holy Birthday Week' celebrations from Turkey where the Turkish Consulate, politicians and clergymen from Turkey also take part.[51] They are regarded on an equal status with minority MPs and invited to all receptions given by the Turkish Consulate on national days where they sometimes give speeches. Turkish politicians who visit the region also pay a visit to the office of the elected Muftis.

The elected Muftis keep regular and frequent contact with the political elite and the rurals by participation in a number of events such as hatim ceremonies. They occasionally organize iftars during the holy month of Ramadan in remote highland villages. They organize special Qur'an teaching classes free of charge for women and children in the village mosque. These classes end with a Qur'an citing ceremony(*hatim töreni)* where the participants cite from the Qur'an and are awarded with certificates and gifts publicized through the minority media.[52]

They run charitable campaigns for the minority. For instance, in 2016, they organized a mass circumcision ceremony for the Muslim male

51 http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/5132/iskecede-kutlu-dogum-haftasi-etkinligi-duzenlendi.html, last retrieved 31.12.2015.

52 http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/galeri/32/koyunkoy-hatim-merasimi-2015.html, last retrieved 31.12.2015.

children of Alankuyu, a Muslim Roma (ghetto) neighborhood of Komotini where they also condemned the terror attack in Kayseri resulting in the death of fifteen Turkish soldiers.[53] In the village- district of Arriana, for instance, mass circumcision has almost become a tradition after four successive years.[54]

The elected Mufti of Komotini Şerif stated that from 1999 when the ECtHR decided in his favor, until 2017, he was not intimidated or oppressed by the Greek government. However, since January 2017, until that day (mid-August), he was asked to testify against certain events by the Police at least six times upon the order of the local prosecutor. For instance, the last time he was accused of organizing a mass circumcision ceremony with the title of Mufti because he was not the legal Mufti. Referring to the above-mentioned circumcision ceremony in Alankuyu, Şerif explained:

> A group of Muslim Roma came to us and asked for a free circumcision because they said that they did not have money to have their kids for circumcised by a private doctor. We organized the ceremony by asking some minority doctors to perform the circumcision for these poor Roma boys.[55]

Indeed, in Greece, circumcision is not performed in public hospitals. It is only performed by minority doctors, and unfortunately seldom by surgeons.[56] On the average they charge between 100-150 euros for a

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53 "Mass Circumcision Ceremony in Komotini", *Millet*, available online at: http://milletgazetesi.gr/view.php?id=6308, last retrieved 18.12.2016.

54 https://gundemgazetesi.com/detayh.php?id=14195, last retrieved 10.08.2022.

55 "The elected Mufti of Komotini accused of impersonating the Muftiate",08.08.2018, Anadolu Ajansı News Agency, available online at: https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/gumulcine-secilmis-muftusune-makami-gasp-suclamasi/1083384, last retrieved 06.05.2019.

56 The final popular surgeon who performed it regionwide was the late Dr Sadık Ahmet. A popular surgeon in the final decade is in fact a physiotherapist. Prior to late 1980s, it was customarily performed by males who called themselves "sünnetçi"(circumsizer) were

circumcision by laser. The circumcision cost is not a problem for families in general. However, the Muslim Roma is the economically most deprived group. Therefore, all Muslim Roma cannot afford it. This kind of a religion-based demand from the poor stratum of the community must have put the elected Mufti Şerif in a dilemma. On the one hand, he wanted to respond to the Muslims' request, on the other hand, he was not authorized to do it.

Circumcision is a religious based tradition. Whether it is a multicultural right is controversial because it contradicts basic human rights as well as the rights of the child.[57] This is also the boundary liberal theory draws between cultural group rights and individual human rights.[58] In Britain, for example, immigrant Muslim community leaders' demand for the recognition of Islamic Law regarding family status is not allowed as it runs the risk of violating basic human rights.[59] Moreover, circumcision is not obligation in Islam. It is sunnah, a practice recommended by Prophet Muhammed for reasons of hygiene in a desert-like region where water was limited.

On another occasion, Şerif was summoned to the police station to to explain why he had attended DEB(the minority political party) party meetings. He did not mention about his response. However, he was invited, because the elected Muftis are involved in political issues and invited to political meetings. On the one hand, he stated that he was overwhelmed by interrogations. On the other hand, he seemed to have accepted them as part of his position. Nonetheless, he was content with the popular support he had as he enunciated;

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usually barbers. In 1984, a friend in the village was hospitalized due to excessive bleeding after circumsicion.

57 J. Steven Svoboda, "Circumcision of male infants as a human rights violation", *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2013 Jul;39(7):469-74.

58 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, 35-38.

59 Ibid., 90.

> The Mufti appointed by the state is not recognized by the minority. Our people supported us for the past 27 years. The village imams and trustees are all in contact with us.

Although the number of imams and trustees who adhere to Şerif is not available, depending on my observations and participants' narrations, majority are in his circle.

> Our people demonstrate their support by avoiding marriage at the Mufti institution or the village imam who is accountable to the appointed Mufti. They marry at the municipalities. Then they either come to me or ask an imam by my side to cite a prayer for their marriage. They contribute to our fund-raising campaigns. In every Friday prayer at the mosques, the imams read the khutbas we send. What else can these ordinary peoples do?

The elected Mufti Office also has international charitable functions. They have run a number of fund-raising campaigns for Muslims in need anywhere in the world. Şerif stated that he donated 10,000$ compensation he received from the Greek state based on the ECtHR verdict to the regional fundraising campaign for the victims of the earthquake in Turkey(1999). Similar donations were collected and sent to the Muslim victims of wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine previously.

The elected Mufti office has an indirect but influential role in the teaching of the Qur'an and training of clergymen in the Mufti Office and in Turkey in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The village imams in the circle teach pupils to read the Qur'an (Arabic) script. Female theology graduates organize programs in the mosques to teach women to read the Qur'an. Serif stated that they were running Qur'an courses for pupils in 102 villages in Rhodope and 2,700 pupils were attending them. In 42 villages, there were training courses for around 1,500 adult females taught by 25 female scholars.

In the final part of the interview, the Şerif criticized the Greek state concerning minority education and the Western Thracian Muslim-Turk

society for sending their children to public schools. However, he also related it to the lack of proper education in minority schools due to the state intrusion:

> Greece employed incompetent teachers at minority schools, particularly the graduates of the Teaching Academy, who could teach neither Turkish nor Greek language or any scientific subject to pupils. As a result, the parents had to send their children to Greek schools and many of our minority primary schools were closed down due to lack of students.

He argued that in order to promote minority students' enrollment in Greek public schools, they were encouraged by artificial high grades. It is interesting that a number of rural parents and observers made the same claim. He asserted that this was a 'deliberate state project to deprive the minority of their own primary schools'. However, he did not mention the substantial improvement in minority education by Dragona and her team funded by the EU.

He expressed his concerns that in the near future the minority graduates of Greek schools will degenerate, lose their identity and values, and entirely assimilate into the Greek culture, like the Turks of Rhodes, 'We will be just like them within the next fifty years.' Apparently, minority primary schools on the island were closed down by the junta in 1967.

He reprehended parents for the five hundred dropouts from Qur'an classes in village mosques for being indifferent to and ignorant of the Islamic values. In his critique of the rurals, he reiterated that "religious consciousness is highest in highland villages and it decreases towards the lowland villages."[60]

Associating religiosity with high education, he also underlined that education is much more valued by the highlanders, as they have

60 Interview with the elected Mufti Şerif, summer 2017.

more university graduates than the lowlanders. He reproached the parents in Yalanca for failing to send their children to the Qur'an courses regularly:

> We started a Qur'an courses in the mosque of your village (Galini). However, parents did not send their children regularly and we had to terminate it.

As a matter of fact, parents sent their children to the mosque in the beginning. I did participant observation for an hour in the village mosque in Galini in summer 2012. I noticed that the girls were attentive while the boys were not. Apparently, they got bored after a while and their parents did not force them to attend. In my village, actually in the lowlands, grandparents parents try to give their children religious consciousness and teach prayers.

His criticized the young and middle-aged villagers for their lack of religious consciousness. Apparently he was quite disappointed to see few old men in the village mosque during a Friday prayer when he visited the mosque with the Turkish Consulate of Komotini:[61]

> Although we had previously informed them about our visit, only a few old men appeared in the mosque for the Friday prayer and they performed the prayer on chairs. Where were the middle-aged, the young, the children? What is going to become of them in the future?

These few old men are the only frequenters of Friday prayers in the mosque. They perform the prayers on chairs because they cannot bend their legs due to rheumatism.

61 "Başkonsolos Akıncı Yalanca köyünü ziyaret etti", http://www.gundem-gazetesi.com/haber/detay/2552, last visited 05.03.2019.

In his comparison of religious consciousness between the highlands and the lowlands, he referred to the impact of early Republican Turkish reforms in lowlands.

> Our grandfathers in the lowland villages have adhered more to the Turkish reforms. Is this right or not? I do not blame those people because they did it in order to affiliate with Turkey, in other words, they thought "as Turkey has adopted these (secular)reforms, we should also do so." Therefore, lowlanders have distanced themselves from their indigenous culture while the highlanders have been able to sustain it.

As soon as he finished, he said , as if in a manner to clarify himself,

> I mean that the minority primary schools in the highlands are not closed because the inhabitants continue to send their children to these schools. For example, the minority school of Üşekdere is still open whereas the minority school of Yalanca, your village, is closed because parents send their children to public schools.

The elected Mufti's opinion on the impact of Turkish reforms in lowlands seem to reflect that of traditionalists in the interwar period. The desire to affiliate with Turkey can be a reason for voluntary adoption of secular reforms, but explaining rule (reform) adoption merely on this basis deprives the minority of *agency*. After all, the Turkish reforms were not imposed in Western Thrace but voluntarily adopted by individuals and the lowlander rurals.

Furthermore, lowlanders have subsequently neither converted nor become faithless. On the contrary, they have quite successfully incorporated secularism into their lives and synthesized it with Islam. Unlike the highlanders and a number of middle-line villages, there has been little or no male interference in females' clothing, no pressure on children to learn Arabic script. No one is criticized for not praying namaz whereas

those who perform it are praised. Alcohol consumption is common in the lowlands but alcoholics are not esteemed.

For instance, when the girls who study at Greek universities come home for holidays, they fast for a month and attend prayers at the mosque in the evening. While they are walking in sleeveless t-shirts and shorts in the village, they greet the people in the traditional (Islamic) way (Selamün Aleyküm).[62] If this is defined as acculturation, which is an exaggeration, it also exist among highlanders as a number of the young and middle-aged live different lives in the village and in the town where they study or work. [63]

§ 9.4 Rurals' perception of the appointed and elected Muftis

The "right to elect the Mufti" emerged as an elite discourse, but it seems to have been learnt and internalized by the rurals. Majority of my respondents asserted that the Mufti should be elected by popular vote. The politicization of human rights discourse[64] must have a significant weight in this kind of perception as many of the respondents in favor of Mufti election also fervently argued that it is their (human) right to elect him.[65] On the other hand, in response to the question on the Mufti, some narrators responded with another question: "Which one; our Mufti, or the Greek state's Mufti?". This shows that the elected Mufti İbrahim Şerif enjoys considerable legitimacy.

Some university graduates and two young male lawyers, Berk and Onat, on the other hand stated that a judge can never be elected according to the universal law. He can be elected only if he does not have judicial

62 In English, "May Peace be upon you".

63 Based on my interviews and personal communications in Ketenlik.

64 Antigoni Papanikolaou, "The 'Politicization of Rights'in the case of the Muslim-Turkish Minority in Greece", unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2007.

65 Interview with Ali, Osman, Haydar, Yıldız, Yalanca; Berk, Mithat, Komotini,

powers and as a spiritual leader, like the Mufti in Bulgaria.[66] Some participants stated that they recognized neither as their Mufti; "One is the Mufti of Athens, the other is that of Ankara" and asserted the need for a democratic way of Mufti election with or without judicial powers.[67]

On the other hand, majority of my young, middle-aged and old female respondents in the lowlands stated that they were not interested in whether the Mufti is elected or appointed. Among them, some respondents emphasized that the Mufti institution was highly politicized, and they were not interested in politics. A few old narrators (male and female) viewed the Mufti Office from a pragmatic point as an institution of marriage and divorce and expressed in a humorous manner that the matter was totally insignificant because they did not intend to divorce or get married. Some declared that the Mufti institution is obsolete and should be totally abolished.

The right to elect the Mufti was more fervently pronounced in the Ksanthian highland village Ketenlik. Highlanders are more sensitive to the issue, as stated by the elected Mufti Şerif. The funeral of a young man in Glafki in 2016, for instance, was scene to a conflict between the appointed Mufti Şinikoğlu and the elected Mufti Ahmet Mete. The unfortunate young man was drowned in the sea on his free day while he was doing his military duty in Kavala. The Greek Lieutenant General and several military authorities attended the funeral in the village. Şinikoğlu wanted to lead the funeral prayer. However, the village imam told him that the elected Mufti Ahmet Mete is assigned to do it and asked him to join in the ranks behind. At first Şinikoğlu refused claiming that it was his duty, faced with reactions, he had to comply. Ahmet Mete led the funeral procession.[68]

66 Republic of Bulgaria, Muslim Denomination Grand Mufti official website, https://grand-mufti.bg/tr/za-nas-6.html, last retrieved 14.07.2022.

67 Interview with Aslan, Nadide, Berk, Onat Komotini, summer 2012.

68 "Thousands of people bid farewell to Ahmet", Gündem Minority Newspaper, 15.07.2016, available online at: http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/1932, last retrieved 18.05.2019.

Unlike in Rhodope, where the official Mufti enjoys a degree of legitimacy, the appointed Mufti of Ksanthi is more than disregarded. My narrators stated that majority of Ksanthian highlander imams would not even salute the Ksanthian Mufti Şinikoğlu even when they encountered him by coincidence. "This is a red line for us. The Komotinians acknowledge both Muftis. They are not strict like us" remarked Erman. He narrated a project for the construction of a small hospital in the village which required the signature of the official Mufti. "We renounced the project because if we took his consent (signature), people would think we were siding with the Mufti"[69]

§ 9.5 Imams between the state and Muftis

In Western Thrace, the profession of "imam" has found high appeal among the poor, conservative and big families in the highlands. For decades, the medrese in the Ksanthian highland village was the only school they could send their boys in the vicinity and with no cost. The second medrese in Komotini town center was popular among the Rhodopean highlanders for similar reasons. As a consequence of frequent immigration to Turkey and relatively lower rate of birth in the lowlands, the need for imams has been met by the highlanders. They were employed in the lowland mosques. Many married with lowlanders or brought their wives from their villages and settled in the lowlands. Prior to 1980s, when communication and transportation was very limited, these imam families totally cut off their ties with their villages within time.[70]

In every village there is a mosque and an imam (in big villages also a muezzin). The imams are hired on a yearly basis by the village trustees, who, depending on the size of the village are one or two elderly males, responsible for the administration of the mosque and vakıf property. As

69 Interview with Erman, Ketenlik, summer 2017.

70 Personal Observations.

the income from village vakıf barely meets the mosque's maintenance costs, the imam's salary is paid by the village households on a yearly basis albeit without social security.[71] The imam earns extra income from marriage contracts, funerals and mawlids. He stays in the house (alone or with his family) in the mosque complex, composed of a bathroom, kitchen and bedroom.

The villagers' attitude to the imam depends on the religiosity of the villagers as well as the imam's attitude towards them. Therefore, the village community can be welcoming, indifferent or hostile towards the imam, in which case they are not hired for the following year. Therefore, some smart imams make the contract with villagers for five years. One of the reasons why some people do not like imams is either due to their personal attitude to religious practices (indifference) or the imams' know-it-all behavior in their sermons,[72] as was also criticized by the official Mufti Cemali Meço.

In Rhodope, unlike in Ksanthi, there are also imams loyal to the official Mufti. Some imams switch sides from the official Mufti to the elected one or vice versa. In some villages, controversies arise. In 2012, for instance, the imam in Sostis complained about the then Turkish Consulate in his letter of resignation to the official Mufti. In the letter, the imam was complaining about the then Turkish Consulate who insisted him to be loyal to the elected Mufti and was defamed when he rejected it. It leaked out to the Greek Foreign Ministry and almost led to a small-scale crisis between Greece and Turkey.[73]

Majority of imams' adherence to the elected Mufti and his affiliation to Turkey has been a serious concern for Greece. Therefore, in an effort to centralize the appointment of imams, ensure their allegiance to

71 Imams' salary of the current year for the lowland villages is on the average 8000 euros per year which is either paid yearly or in monthly installments.

72 Based on narrations and personal observations.

73 "Türk-Yunan dostluğu istemeyen Samaras'ın vekilleri Gümülcine Başkonsolosu'na savaş açtı.", available online at: http://www.cinarfm.gr/haber-oku.php?haberid=2172, last retrieved 10.12.2016.

the state and systematize the teaching of Islam in public schools with considerable Muslim students, the Greek government devised a new system by the law nr.3536 in 2007. Upon reactions from the notables[74] and the official Mufti of Komotini Cemali Meço[75], it remained in limbo for seven years until it was amended in 2013 and eventually put into effect in 2014.

According to the amended version (Law nr.4115/2013), imams will be appointed by an appointing committee which includes the local official Mufti as Chairperson, an official of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports and one alternate, a University Faculty member from Islamic studies and one alternate, a distinguished Muslim theologian and one alternate, appointed by the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports, a distinguished Muslim theologian and one alternate, proposed by the local Mufti .[76]

The law envisages employment of around 240 imams for the entire region; 80 imams for Ksanhti, 120 for Komotini and 40 for Didymothiko. Flexible hours are guaranteed for imams employed in public schools to teach Islam to be able to conduct their duties in the village mosque. Like other teachers, they will be hired for a nine-month period (school year), paid monthly salaries and benefit from social security.

The minority elite and subsequently the rurals regarded it a violation of religious autonomy. They claim that despite its elective nature, the

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74 The then minority MP Cetin Mandacı gave a question to the Parliament, and the Advisory Committee (Danışma Kurulu) issued a declaration of protest, cited in Topçu, *İslam Hukuku,* 2012, 69. The main target of criticism was the composition of the 5-member committee which included one member from the Ministry of Interior, Pubic Administration and Decentralization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The remaining two members were to be university graduate scholars Islam. After consulting the official Mufti, the Committee would be in charge of imams' appointment.

75 Interview with the Mufti, 2012. Mufti's disapproval was mentioned in minority media.

76 Law 4115/2013 in English version is available online at: available online at: available online at: https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2016/2013-0113_L.4115_2013_art._53_Islamic_religion_teachers.pdf, last retrieved 05.12.2016.

public-school administrations will force Muslim students to take Islam classes from these imams who are supposed to teach Islam in Greek language. [77] The eligibility of primary school graduate imams to be employed as teachers[78] is a matter of concern although the concerned law refers to "primary school graduates with at least 10 years of experience teaching the Quran".[79]

On the other hand, they do not show equal sensitivity to the qualifications and eligibility of active imams in the region. After all, not all current imams in Thrace are medrese or high school graduates. Some of them are primary school graduates who attended schools of religious brotherhoods in Turkey to learn the Qur'an. In order to be employed as an imam, one needs a certificate of authorization from the official Mufti. This certificate is given after an exam , which apparently, requires more than being able to cite the Qur'an and includes questions on the history of Islam, elaboration on Qur'anic verses. However, candidates who fail the exam at the Muftiate are also employed as imams in the village as long as they can cite the Qur'an.

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77 "240 İmam Yasasının Yürülüğe Girmesine Tepki", availabline online at http://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/240-imam-yasasinin-yururluge-girmesine-tepki/169638, last retrieved 05.02.2016.

78 Ali Hüseyinoğlu, "Batı Trakya'da Dini Özerklik Bağlamında 240 İmam Yasası", paper presented at Dünden Bugüne Batı Trakya Uluslararası Sempozyumu, Düzenleme Kurulu Üyesi, İstanbul, 23-24 Ekim 2014.

79 Article 36.2 stipulates: "[...]Lastly, in order to facilitate the immediate and complete implementation of the law, due to lack of candidates with enhanced formal qualifications, it is provided for, by way of exception and for a limited period of time, that is for the first five years following the publication of this law, Greek citizens members of the Muslim minority graduates of either one of the two Medresses in Thrace or graduates of Primary or Secondary education who have a ten year service (continuously or intermittently) in teaching the Quran are authorized to be appointed as Islamic religion teachers with a view to remedy the lack of the required formal qualifications by established long-standing experience in teaching the Quran", available online at:https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2016/2013-01 13_L.4115_2013_art._53_Islamic_religion_teachers.pdf, last retrieved 05.12.2016.

The new law aims to centralize imam appointments by distancing them from the elected Mufti's domain. The majority of imams are employed from the elected Mufti Office. Whenever there is a need for an imam, the village trustee goes to the elected Mufti and informs him about it. Candidates also apply to the elected Mufti for vacant positions. In return, the elected Mufti sends them to the villages in need. It is sometimes the case that once an imam on the elected Mufti's side fails the exam, the people who hire the imam usually say, "The appointed Mufti failed him on purpose, the questions were very difficult." [80] This is a biased and political response. If that was the case, barely any imam would be able to get authorization as majority adhere to the elected Mufti.

The law on the appointment of imams can also be considered as a multicultural policy. Thus, Muslim students in Greek public schools will not be deprived of the opportunity to learn their religion which is already offered to their Christian classmates (Artc.36.2). Moreover, the state will have knowledge of and control in the teaching of Islam to children and teenagers as opposed to the teaching of Islam in the private sphere – the mosque. However, it should also be noted that minority children get religious consciousness and education first and foremost at home.

As regards imams they barely exhibit agency, in other words, their own free will. It seems to be the case that many are interest-seeking, another common survival strategy. There are hardly ever any imams who openly express their support for the law due to the perceived and real pressure from minority authorities and people in general. They depend on short term survival strategy of taking and shifting sides. For instance, in a village, an imam switched his side from that of the 'elected' to the 'appointed mufti' in order to benefit from this new law.[81] However, the next year his contract was not renewed. In a similar vein, a village imam loyal to the official Mufti refused to read the khutbahs sent by the elected

80 Interview with Haydar, Yalanca, summer 2012. The village imam failed the first time he took the exam but passed the second time he took it. However, in the meanwhile, he continued in his job.

81 Personal observations.

Mufti claiming that they should be written in Arabic and not Turkish. The villager males got frustrated and did not renew his contract for the following year.[82]

Another imam, one of my narrators, sincerely stated that the duality in the Mufti institution is political, and he adheres to the 'elected mufti' because many other imams do so.[83] Arguably, there are many more who want to be appointed by this law for reasons of job security and social rights such as health insurance and pension. This is the point where individual freedom to choose confronts the multicultural right of religious autonomy that is inevitably exercised as a group right.

§ 9.6 Muslim Waqfs, Victim of Retaliation and Corruption

Waqf means, according to the Islamic Law, the donation of a property and/or income from that property to be used for charitable purposes for the community for an indefinite period of time.[84] Waqf property consist of mosques, schools, libraries, orphanages which can directly be used by the public, as well as land, houses, shops, hotels that can be rented by community members.[85]Waqf property is considered to belong to God whereas the right to benefit to the public. Therefore, transfer, sale, and mortgage of waqfs and their property are forbidden in Islam.[86]

Muslim waqfs were established in every sanjak and township where Muslims lived. The administration of these foundations was first

82 Interview with Basri, Domruköy, summer 2015.

83 Based on an (unrecorded) part of an interview with a village imam.

84 Turgay Cin, *Yunanistan'daki Müslüman Türk Azınlığın Din ve Vicdan Özgürlüğü,* Seçkin Yayıncılık, Ankara, 2003, 196.

85 Ibid.

86 Rusni Hassan, Syed Musa Bin Syed Jaafar Alhabshi, Adnan Yussof, "Towards Providing the Best Sharia Governance Practices for Waqf based Institutions", *Journal of International Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilization*, 165-185.

institutionalized by the governor of the Danube province Ahmet Mithat Paşa (1864-1868). Consequently, in all villages and towns of Rumelia, Muslim Community Administrative Boards were established to manage the waqfs.[87] The administrative boards were organized independently from each other and had a non-official hierarchical structure. In the region of Rumelia, for instance, the administrative board of Selanik and the administrative board of Hanya (Crete) were in central positions.[88]

The administrative boards were determined by the initiative of townships. In some townships, the village council decided on the board members, in some others they were appointed by the proprietor by a decree.[89] The Board Head was usually elected by members' votes.[90] Sometimes the Mufti of the township could also be appointed as the President of the Board. Members of the Administrative Board were neither paid nor were given any titles as it was in principle philanthropic work for the community to acquire merits from God. They met regularly on a weekly basis and paid utmost care for the participation of all members. [91]

These boards had administrative and economic autonomy. They were inspected from within the institution itself. All accounts pertaining to the incomes and expenses were recorded in a coffer. One of the administrative board members was commissioned as the trustee. The revenues were deposited in the Bank of Athens and the National Bank of Greece. In times of economic hardships, upon the consent of administrative board members, loans were taken from Greek banks.[92] In contravention with

87 Ayşe Nükhet Adıyeke, *Yunanistan Sınırları İçinde Müslüman Cemaat Örgütlenmeleri: Cemaati İslamiyeler 1913-1998*, Ankara, 2001, 24.

88 Ibid, 25.

89 VİBMA, Defter no:726, Drama Cemaat-ı İslamiye İdaresi Karar Defteri, karar no:1, 22 Temmuz 1339, cited in Adıyeke, 2001, footnote 5, 44.

90 Ibid, 44.

91 Ibid.

92 In June 1920, Hanya Administrative Committee had to mortgage two shops in order to take a loan.VİBMA, defter no=642, Hanya Cemaat-ı İslamiye İdaresi Karar Hulasaları Defteri, karar no=67, 20 Mart 1922, Ibid., 2001, 59.

their foundation philosophy, the administrative boards also paid taxes to the Greek government for income from waqf property.[93]

In the Ottoman Empire, waqfs fulfilled many of the functions of a modern state. In addition to their charity functions, they were responsible for the repair and maintenance of places of worship including mosques, convents, Muslim cemeteries as well as the salaries of Muslim clergy. A separate subcommission in charge of educational matters collected revenues from waqf property donated for education and tuition from parents according to their income. The revenues were used in the administration of schools, designing curriculum, taking care of students, hiring, firing and paying schoolteachers. Poor students were exempted from tuition. Scholarships were granted to successful students for higher education.[94]

Muslim waqfs in Western Thrace are common property of the Muslim minority and the economic basis for the enjoyment of religious, cultural and educational autonomy, or multicultural rights. However, Muslim waqfs in Western Thrace and the Greek Orthodox waqfs in Istanbul have been exploited as part and parcel of reciprocity mentality. They were taxed, confiscated and laid in ruins because their maintenance was prohibited.[95] The Muslim minority foundations in Western Thrace were also abused by the corrupt community administrators. Free elections for Administrative Board membership were done only twice based on royal decree, in 1950 and 1953.[96]

Waqf property in the village are plots of land, the Muslim cemetery field, the mosque complex, the minority school and its yard. Land is

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93 Hanya Administrative Committee paid 775,55 franks to the Hanya Tax Office as the accrued income tax from 1921Aynı defter, karar no=249, 20 Mart 1922, Ibid.

94 Ibid., 51-53.

95 For the list of current waqfs in Western Thrace(Greece), see "A Tale of Reciprocity: Minority Foundations in Greece and Turkey", Dilek Kurban and Konstantinos Tsitselikis, June 2010, joint working paper by TESEV and KEMO. The entire list of Muslim vakıfs in Komotini including the confiscated and/or sold waqf properties, see Halit Eren, "Batı Trakya Türk Vakıfları: Tarihi Süreç ve Bugünkü Durum", paper presented to the *Balkanlarda Osmanlı Vakıfları ve Eserleri Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, İstanbul,2012,38-40, 2012.

96 *Trakya,* 16.03.1953; 23.03.1953; 05.11.1956.

the only income generating waqf property because it hired to locals on a yearly basis. The rental income is used for the maintenance of the mosque, the village primary school and pay for the teachers of the Turkish part of the curriculum hired by the school administrative board on a yearly basis. In 1980s, Greece started to appoint schoolteachers from among the graduates of notorious Teaching Academy. Therefore, only Religion teachers were hired by the village board. As a number of minority primary schools have been closed down due to insufficient number of pupils in the final decade, the educational function of some village waqfs have almost come to an end.

The urban waqfs are managed by an administrative board who are in principle supposed to be elected but in practice appointed by state authorities. The village waqfs, on the other hand, are managed by a board elected by the villagers from among themselves and headed by a male trustee who is supposed to be approved by the official Mufti. The village boards consist of two or more Muslims depending on the population size of the village. They are accountable to the *waqf administration* of the related province and have to submit them a list of accounts periodically.

Waqf autonomy was first incorporated in the 1881 Istanbul Agreement between the newly founded state of Greece and the Ottoman Empire. Greece was recognizing the waqfs and their right to acquire property. Confiscation of waqf lands and ciftliks was banned. According to the subsequent annexes to the law, an administrative board for waqf administration would be made up of 5 persons, including the local governor (the Christian prefect or mayor), the Mufti, and three Muslims elected by the Muslim community. With an amendment to the law in 1889, the Christian prefect was withdrawn.[97]

The subsequent 1913 Athens Agreement also incorporated provisions about the election of administrative boards (protocol 3). In 1920 it was replaced by Law nr. 2345 entitled "Concerning temporary Arch-Mufti and muftis of the Muslims in the state and concerning management

97 Popovic, *Balkanlarda İslam*, 1995, 306-307.

of the Muslim Community property". However, it was never applied. According to Law nr.2345/1920, the Muftis were authorized to form a board of 7 to 12 persons in their jurisdiction to administer the foundations with a Head as its representative and a deputy Head to represent him when necessary. The members of this commission would be elected for 3 years from the Muslims registered in the electoral roll within the Mufti's area of jurisdiction. [98]

This law was securing almost full autonomy in waqf administration. The subsequent Treaty of Lausanne (Articles 40-42) grants the Muslim minority in Greece and the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey the right to establish, control, and manage at their own expense any charitable, religious and social institutions and the right to use their language freely therein. It also entrusts both states to provide these foundations with equitable funds from public budget. However, there is no specific procedure for the administration.

The previous unapplied Law nr. 2345/1920 based on the Athens Agreement (1913) was put into practice with some amendments in 1950 by a royal decree declared in 1949. Consequently, the first free elections for the Board were held.[99] As part of the amendment, the regional Prefect was made responsible for the implementation of the electoral procedure. Draft budgets and the income statements had to be submitted to the Prefect for approval. Transactions such as a loan agreement, purchase and sale and donation of immovables, the right to file a suit against a person or legal entity, judicial or private reconciliation, every kind of insurance on the immovables would be subject to the approval of the Prefect.[100] The

98 Ayşe Nükhet Adıyeke, *Yunanistan sınırları içinde Müslüman cemaat örgütlenmeleri : 'Cemaat-ı İslamiyeler',* 1913- Ankara : Ankara Üniversitesi, 2001, 31-32.

99 *Trakya*, 09.01.1950; 16.03.1953; 23.03.1953.

100 *Batı Trakya'nın Sesi,* Kasım-Şubat, 1988-1989, sayı 7-8. Yıl.2, s.50; Halit Eren, "Batı Trakya Türklerinin Cemaat ve Vakıf İdareleri", XI.Türk Tarih Kongresi, 5-9 Eylül,1990, cited in Adıyeke, 33.

change in the royal degree introduced a new actor, the regional Prefect, in waqf administration.[101]

In the interwar period, waqf property in towns was managed by five prominent Muslim community members previously recommended by the Mufti and approved by the Greek authorities.[102] Topçu claims that the Greek government did not allow free elections in this period as a reaction to the Turkish government which did not allow it for the Greek Orthodox waqfs in Istanbul until 1944.[103] Two of the appointed Board Heads in this period were from the notorious 150 fugitives; Hafız Reşat and Hüsnü Yusuf.[104] Even then the waqf administration was vulnerable to corruption from inside and outside.[105]

After the signing of Lausanne, some of the waqf property were temporarily confiscated for the settlement of the Greek Orthodox refugees from Anatolia. Not all was returned to the community. For instance, part of the Didimotyho mosque complex and the Gazi Evrenos hospice (imaret) in Komotini was permanently confiscated.[106]

Waqf property was dramatically reduced during the Bulgarian occupation (1941-1944)[107] and the junta period (1967-1974) due to urban planning in the towns of Komotini and Ksanthi.[108] The waqf property in the town centers such as mosques, convents, public baths were either

101 Ibid.

102 Tsiumis, K. A. (1994). I musulmanikí mionótita tis Ditikís Thrákis ke i ellinoturkikés schésis (1923–1940). Pedagoyiki Scholi Tmima Nipiagogon. Thessaloniki, Aristotelio Panepistimio Thessalonikis cited in Aarbake, p.86

103 Soltaridis Simeon, I istoría ton muftión tis Ditikís Thrákis. Athens, Nea Sinora, 1997, cited in Topçu, 2012, 77.

104 Ibid., 78.

105 According to the report of the then Greek minority inspector, Stilianopulos (1929), " [...]the boards sold land without permission, lent money without a proper procedure, and spent considerable sums outside the purpose of the foundations", cited in Aarbake, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 87.

106 Kurban and Tsistselikis, "A Tale of ...", 2010, 13.

107 *Trakya,* 23.03.1953.

108 Kurban and Tsistselikis, "A Tale of Reciprocity..", 2012, 12.

confiscated or destroyed.[109] The waqf administration boards were scene to power struggles between the modernists and the traditionalists and a matter of friction between Turkey and Greece.[110] Lack of accountability in waqf administration was the basis of corruption. It paved the way for excessive sale of waqf property by the Board members and the Mufti,particularly in Ksanthi between 1958 and 1963.[111] The tenants of waqf property either avoided paying rent or paid rents much below the market because the waqf administration did not have the right for litigation.[112]

The first election for administrative board members was conducted in 1950 upon a royal decree and the next in 1953.[113] Between 1950 and 1967, elections were held regularly for the formation of administrative boards.[114] Osman Nuri claims that between 1950 and 1953 the Ksanthian administration Board headed by İbrahim Serdarzade worked perfectly. Education was given priority. Turkish Teaching school graduates were employed as teachers in minority schools, who were denied this position previously. The villages were frequently visited to encourage them send their children to school.[115]

However, in 1967, when the junta came to power, a new law was enacted (65/1967). Elections were cancelled, and the size of the administrative boards were reduced to 7 members. They were completely abolished in Alexandroupoli as there was no Mufti there. In Didimothiko, the deputy Mufti had to take over the administrative function himself.[116] Hafız Yaşar was appointed the Head of the administrative board in Komotini and Şevket Hamdi as the Head of the Board in Ksanthi. The Boards' functions were reduced to the management of immovable property. Thus,

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.,13;

112 Interview with the Official Mufti of Komotini, summer 2012.

113 *Trakya*, 19.10.1953.

114 Eren, 36 (1960 and 1964 elections were delayed)

115 *Trakya*, 23.03.1953.

116 Eren, "Batı Trakya Türk Vakıfları", 2012, 37.

their social and cultural duties were wiped out.[117] In the meanwhile, Turkey showed no reaction against the confiscations which were only covered by the Turkish newspapers.[118] Likewise, the minority media did not dare criticize the situation until the collapse of the junta.[119]

In fact, Muslim waqfs were subject to taxation which they paid regularly until 1971. This was a remarkable implementation of the reciprocity principle as the Greek Orthodox waqfs in Istanbul were taxed until 2007.[120] Afterwards, however, the taxation office did not take the taxes, but mortgaged the waqf property instead.[121] When the Board Head Hafız Yaşar tried to pay the tax, the taxation office would say that the government had not given an order for its payment. This procedure continued for several years. In the meanwhile, the waqfs continued to use the mortgaged property anyway.[122]

Greece was taxing only Muslim waqfs but refusing the payment of taxes and mortgaging the property as if the taxes were not paid. Onsunoglu described it as a "schizophrenic condition, like the government attitude to other minority issues".[123] In the meanwhile, confiscation of waqf property continued.[124]

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117 Altan Genç, "Batı Trakya Türk Vakıfları ve 1091/1980 Sayılı Yunan Yasasının Düşündürdükleri", *Yeni Batı Trakya Dergisi,* Yıl.6, Sayı 64, Temmuz, 1988, s.38, cited in Adıyeke, 34; *Oran, Türk Yunan,* 1991, 157.

118 "Batı Trakya Türk Cemaat İdare Heyetleri, askeri idare zoruyla değiştirildi", *Ulus*, 29 Ekim 1967,cited in Adıyeke, 41.

119 Akın, 26 .10.1974, 27 .04/ 23 .071975, cited in Oran, *Türk-Yunan*, 1991, 158.

120 Law No. 3554, 12.4.2007, Official Gazette No: A 80, 16.04.2007, cited in "A Tale of ...", 2012, 12.

121 İbram Onsunoğlu, "Yine Vakıf Borçları Hakkında", *Azınlıkça Dergisi*, sayı 34, Ocak 2008; Trakya'nın Sesi 455/25.06.1993, cited in Aarbake, 465; Interview with the Official Mufti of Komotini; Interview with Mithat, a retired teacher of Religion in Komotini, 2012.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 For instance, the waqf land of Kallisti (Kalanca) decreased from 110 stremma to 10, *İleri,* 16.09.1983.

During the PASOK in government, a more oppressive waqf law was enacted in 1980 (Law.nr 1091). It was institutionalizing state control in waqf administration. The Prefect was granted with a wide scope of authority including the right to appoint candidates for the administrative Board in case the candidates fell short of the required number. In places with more than one waqf property, the Prefect could send the elected board members to whichever waqf he wanted (Artc.11).[125]

The waqf budget was made subject to the Prefect's approval. All income, expenditures, and other financial transactions required to be acknowledged and confirmed by the Prefect, who could change the budget as he wanted (Artc.16). The waqf schools were separated from waqfs and their income was decided to be transmitted to the Ministry of Education (Artc.19) Thus, minority schools would be deprived of major income because majority were waqf property.[126]

The heaviest blow to the waqfs would be submission of their title deeds to the Ministry of Finance within one year of the declaration of the law (Artc.20). Yet some of the deeds were either too old or lost during wars. [127] In the case of non-compliance, waqf property could be confiscated by the Greek government. Worst of all, the administrative board was deprived of the right to sue the tenants in case of non-payment of rent.[128]

Even worse, the administrative board Head Hafız Yaşar was deprived of the right to represent waqfs in Greek courts. He was defamed for decades by the hardliner circle for decades as he had been appointed by the junta. Eventually, he resigned in August 1989.[129] Consequently, the entire administrative board became dysfunctional.

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125 Oran, 274.

126 60% of minority schools in Western Thrace are vakıf property and 20% of them are within the mosque buildings. Vakalios, Th. To provlima tis diapolitistikis ekpedevsis sti Ditiki Thraki, Athens, 1997, cited in Cin, *Yunanistan'daki Müslüman*, 2003, 203.

127 Oran, *Türk-Yunan*, 1991, 274.

128 Yeni Batı Trakya Dergisi, Yıl.5, sayı 56, Kasım 1987, s.18, cited in Adıyeke, *Yunanistan Sınırları*, 2001, 38.

129 *İleri* 18 Ağustos 1989; Oran, Türk-Yunan, 1991, 159.

Upon his resignation, the Minority Supreme Council met on 7th August 1989 and decided that the administrative board should be ruled by minority members of the Municipal Council of Komotini, who had been elected by minority votes, until elections are held according to the law 2345/1920. [130]

On 8th August, the independent MP Sadık Ahmet went to the administrative board office to take over the management. Apparently, previously Hafız Yaşar had told him that he would let the elected minority MP to head the waqf administration.[131] The revenue inspection clerks inside the building who were assigned by the Prefect to control the accounts called the police. As a result, the waqf administration office was guarded by the police for a month.[132] Soon after, a presidential decree was issued stating that some articles of law 1095/1980 would be suspended.[133]

Turkish Foreign Ministry sent a memorandum to Greece as a reaction to the enactment of law 2345/1980, claiming that it was in violation of Greek international obligations for the Western Thracian minority by referring to articles 11,12 of the Athens Agreement of 1913 and the 1920 Sevres Agreement, and Article 45 of the Lausanne Treaty. In her response, Greece repeated the claim that the Athens and Sevres agreements had lost their validity as they were replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne. They also added that "it was not to their benefit to provide Muslim foundations equal conditions with Greek foundations in the country". [134]

In return, Turkey threatened Greece by bringing the matter to international platforms, to the UN Human Rights Commission, Organization of Islamic Conference and all signatories of Lausanne. Greece

130 Ibid.

131 Aarbake, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 468.

132 Ibid., 469.

133 Ibid.

134 Oran, Türk-Yunan, 1991, 272.

retreated by assuring Turkey that certain provisions of the law required decrees to put into force and they were not intending to issue the decrees immediately.[135] Oran interprets the Greek response as 'a policy of retreat' to avoid international criticism. On the contrary, Aarbakke, he agrees with Onsunoglu that the law was not intended to implement but to use as a pawn in bilateral relations with Turkey. [136] Aarbakke claims that Turkey in fact did not mind the implementation of the new law because the Greek Orthodox waqfs in Istanbul were richer than Muslim waqfs in Western Thrace. [137]

In 1991, another presidential decree was issued to prevent minority notables' candidacy in the administrative board. Deputy Mayors, township administrators, deputy Muftis and their relatives up to second degree of kin could not be candidates. Any boycott of board elections was prevented by increasing the required number of candidates by three times as much as the number of existing board members. (Art.7.2) Furthermore, in order to prevent an unexpected resignation like Hafız Yaşar's, in case of death or resignation of a board member, the next person on the previous candidacy list would be appointed by the Prefect (Ar.25). [138]

When Cemali Meço was appointed the Mufti of Komotini in 1990, the waqf administration was in chaos. The income from waqf property had already plummeted. They were neither able to pay the teachers nor the religious personnel or meet schools' material needs. The tenants were abusing the in-limbo situation either by totally avoiding rents or by continuing to pay very low rents. [139] As described by the Mufti:

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135 Ibid., 272.

136 Onsunoglu's article in minority short-lived newspaper *Denge* 14/13.10.1989, cited in Aarbake, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 466.

137 Ibid.

138 Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde*, 2000, 274-275

139 Onsunoğlu "Yine Vakıf...", cited in Aarbake, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 470; Interview with the Mufti, 2012.

> The administrative office remained closed for nine months. We could not pay the electricity bills. We could not pay the imams. They were about to resign. Then the provincial administration decided to pay for the imams' salary and electricity bills and invited me to discuss about it.

To his surprise, the Prefect asked him to head the waqf Administration Board temporarily. The Mufti replied him in an amusing manner; "My people do not want me as a Mufti, and now you also want me to head the waqfs?".[140] Upon his insistence, the Mufti told him he would accept it on one condition: retrieval of the waqfs' right to litigation.[141] Surprisingly, the Prefect accepted the Mufti's demand. He narrates how the 'right to litigation' changed (peaked) rental income:

> We have filed 41 suits against our people (tenants) and 5 against the Christians. Thus, we increased the ailing waqf income in a short period of time".[142]

The income from waqf property rose from 23 million drachmas in 1989 to 42 million in 1990 , 52 million in 1991 and 75 million in 1992.[143] However, the rise in waqf income must have disturbed Greece as well as opponents of the Mufti and his circle.[144] Greece did not want waqfs to increase their income, and the opponents probably did not want the Mufti to be successful as he was appointed.[145]

The Greek authorities ordered the tenants to pay the rents not to the waqf office but to the state revenue office. The Mufti responded

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140 Interview with the Mufti, Komotini, 2012.

141 Interview with the Mufti, Komotini, 2012. The Mufti emphasized that prior to his death, the ex-Board Head Hafız Yaşar had told him to retrieve the waqfs' right to litigation.

142 The Mufti entrusted the journalist Abdülhalim Dede to help him deal with the tenants, Interview with the Mufti.

143 Trakya'nın Sesi 460/18.08.1993 cited in Aarbake, 470;

144 Ibid.,; Interview with the Mufti of Komotini, July 2012.

145 Ibid.

by sending a memorandum to the Prefect asking urgent organization of elections for an administration board. As a reaction to the Prefect's indifference, he declared that he resigned from the position of Board Head.[146]

In 1993, the Greek government issued a presidential decree for a three-year period. It entrusted the regional governor with the right to appoint the administration board.[147] Consequently, the regional governor appointed five members to the administration board with Sabri Boşnak as the Head. The Minority Supreme Committee protested the appointment with a meeting where two hundred minority members participated. The Mufti declared that he did not approve of the appointment and insisted on the need for a democratic election of members for the administrative board.[148] However, neither the law was changed nor the appointed committees.

The final law on waqf administration was enacted in 2007 and put into effect in 2008 concomitant with the Turkish legislation on waqfs[149] and replaced the notorious law 1091/1980. The new Law No.3647/2008 assures elections for administrative boards under close supervision of the regional secretary and the prefect, the Mufti and imams. However, in case of a boycott, the regional secretary or prefect can appoint members. The most striking aspect is the withdrawal of the reciprocity clause.[150]

The best aspect of the law is that taxation from waqf income was lifted and the accumulated debt from taxation which had reached 24 million euros by 2006 was written off.[151] Ironically, the law was condemned by the minority elite on the basis of the (il)legitimacy of

146 Trakya'nın Sesi, 530/16.11.1995, cited in Aarbake, 471.

147 Trakya'nın Sesi 553/12.06.1996, cited in ibid, 472.

148 Ibid.

149 The law nr.5737 concerning vakıfs in the official gazette available online at: http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2008/02/20080227-2.htm, last retrieved 02.12.2016.

150 Kurban and Tsitselikis, "A Tale of Reciprocity..", 2012, 13-14.

151 Onsunoglu, "Yine Vakıf Borçları Hakkında".

the appointed Mufti, the intervention of government representatives, and the exclusion of the Muslim minority from the decision making process.[152]

Aarbakke challenges Turkish historiography that claims the waqf property was deliberately misused and sold out by dishonest administrators appointed by Greece. However, whereas the appointed Board Head in Komotini, the late Hafız Yaşar managed the waqf property well, his counterpart in Ksanthi, Şevket Hamdi mismanaged and sold out waqf properties.[153] The elected late Mufti Mehmet Emin Aga is claimed to have sold out some of the waqf property in Ksanthi in collaboration with Sevket Hamdi.[154]

Widespread corruption in the administration of waqfs has been a familiar phenomenon.[155] Corrupt administrators either appointed or elected, internal minority politics largely shaped by the notables' whims and struggle for power[156] and the community's ignorance and/or false consciousness resulted in the maladministration and dramatic decline of waqf property.

Had the waqfs been administered properly, the income could have been mobilized to provide more scholarships for poor rural children, to build more schools, medical laboratories or a hospital like that of the Balıklı Rum Hospital in İstanbul, to build income generating facilities such as factories to prevent immigration and investments for employment not only for the minority but for the entire region. This was successfully curtailed by the reciprocity understanding of Greece

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152 Advisory Board, press release of 19.02.1998, cited in "A Tale of Reciprocity...",2012, 16.

153 *İleri* 140/08.06.1979; 699/18.12.1992, *Aile Birlik* 58/28.05.1992, cited in Aarbake, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 467.

154 Trakya'nın Sesi, 420/21.05.1992–426/09.07.1992; 454/16.06.1993 cited in Aarbake, 467. A similar claim is made in the report entitled "A Tale of Reciprocity", 2012, 12 for the period of 1958-1963, prior to the junta, without giving names. They even sold the Muslim cemetery in the village of Petrinos (Horozlu), narrations and map presented by architect Adnan Tevfikoğlu, Ksanthi.

155 *İleri* 28.08.1998 , *İleri,* 24.04.1987.

156 For a detailed account of events relating to the power struggle among the minority elite, see Aarbake, "The Muslim Minority", 2000, 467-470.

and Turkey. It seems that neither wanted the minority to be independent.

Hafız Yaşar, for instance, although was appointed by the junta regime, administered the waqf property perfectly. Osman, one of my elderly informants, admitted that he and some of his friends had misperceived him as a traitor, an indoctrination of hardliner elite.

> The late Hafız Yaşar… We used to dislike him… However, later I learnt that in fact he managed the waqfs in Komotini well. The current football field in the vicinity of the Komotini bus terminal was 25 stremmata of arable waqf land. The junta decided to confiscate it to make a football field. Hafız Yaşar was reluctant but also knew that he could not change the decision. In return for his consent, he asked the authorities for permission to renew the hut-like waqf shops on Ermou street. He had them all pulled down and rebuilt with concrete. A number of Komotinians Turks have rented them and made good money for decades.[157]

Among my informants, the elderly males know the waqfs in the towns. They also participate in alternative Mufti elections and elect the village trustee. However, majority of young and middle aged are unaware of waqf property in the towns although they know the waqf property in the village.[158] This cannot only be explained by the geographical factor of distance between the village and town because the young people often go to Komotini and Ksanthi and know the cafeterias, restaurants and shops. This is rather a consequence of indifference which could be dealt with by a volunteer teacher or the village imam who would organize a daily tour to Komotini and/or Ksanthi to show them the waqf buildings and explain their history and purpose. Yet, the eligibility of imams on such educational issues is questionable.

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157 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

158 Narrations of the young group, (aged 16-30) participants.

RURALS

The ignorance of rurals concerning waqf property administration can be illustrated by the case of a lowlander village trustee I encountered during my participant observations at the office of Mufti in summer 2012. A village trustee Osman (68 years old) entered the Mufti Office with three other fellows to declare his resignation and his replacement by another villager (male). The discussions that almost lasted for an hour were like a theatre play.

He submitted his letter of resignation to the clerk İmamoğlu and introduced the man who was determined as the new trustee by males in the village mosque. The clerk told him that he could not accept his resignation because there was a legal procedure to follow. He had to bring in the previous year's accounts of the village waqf and have them approved and signed by the imam. The accounts had to be controlled and signed by the Mufti afterwards. Thereafter, a new trustee could be determined in the village who would later be approved by the Mufti.

The old man insisted on the clerk to accept his resignation recurrently saying; "May Allah be witness I am an honest man… I would never abuse my village's waqf income." "Sure" said İmamoglu in a calm tone,

> But the accounts need to be checked for your resignation to be accepted. In the past we heard complaints of villagers claiming corruption but we could not question the trustee because he had migrated to Turkey.

The old man was not convinced. He just wanted the clerk to take the resignation paper and get done with it. The clerk explained him the procedure patiently, as if explaining to a child, at least three times until he lost his patience and said, 'I cannot change the rule and I have stuff to deal with.' The old man was finally convinced by the two fellow men who were accompanying him.

Then İmamoglu turned to me and said, "As you've already noticed, we do not talk of 'elections' but 'determination of the trustee by

the community (males)' because these are customary practices", referring implicitly to the controversies over Mufti elections.

> These duties do not bring financial returns but are done for merit from Allah. Therefore, the trustee (mütevelli) must be an honest and accountable man. We are not against democracy. Yet, democracy applies for the school council, town council, village headman, because these posts are renewed regularly whereas trustees and Muftis are determined for a lifelong period. [159]

[159] Interview with İmamoglu, Komotini,summer 2012.

10

Religion and Cultural Traditions

§ 10.1 Muslims Challenging the Implementation of Sharia

During the Ottoman rule, the rules of Sharia were never written and therefore never became canonized body of law. The Islamic judge, *qadi,* based his decisions on *fatwa*, the declared opinion of the Mufti and the rules of the Sultan- qanun- for issues not addressed by the Sharia. Upon the end of Ottoman rule in Western Thrace, there has been no supplementary qanun. Therefore, the Mufti's decisions have been based on principles of Sharia interpreted in accordance with the customs and traditions of the Muslim minority and in accordance with the Greek Civil Code. In this regard, the Mufti has had a consultative and mediating role rather than a strict executor of the Islamic family law.[1] For instance, although polygamy is legal under Islamic law, it is not allowed in Western Thrace.

Appeal to Greek civil courts for family issues of marriage and divorce was denied for Muslims until late 1980s, [2] consequently the Mufti was the only court for issues of family law. Yet, there must have been some exceptions. For instance, a female relative divorced in 1965 at the

1 Interview with the Mufti of Komotini, summer 2012; Personal Observations.

2 Tsitselikis, 2004, p. 418.

Greek civil court. The Mufti could not divorce her because she was the plaintiff[3] and women cannot divorce unless this right is written in the marriage contract (*izinname*).

Post 2006, however, the check system on the Mufti's decisions are claimed to have tightened due to pressure from human rights organizations, the EU member states, domestic lawyers and scholars and as a consequence of the integration and democratization process initiated in 1991. Ever since, Mufti's decisions concerning cases of divorce and child custody have to be checked and affirmed by the independent civil courts.[4]

As mentioned earlier, today fewer Muslims bring their cases concerning family law to the Mufti compared to the past. This is not only due to loss of legitimacy, but for pursuit of equality between males and females and for individual benefits. Inheritance cases, for instance, are usually treated by civil courts. They are particularly preferred by females because the Islamic law entitles them half of the share of male siblings. The 2/1 ratio in inheritance to the disadvantage of women is justified on the Islamic principle that when the daughter inherits the property, she can spend it for herself only. However, when the son inherits property, he has to spend it for the whole family and for her sister if her husband dies. Although it looks fair in principle, there is no mechanism to check if the widow sister receives any funding from her brother.[5] In practice, they hardly ever do.

Muslim women demand equality in the distribution of family property. Some even seek for justice in the ECtHR. An old Komotinian Muslim Turk lady, Hatice Sali, for instance, inherited all the property based on his husband's will when he passed away. Yet, the relatives of the deceased appealed to the Mufti, who ruled that the property must be divided among the relatives as the couple did not have children and that

3 Interview with Nefise, Palazlı , summer 2012.

4 Interview at the office of the Mufti; Personal Communications with minority lawyers; personal observations.

5 Ibid.

'will' is not acceptable according to Sharia. The lady appealed the decision at the local court, which decided in her favor. The relatives appealed the civil court's decision at the Court of Appeal, which decided that the case falls within the jurisdiction of the Mufti and declared the civil court's decision void. The lady finally took it to the ECtHR and won the case.[6]

Prior to 1982, like Muslims, Christian Orthodox Greeks were deprived of the right to civil marriage. They had to marry at the Church. This also meant that a Christian could not marry a non-Christian in Greece. The exceptional number of Christian-Muslim marriages therefore were never registered**.** Onsunoglu narrated the dilemma when he wanted to marry his late Greek Orthodox wife in Thessaloniki in early 1970s.

> As I was a Muslim and she was a Christian, we could not marry at the Church. Civil marriage was not allowed for either of us. Then I thought that I couldn't marry her at the Mufti because she was a Christian. However, sharia allows marriage with non-Muslim women, which I did not know at that time. When our children were born in 1975 and in 1977, we could not have them legally registered.[7]

Civil marriage was introduced in 1982 by law 1250/1982 for all Greek citizens and enshrined in the Greek Civil Code (Art 1376). However, minority members have conducted civil marriages since early 2000s. It is stated that almost 80% of marriages in İskeçe are conducted

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6 "Yunanistan'da ilginç bir miras hikayesi: Müslüman kadın şeriat hükmünü kabul etmezse", available online at: http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalEklerDetayV3&ArticleID=961813&CategoryID=96, last retrieved 15.10.2012, http://haber.sol.org.tr/dunya/yunanistanda-ilginc-bir-miras-hikayesi-musluman-kadin-seriat-hukmunu-kabul-etmezse-113104, last retrieved: 30.11.2015 ; a similar case is *Case of Dilek Cigdem v. Greece*, http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?action=html&documentId=882082&portal=hbkm&source=externalbydocnumber&table=F69A27FD8FB86142BF01C1166DEA398649, last retrieved 21.12.2015.

7 Interview with İbram Onsunoglu, summer 2012.

at the municipality whereas in Gümülcine the number is around 50%.[8] This kind of a behavioral change owes to the Muftis' loss of legitimacy, the difficulty of divorcing a religious marriage and child custody, and also the compensation paid by the husband to the wife for divorce.[9]

The conventional (religious) marriage takes place at the bride's house or at the Mufti Office. The village imam performs the marriage and submits the marriage certificate to the Mufti later. During the ceremony, the couple is usually represented by their male relatives and two witnesses. The imam asks for the *mehr*[10] and writes it in the marriage contract. *Mehr* consists of two types of compensation, gold or money given at the time of marriage and upon divorce or the husband's death. The ceremony ends with a few prayers from the Qur'an and good wishes for the couple. The imam never asks the bride her consent directly.

Only at the office of the Mufti, the Mufti asks her consent directly. Therefore in the past, around three decades ago, a number of arranged marriages, which was the norm in the minority were forced marriages. When I raised this issue to İmamoglu, he told me that it was the imam's duty to ask for the bride's consent but that it was impossible to check if all imams did that. "Forced marriage is a sin" he said, "imams who did not take the consent of the bride are accountable to Allah in the afterlife."[11] The response falls short of providing any satisfactory explanation as justice is postponed to afterlife.

Child marriage is the most contentious issue with regard to the implementation of Sharia in Western Thrace. Several Muslim countries

8 Interview with Imamoglu, Komotini, summer 2012.

9 Marriage at the municilapility is free whereas a fee of nearly 300 euros is required for an Islamic marriage at the Mufti institution and 250 euros if the ceremony is conducted by the village imam on behalf of the Mufti.

10 In Arabic, 'mahr', money or possessions given by the groom to the bride at the time of marriage.

11 Interview with Imamoglu, the Mufti Office, Komotini, 2012.

allow child marriages based on Sharia. In Western Thrace, child marriages are common among Muslim Roma. Majority of divorce cases also belong to them.[12] Child marriages in Western Thrace attracted international and nationwide attention when the children couples were noticed by German authorities in 2004.

A Muslim Roma Greek citizen man, a transmigrant worker in Germany, married a 12 year old Muslim Roma girl in Western Thrace and took his wife to Germany. However, the German authorities denied to register them as a couple due to the wife's age. According to the German law, the man had conducted an illegal act (sexual abuse) punishable with at least two years of imprisonment. The Greek Consul of Düsseldorf was consulted who explained it as a case related with the religious autonomy of the minority in Western Thrace. [13] Greece was consequently entrapped between multicultural rights and universal human rights, typical dilemma current Western democracies are confronted with.[14]

As a matter of fact, some Muslim Roma children usually get married by a wedding ceremony in their neighborhood and/or the village.[15] They are either persuaded by the village imam to get their marriage registered at the Mufti or they get their marriage registered when the wife is pregnant or after having a child.[16] İmamoglu narrates,

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12 According to the figures taken from a government source, between 1980-1990, the rate of divorce was 5.1% among the Pomaks, 7.2% among the ethnic Turks, and 27.1% among the Muslim Roma. Topçu, *İslam Hukuku* , 2012, 98.

13 *Ethnos*, 22 January 2005, cited in Greece Helsinki Monitor, Minority Rights Group, Coordinated Organizations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece, *Parallel Report on Greece's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,* 3 March 2011.

14 Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1991.

15 Personal Observations; Interview with Imamoglu, the Komotinian Official Mufti Office, summer, 2012.

16 Personal observations.

> Our purpose is to protect the girl so that she can have rights from this marriage and to prevent the birth of out of wedlock children. When very young couples -usually Roma- come to us to get married, we advise them to get engaged and wait a few more years until they reach the legal age of adulthood(18). Concerning the case of the couple in Germany, the wedding had already taken place when the village imam informed us and persuaded them to have their marriage registered at the Mufti. The girl was 12 years old, but she was well built and looked at least 25. [17]

İmamoglu implicitly referred to the related interpretation of sharia which determines female age on physical appearance. In the next part of the story, which did not appear in the media, the husband was charged with sexual abuse in Germany and imprisoned. The girl was sent back to her family to Greece accompanied with a German official. İmamoglu went to the airport to take her. Apparently, German authorities did not allow the girl to stay in Germany and made her sign a paper saying that she did not want her husband. She asked her husband to return to Greece to be able to live together after his sentence was over, but the man preferred to stay in Germany. Eventually, they had to divorce. The girl remarried but it did not last very long. "Eventually she went astray", İmamoglu said, "This is how the German authorities destroyed a family".[18]

On the one hand, legal (religious) marriage provides certain rights for the female children, on the other hand, it helps them sustain this practice. If Muslim law did not wed them, then they would have to suffer the legal consequences such as imprisonment. This could induce a certain 'social learning' to abandon this practice. Otherwise, it turns into a legal and social stalemate. Moreover, the police or social workers can prevent such marriages by instant intervention because weddings do not take

17 Interview with Imamoglu, Komotini, summer 2012.

18 Ibid.

place in secret but outdoors. On the other hand, if they did intervene, it is very likely that it would be considered a violation of religious autonomy.

Another controversial issue concerns women's right to divorce. The wife can only divorce her husband if she has 'the right to divorce' included in the marriage contract which is written during the marriage either by the imam at home or at the Mufti Office. However, women are usually not informed about this procedure beforehand. In any case, the idea of divorce is not in the minds of women during the wedding which is a romantic occasion. Most important of all, imams do not tend to explain the legal rights granted by Islamic marriage to the couples. It is usually ignored. Instead, the emphasis is usually on the *mehr* (usually gold), which sometimes raises disputes between the groom's and bride's family. On the other hand, the husband can divorce his wife on the condition that he pays the compensation previously determined and registered in the marriage contract.

Inheritance from husband upon his death is also considered unfair and to the disadvantage of women. Upon the husband's death, the wife only gets the compensation stated in the marriage contract whereas the children inherit the rest. If the couple has no children, the husband's relatives are entitled to inherit his property. As a matter of fact, like the right to divorce, the wife is entitled to demand anything she wants such as a house, car, gold, upon the dissolution of marriage either by divorce or husband's death. Yet, these demands have to be included in the marriage contract.[19]

Viewing it from the Islamic mentality of women confined to the house and the man as the breadwinner, the compensation is a deterrent for men not to abandon their wives and leave them miserable. However, in a rural community, men and women work together to sustain themselves and to make accumulation. Even the urban housewives who do not participate in the workforce, raise children and take care of the entire

19 Interview and Observations at the Office of the Mufti in Komotini, 2012 and 2013.

family, and therefore have a share in the property accumulated after marriage. Therefore, it is obviously unfair for a husband to divorce by offering the wife a predetermined number of gold coins especially if the family has accumulated wealth within years.

The *mehr* is a contentious issue among the minority men and women alike. Some women respondents stated that, marriage is an emotional issue, therefore inclusion of material requirements in a marriage contract makes it more like a sales contract and contradicts its nature. Yıldız narrates;

> I was in love with my husband. When we were getting married, what to ask for as a compensation was something I could not have thought about. The village imam told us that the customary practice was 50 gold coins. We agreed. My husband is a farmer and I am a civil servant. We have bought a house , two cars, and a hundred acres of land since we got married. If my husband divorces me now, I'll only get 50 gold coins. Is it fair?[20]

Osman made a similar comment:

> We only had a tiny house of two rooms when we married. My wife's father had 15 gold coins written in the marriage contract. All through sixty years, we've worked together and built this large house, bought land, a tractor and agricultural equipment. If I divorce her now, shall I pay only 15 gold coins? This is ridiculous.[21]

On the other hand, İmamoglu reiterated that they told women they can have any possession registered in the marriage contract. He added that he witnessed women who asked for a Mercedes, a BMW, a house, land and had them written in their marriage contracts. However,

20 Interview with Yıldız, Yalanca, summer 2012.

21 Interview with Osman, Yalanca, summer 2012.

few women can get the compensation upon divorce if the husband is penniless and many forego their right to compensation in order to be able to divorce. Sometimes the divorce procedure takes such a long time that eventually the wife waives her right to compensation or the Mufti as a judge acts as a mediator for an amount less than that stated in the contract.[22]

When the couples both agree on divorce, they go to the Mufti. The Sharia court is held inside the large private office of the Mufti with himself as the only judge, and İmamoglu as the secretary to fill in the required documents. No outsider is allowed in unless the couple demand otherwise. The Mufti does not necessarily base his decisions on Sharia, but acts as a mediator listening to both parties and advising them to continue their marriage. Some couples follow the advice and give their marriage a chance. If the couple insist on divorce, then the Mufti tries to help them reach a compromise over the marriage compensation and/or child custody.[23] Prior to 2006, the Mufti was eligible to divorce the couple. However, since then, the Mufti's decisions- except for marriage- have to be ratified by the civil courts. This means that the couple also have hire a lawyer. [24]

When the case is brought to the court, a serious problem to deal with is the judges' lack of s knowledge about the Islamic family law.[25] Therefore divorce cases often develop into a stalemate and take a very long time to finalize. Appealing both to the Mufti and the civil court is not only time consuming but also costly. Dissolution of a marriage involving

22 Interview with Imamoglu, Komotini, summer 2012; Personal Observations.

23 Interview at the Office of the Mufti, Komotini; Personal Communications with divorced persons.

24 Ibid.

25 Konstantinos Tsitselikis, "Muslims in Greece", *Islam and the European Union,* Richard Potz, Wolfgang Wieshaider, eds., Peeters: Leuven 2004, 104; Interview at the Mufti Office, Komotini, 2012, Personal Communications.

a Western Thracian Greek citizen Muslim and a foreigner (a Turkish citizen Muslim Turk), for instance, is legally impossible. İmamoğlu narrates the case of a minority woman who could not divorce her husband:

> As the couple were married here (at the Mufti Office), they had to divorce here. When the Mufti's decision for divorce was sent to the civil court, they decided that as one of the parties was not a Greek citizen, and that the Mufti was not authorized to dissolve the marriage. Therefore we do not conduct international marriages anymore.[26]

Contrary to the general argument in the literature that the implementation of Sharia in Thrace works to the advantage of men but to the disadvantage of the women in cases of divorce[27], sometimes the victims of divorce are men. Although not mentioned in the literature, sometimes men are made victims twice; by the misbehavior of their wives and the financial burden of compensation.

An acquaintance , for instance, appealed for the dissolution of his marriage at the Mufti with evidence that his wife cheated on him. Nonetheless, the Mufti asked the husband to pay the marriage compensation to divorce. The case was brought to the civil court. The civil court could not treat the case independently because it was a religious marriage involving the Mufti. The Mufti could not dissolve the marriage without com-

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26 Interview with Imamoglu, Komotini, summer 2012.

27 Yannis Ktistakis, *Charia, tribunaux religieux* et droit grec (*The Holy Law of Islam and the Greek Muslim Citizens*, Istos, İstanbul, 2013; Konstantinos Tsitselikis, "The Legal Status of Islam in Greece" *Die Welt des Islams, New Series*, Vol. 44, Issue 3, *Sharī'a in Europe* (2004), 402-431, 414-420, 2004; Lina Papadopoulou, "Trapped in History: Greek Muslim Women Under the Sacred Islamic Law", *Annuaire International Des Droits D L'Homme ,*2010, 397-418; Iris Boussiakou, "Religious Freedom and Minority Rights in Greece: the case of the Muslim minority in western Thrace", working paper The Hellenic Observatory &The European Institute, 2008

pensation because he was under pressure from the state to protect Muslim women's rights. The process took over a year when the wife was finally persuaded by the Mufti to divorce by waiving her right to compensation.[28]

In a similar vein, a young neighbor divorced his wife due to her misbehavior. Yet he had to pay the previously agreed compensation of 30,000 euros which otherwise (if judged on Sharia) required no compensation. A friend of mine was abandoned by his wife. However, he could not divorce her as he was obliged to pay the compensation, gold coins worth 20,000 euros. The process took over three years when eventually the wife waived her right to compensation and agreed to divorce.

Child custody is another contentious issue. According to the Islamic law, female children of divorced parents have to live with their mothers until the age of nine and male children until the age of seven after when they are given to the father. As in all other decisions, the Mufti does not base his decision on child custody on this rule, but consult with the parents. When the mother intends to remarry and does not want the child or children, the Mufti does not force her to take them. If divorce is materialized upon mutual consent, the father has to pay alimony for the children. If the father does not pay alimony, he does not have the right to demand their custody later.[29]

İmamoglu stated that he had observed a number of Christian divorce cases at the civil court and argued that they were similar to the court at the Mufti Office:

> The judge first asked the couple for their decision on the custody of children, and he accepted it when they had mutual consent. Otherwise, he tried to mediate in between. This is exactly what the Mufti does here. So what is the problem?[30]

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28 Interview with Mert, Iasmos, summer 2012.

29 Interview with Imamoglu, Komotini, 2012.

30 Ibid.

In divorce cases, alimony is not determined on a monthly basis but given to the woman at divorce. If there are children, the mother is given monthly child maintenance until they are 18. In the past, prior to 1990, there were no clearly determined rules for the divorced father to see his children. Some children grew up without ever meeting their fathers. Some were told their fathers were dead although they lived in the same or nearby village. In the long term, they became traumatic adults, drug/alcohol addicts. Recently, however, the Mufti has legalized the father's right to spend time with his children on specific days of the week. In case the parent does not allow the other to see the child, he/she can contact the Mufti, get the required papers and ask the help of Police to see the child.[31]

The picture about the implementation of Islamic family law in Western Thrace is neither as black as presented by the academia nor as pink as it is presented by the Mufti Office. It lies somewhere in between. Undeniably, in principle and sometimes in practice sharia rules pertaining to women's rights confront with universal human rights. Here the Mufti enters the scene with an intermediary position in an effort to reach a compromise via supervision, consultation, and negotiations with the individuals involved.

The Greek government neither dares entirely abolish the implementation of Islamic family law, nor does it allow its literal implementation by the Mufti. The Mufti institution suffers from a serious loss of legitimacy and prestige within the minority and the Greek state. İmamoglu complained that the government did not answer their petitions, demands, questions on time, and that they sometimes completely ignored them by not responding at all. 'When our own (Muslim)community does not respect us, why should the non-Muslims do?' he said in disdain.

31 I encountered a divorced father at the Mufti Office who asked for a document from the Mufti to take to the police because his ex-wife did not let him see his son.

During my participant observations and interviews at the Office of Mufti in the summer of 2012, I observed that the Muslim Roma are the most frequent visitors of the Mufti Office. [32] Despite being the most socio-economically deprived group, they prefer to get married and divorce there although marriage is free at the municipality whereas it costs 300 euros at the Mufti Office. This is not only due to the authorization of child marriages but also adult marriages are conducted here.

The Muslim Roma use an informal but esteemed language while addressing the Mufti and the clerks. They address the Mufti "Müftü Baba" (Father Mufti), synonymous with the Christian addressing to priests. When they need an official document, they refer to the clerks with reference to kinship, "Kızanım bana boşanma kiyadı lazım" (I need a divorce certificate my child). I also observed that there was no incremental difference in the Mufti's and the clerks' treatment of Muslim Roma and Muslim Turks. Obviously the Muslim Roma are treated with respect, which barely exists at any other institution. This could be a reason for their getting married at the Mufti Office, something more valuable than the costless option of civil marriage.

§ 10.2 Practice of (Sunni) Islam in the Lowlands

It can be argued that religion has been the strongest refuge for Western Thracians after secession from the Ottoman Empire and losing the superior millet status. Religion remains at the very heart of individual and collective identity that reflects itself not only in Islamic practices and rituals but also in everyday life and discourses. Although there are intergenerational differences concerning perception and practice of Islam, religion prevails as an indispensable component of identity and culture.

32 A similar observation belongs to Demetriou, "Divisive Visions", 2004.

It is also a natural boundary between the Muslim and the mainstream Greek-Orthodox community. It is a boundary with various features and roles; one that becomes flexible in terms of neighborliness but tough when it comes to intermarriages. It is also a promise for heaven in the afterworld where Muslims will be rewarded with the most superior class again, a privilege which the current superior Christian citizens will not be granted. Consequently, it has been a staunch element of social survival particularly during the discrimination and oppression periods when many minority members took refuge in religion based fatalism.

Muslim outfit is the most visible marker of difference between the Muslims and Christians who are otherwise not differentiable by physical appearance. The traditional Muslim female dress is a long, loose black gown called *ferace* and a wide outer headscarf either black or white worn over a smaller headscarf, called çember in the vernacular language. In the past, wearing the *ferace* was the customary practice for females who reached the age of puberty along with other religious practices such as fasting and namaz. However, the rule was bypassed during the weddings when they wore long dresses with laced headscarves that left part of their hair open.

There is no traditional Islamic dress for men. Until late 1980s, in the lowlands, some elderly men used to dress in the Ottoman style; loose pants with a large strip of cloth wrapped around the waist where they also kept their money and cigarette box and a *fez* wrapped with a strip of cloth around on their heads. It is still worn by a few old men in the highland villages.

Islam continues to be the common denominator of the minority regardless of religious commitment which varies depending on the geographical location of villages. The highland villages of Ksanthi and Rhodope are the most conservative ones concerning the practice of religion. The relatively crowded middle-line villages to the east of Komotini are also conservative. On the other hand, lowland villages are not very conservative.

In the highland villages people adhere strictly to Islamic dress code. All females, including children, wear headscarves. The women wear

loose coats or ferace whereas the children and girls wear casual dresses such as jeans with long sleeved tops. Nevertheless, the norm has been surpassed outside of the village particularly at Turkish and/or Greek universities where a number of female students take their headscarves off and wear them again when they come to the village.[33] In the past decade they have been allowed to wear it in minority, Turkish and Greek schools.

In contrast to Anagnostou's claims that there is more pressure on Muslim women to veil in villages than in towns[34], there is no such clear cut village- town dichotomy in terms of veiling. There are villages where women enjoy much more freedom compared to certain neighborhoods of Komotini such as Mastanlı, Harmanlık and Kır Mahalle. Young women in lowland villages do not cover themselves whereas in the suburban neighborhoods of Komotini Islamic dress is the norm. Moreover, in the villages, agricultural division of labor makes it impossible to separate men and women as they have to work together on the fields.

Post 1960s, as females started attending minority high schools and Turkish universities; they gradually abandoned the headscarf. The rural females in the lowlands did not wear the *ferace* and the headscarf until they married anyway. Even married women took off their headscarves at certain occasions like weddings. Therefore, the process of unveiling cannot be confined to the past eight or ten years (from 1997 back) as claimed by Anagnostou.[35] It was a result of decades long processes involving a number of parameters such as the impact of secular Turkish reforms, immigration experience (Germany and Turkey), the rise in education level (graduates from schools in Turkey), and attendance in Greek universities post 1991.

On the other hand, the tradition of wearing the Islamic dress has prevailed in the more conservative highlands and semi-plain villages. For instance, girls who attend Imam Hatips in Turkey and the medrese in Komotini since 1995 wear the veil. Furthermore, post 2000, two minority

33 Personal Observations and narrations of highlander friends and acquaintances.

34 Anagnostou, "Oppositional and Integrative Ethnicities", 1999, 205.

35 Ibid.

high schools in Komotini and Ksanthi -schools with a strict secular tradition- have allowed the wearing of the veil. Therefore highlander female students who took off the veil before entering school do not have to take it off anymore.

Interestingly, in the past two decades, they have adopted the Turkish way of covering, which became fashionable in Turkey after the AKP took power; long sleeved shirts over trousers or body fit coats and a hair bonnet with a headscarf over it. Some of my Komotinian respondents claim that the rise in the veiled young females in Gümülcine is an implication of the influence of Turkey as well as the impact of Turkish religious brotherhoods in Thrace. When I followed up the question arguing whether the acceptance of veiled might have led to an increase in the number of female students, implicitly referring to Göle's argument of the veil as a tool of female emancipation[36], I received a definite 'No' as response.

> Prior to 2000, girls were open until they got married regardless of whether they attended school or not. They were not 'open' in the current meaning, though. They used to wear long skirts and short sleeved shirts. They used to wear the veil after they got married. This was the norm. No one who attended the Minority High School in Gümülcine was veiled.[37]

The most liberal villages in terms of religious adherence are the lowland villages. Religious radicalism or even conservatism hardly ever develops in the lowlands. Previously they also suffered from communal pressure to abide by religious rules; particularly before 1950s.[38] There are some old respondents who admitted that they started to pray the

36 Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: civilization and veiling,* Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1996.

37 Interviews and Personal Communications with a number of Komotinians.

38 Personal Communications and Interviews with villagers from several lowland villages.

namaz five times a day and fast because they were intimidated by communal pressure.[39] Then the villagers of the plain became gradually more flexible as a result of a number of factors such as more frequent encounters with secular trends due to their proximity to the town, migrations, and rise in income and educational level.

People in the lowlands practice religion more as they grow old. For instance, women are more devout than men in terms of performing regular *namaz* and fasting. Men usually attend Friday prayers and Bayram prayers at the mosque. However, only the few healthy elderly perform the namaz five times a day. A few couples have also fulfilled the duty of pilgrimage to Mecca. Otherwise, alcohol consumption is common among men of all ages in the lowlands and among the young and middle aged in the highlands.

In the lowlands, religious practices are mostly observed during the holy month of Ramadan. However, although many keep the fast in winters, they cannot fast in summers when they have intensive work on the fields such as hoeing, picking up tomatoes, okras, pepper, cucumbers. When the fasting month does not correspond to this agricultural labor period, fasting is observed by all healthy inhabitants including the young high school and university students. They keep their fasts during the day and attend evening prayers at the mosque in the evening. Their practice of Islam is a perfect example of the harmonization of faith with the requirements of modern life.

§ 10.3 Practice of (Sunni) Islam in the Highlands- Ketenlik

The highlands have been more strongly attached to religion compared to the lowlands in terms of clothing and religious education. In the village, all females, including children over five years wear the headscarf.

39 Narrations of elderly in Melikli, Narlıköy, Yasiköy, Yalanca, summer 2012.

The children who continue their education after primary school in Turkey usually attend Imam Hatip (theology) schools. Even the females who attend Greek public schools and minority high school in İskeçe wear the Muslim attire. Some of the females studying at Greek and Turkish universities stated that they do not wear the headscarf at school but only in the village. Thus, the wearing of the headscarf has historical, traditional, psychological and religious reasons and is also contextual.

Some females wore the headscarf contextually, in the village and nearby villages. A young woman who was attending a university in Athens, for instance, was dressed casually, jeans and a short-sleeved t-shirt, with a headscarf that left part of her forehead and hair open. She said, "I don't wear it in Athens but only in the village to avoid attention and criticism". Naz, another narrator, stated that she did not wear the veil in Gökçepınar, where she lived before she got married. However, after she married her boyfriend from Ketenlik, they decided together that she should wear the headscarf in order not to attract attention. She said she did not wear it outside Western Thrace.[40]

During my fieldwork, there was a wedding in the village. The bride was graduate of a Turkish university. She wore a conservative wedding gown with her hair covered. However, inside the house were her photos of university days with casual clothes, her hair open, drinking with her fiancée. During the night, all girls were dressed in long silk dresses with laced silk headscarves and heavy make-up on their faces. They were all wearing double headscarves; a bonnet that strictly covered the hair and a longer silk headscarf of the same fabric and color of their dresses. It was exactly the same way of covering in Turkey.

Others wore long-sleeved shirts and long skirts, dresses or loose trousers. "We do not want to annoy and upset our grandmothers" they said.[41] They told me that they did not mind wearing the headscarf because around fifteen years ago they had to wear the *ferace* when they

40 Interview with Naz, Ketenlik August 2017.

41 A group of female university students in Ketenlik, summer 2017.

reached the age of puberty- a tradition which ended about thirty years ago in the lowlands. I was told that this was the tradition in all Ksanthian highland villages with minor exceptions of Şahin and Yassıören. It was stated that in recent years around six females attending Greek and Turkish universities stopped wearing the headscarf in Şahin.[42]

Highlander females' adherence to Muslim attire probably has historical-psychological roots in addition to religious reasons. The forced Christianization of Pomaks during the Balkan wars involved also the prohibition of the veil. (Chp.3) There is also a considerable social pressure on females to wear the headscarf. Ece, a high -school student attending Minority High School in İskeçe narrated her first day in the primary school when her hair was not covered:

> Every girl in the classroom was wearing their headscarves except me. Mothers openly scolded my mother for not covering my hair with a headscarf. My mother, a high-school dropout, insisted that I was only a child and she would not make me wear it. However, I felt alienated and upset and wanted to wear the headscarf that I've worn ever since. That day is a trauma in my life. I cannot forget it.[43]

With respect to religious practice, highlanders are similar to lowlanders. The elderly men and women pray five times a day regularly, keep thirty-day fast during the Ramadan, and pay *zakat* to families in need.[44] A number of elderly have fulfilled their pilgrimage duty. The middle aged, on the other hand, perform the religious practices depending on the circumstances of work and climate. The middle-aged women, for instance, perform the five-times daily prayer regularly during the winter and keep the thirty-day fast. However, during the summer when it is very hot and

42 Interview with Beste, Istanbul (originally from Şahin) summer 2018.

43 Interview with Ece, Melike's daughter, Ketenlik, summer 2017.

44 Interview with Hüsmen; Ahmet; Erman, Ketenlik, summer 2017.

they have to pick tobacco, they cannot keep the fast and perform the five-times a day prayer regularly as in winter.[45]

The seasonal construction workers(males) stated that they perform the five-times prayer regularly during the time they spend in the village (three weeks every three-or four months) and keep the fast, but they cannot do it while working abroad.[46] As a significant number of young people are graduates or students in İmam Hatip schools in Turkey, more young people perform the namaz prayer compared to the lowlands.

The Friday prayer is fully observed in both of the village mosques by males of all ages- unlike the lowlands where predominantly elderly attend. Nobody can be seen on the village roads during the Friday prayer time. The only sound is that of the call to prayer. The village males who perform the five-times prayer regularly usually do it in the mosque together.[47]

Alcohol is sold and consumed by males in the village. "I have never drunk alcohol in my life" said the 80 year old Hüseyin "but we do not interfere with those who drink alcohol. Among the frequenters of the mosque are those who drink as well as those who do not"[48] It seems that alcohol consumption is not a problem as opposed to the headscarf, which is strictly adhered by women in the village.

It was stated that pilgrimage to Mecca (hadj), as one of the requirements of Islam, was observed by more people (elderly) in the past than today because people cannot make enough savings and the elderly support the children and grandchildren with their pensions that have been partly cut due to the Greek economic recession. "I've always wanted to go to pilgrimage" remarked Hüseyin, "unfortunately I am not healthy- I have diabetes and I take insulin."[49]

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45 Interview with Melike; Emine, Ketenlik, summer 2017.

46 Interview with Melih and Ahmet, Ketenlik, summer 2017.

47 Interview with Hüsmen, Melike's father in-law, Ketenlik, summer 2017.

48 Ibid.

49 Interview with Hüsmen, Kendavros, summer 2017.

The highlanders marry at the Municipality as the imams are loyal to the elected Mufti Ahmet Mete. The official Ksanthian Mufti suffers a more serious legitimacy loss compared to the Komotinian Mufti. A recent trend in marriages in the highlands and some middle-line villages, for instance, is the (religious) wedding ceremony conducted in the mosque in the presence of males and females of family and friends.[50] The ceremony is like the Islamic version of a Christian wedding in the church. However, the participants are fewer; the bride and groom, their parents, relatives and friends. The imam first asks the groom about his consent for marriage which he has to say three times and then the bride. Then he asks the witnesses- two men- to testify the marriage. As it does not have a legal character, there is no marriage compensation.

Another difference between the highlanders and lowlanders concerning the issue of religion is the predominance of Turkish religious brotherhoods although the followers hardly ever disclose their links. The most common are the Nurcu and the Süleymancıs, the former losing influence after the failed coup attempt on 15th July 2016. The latter have Qur'an teaching houses in Ksanthi which also hosts students from Ksanthian highland villages. It is claimed that the tarikats pervade easily among the Muslims of highland villages because they are religious while at the same time geographically and economically deprived.[51]

On the bus from Komotini to the village in 2012, I had a conversation with a middle-aged lady from Ketenlik. She told me their family story during the journey until Yasiköy where I got off the bus. Her narration is a typical family story of a transnational minority family:

> Years ago, we immigrated to Germany. I worked as a cleaner and my husband as a cook at a hotel in a touristic town where winter sports events are held. We have three daughters. They attended

50 "Wedding in the Mosque", Rodop Rüzgarı, Minority Newspaper, available online at: https://www.rodopruzgari.com/haberler/25460-camide-nikah-kıydılar.html?fbclid=IwAR0YwdrmMYYQM0AYcXFqnn7-MQ7BQDsFj8Fgdn9Ku23pXgRhsWCiDBQv-08, last retrieved 20.11.2019.

51 Personal Communications and observations.

school there. However, there are no Western Thracian Turks or Turkish Turks in the town; but some Kurdish families from Turkey. As the two girls grew and reached high-school age, they wanted to live like their German peers. We did not want them to be like Germans. We wanted to raise them as Muslim Turks, and we decided to return to the village. However, unable to obtain tobacco coupons for cultivation, my husband had to return to Germany for work. I remained in the village together with my daughters. My eldest daughter studied in Greek high school for two years, took the university exam and was accepted to the Faculty of Medicine in Crete. In the meanwhile, she was engaged to a local young man- a seasonal laborer in the Netherlands. At first he said he would allow her to go to Crete to study. However, after they got married, he did not. My daughter is very upset. Due to the geographical remoteness of the village to Ksanthi, and the financial inability to rent a flat, my second daughter, who was attending the Greek public school had to stay in a religious brotherhood house which offered free accommodation and food. In return she had to follow certain rules. She had to leave the dorm with a Muslim attire (and headscarf) and enter the dorm in the same dress. She had to pray five times a day and attend religion seminars in the dorm. She had to return to the dorm by the sunset every day. In the end of two years, she was diagnosed with depression and left the dorm. My youngest daughter finished primary school and wants to go to high school in Turkey because her friends in the village are going there. Today we came to Komotini to apply for school and scholarship at the Turkish Consulate. [52]

Since she had waited in a long line from early morning until afternoon on a hot summer day and in a long black coat and black headscarf, she was suffering a severe headache through the journey. She had asked me for a painkiller which unfortunately I did not have with me. As the

[52] Narrations of Edibe, from Ketenlik, on the bus from Komotini to Iasmos, summer 2012.

bus reached Iasmos, I bade her goodbye wishing all the best. Five years later during my fieldwork in the same village, I learnt that the youngest daughter was given a scholarship to study in Tekirdağ, the second was accepted to a sports faculty in Greece, whereas the first continued to live in the village with her husband.

A significant religious-cultural event that has acquired a wider, regional appeal in the past two decades is the Qur'an citing ceremonies called *hatim*. Literally, it means to completely read the Qur'an in the original (Arabic) script. Melih, born 1975, stated that they had *hatim* ceremonies since early 1980s in the village. It was done in the end of the sixth year (the final year) of primary school when pupils had learnt to read the Qur'an script. At the ceremony held in the school yard, or outdoors, pupils were asked to read a verse from the Qur'an. The participants were then given a fabric handkerchief and sweets as gifts.[53] A village sacrifice was also done every year to venerate the ancestors.

> Every year, in our village, a sacrifice day (kurban) was held to acquire good deeds in God's sight, to offer meat and rice to the poor and strengthen communal bonds. We also prayed for the ancestors of the village who had passed away. We slaughtered sheep, cooked meat and rice in cauldrons, and ate together after the imam cited the Qur'an and we said our prayers. Everyone in the village contributed to the event. In early 1980s, the official Ksanthian Mufti Mustafa Hilmi asked us to abandon the village sacrifice day and do this ceremony for hatim- the children who learnt to read the Qur'an.[54]

Early 1980s is earmark for the dominance of political Islam, the so-called Turkish-Islam synthesis in Turkish politics following the 1980 coup promoted as a panacea against communism. By the

53 Interview with Melih, Ketenlik, summer 2017.

54 Ibid.

same token, Turkey got interested in the Mufti issue in the minority for the first time, promoting his election by popular (minority) vote. Therefore it is no surprise that the village sacrifice day was replaced with the Qur'an citing ceremony on the demand of the then Ksanthian Mufti. In the lowlands, this kind of a change was also reflected in the sacrifice ceremonies, called mahyas, which used to be devoted to a certain Muslim saint.

Ever since, the hatim ceremonies have been conducted this way. However, in the past two decades, they have turned into large-scale, expensive organizations. In the past, when everyone contributed to the sacrifice day, today only the children who are going to read the Qur'an contribute to the ceremony. In 2017, for instance, parents gave 250 euros per child. Considering the fact that on the average each household has three children, this amounts to a great deal of expense.

With the money collected from the children's parents, meat, rice and liquid yogurt (ayran) are purchased, cooked in cauldrons and distributed to the participants. Furthermore, participants are also given special candies wrapped in colorful tulles like wedding candies with a card attached bearing the name of the child and a "welcome to my hatim ceremony" script. The participants include the Turkish Consul General of Komotini, minority Mayor of the area, elected Muftis, minority journalists, minority MPs, head of the minority political party DEB, and heads of minority associations.[55]

These hatim ceremonies have been criticized by the locals and the journalist Dede for their extravagance.

> A great amount of cooked meat and rice are left after the ceremony. They are thrown away. Islam forbids extravagance and

55 "Vice President Ozan Ahmetoglu Attends Karsi Neighbourhood and Kendavros Hatim Ceremonies", official webiste of DEB(Friendship, Equality and Peace) Party, http://debpartisi.org/indexENG1.php?s=detailsENG&id=3599, last retrieved 09.10.2017.

waste. These ceremonies contradict the rules of the Qur'an. They serve the purpose of satisfying the elected Muftis' egos.[56]

It is no secret that these ceremonies acquired region-wide popularity due to the participation of the elected Muftis although they are not the active organizers of the events. Dede criticizes their attitude towards these religious events which cost parents significant sums and generate large amounts of food waste.

Whereas previously they used to learn the Qur'anic script at primary school, in the past decades, pupils learn it at the Qur'anic school given in the mosque either by the village imam or religious functionaries under the supervision of the elected Muftis. The hatim ceremonies are not only religious-cultural events but also highly political arenas. As the pictures in the annex illustrate, the children's clothes have strong ethno-religious connotations. At a hatim ceremony, the boys in Hebilköy are wearing traditional Ottoman suits and fez.[57] The girls in the suburban neighborhood of Komotini, Harmanlık, are wearing red headscarves and white shirts and holding Arabic letters.[58]

Post 2000, with the elimination of the previous human rights violations, investment on culture acquired a new character in order to sustain the minority identity, coherence and culture. Identity politics began to be expressed in religious-cultural events.

§ 10.4 Traces of Bektashism in Rural Sunni Religious Traditions

56 http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/12861/muftu-gecnenlerin-egolarini-tatmin-icin-duzenlenen-hatimlerin-ardindan.html, last retrieved 26.05.2017.

57 Çınar FM, minority newsportal, https://cinarfm.gr/haber-oku.php?haberid=472, last retrieved 10.10.2017.

58 http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/harmanlik-mahallesinde-hatim-cemiyeti-duzenlendi-8282012.html, last retrieved 12.08.2012.

Bektashism can be traced in the animal sacrifice, kurban or mahya tradition in the highlands and lowlands. Kurban is used by the highlanders whereas mahya is used by the lowlanders for the ritual. Because the letter "h" is usually ignored in pronunciation, the lowlanders pronounce it as 'maaye'. The tradition of animal sacrifice as an offering by individuals for the healing of a disease or settlement of a serious issue, sacrifice in honor of the local saint, animal sacrifice for the deceased after one year of his/her death performed one day before the Kurban Fest and therefore referred to as 'arefe kurbanı' resemble those of the Anatolian Alevis/Bektashis.[59] It is the Bektashi tradition to make an offering for the Dede in return for his intercession for the realization of some wishes, particularly for healings.[60]

It is ambivalent considering the fact that animals can be sacrificed only in the honor of Allah, God in Orthodox Islam whereas the (historical) starting point is the honoring of local saint, referred to as *dede* in the vernacular language who is believed to protect the village from illnesses, disasters and enemies.[61] As mentioned in Chapter 8, the village saint, *dede* and his group of soldiers scared a mop group of local Christians who were coming to Yalanca to plunder in 1974. In similar vein, narrators in Ketenlik claimed that during the occupation in 1941, soldiers targeted Karaca Ayşe Shrine but there was no slightest damage. During the Civil War, communist guerillas' plans to attack failed because they encountered an army of Muslim saints walking from Sinikova to Şahin who told them that they could not cross the border.[62]

Any act of disrespect against these saints, or dedes, returns in the form of misfortune for the villagers. These holy figures Karaca Ahmet and Karaca Ayşe, siblings according to the narration, asked to be hosted in the

59 Hamza Karaoğlan, "Anadolu Türklerinde Kurban: Aleviler Örneği", *Dini Araştırmalar*, Ocak-Nisan 2007, Cilt 9, s.27, 133-149, 142, 146,

60 F.W.Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam* **,** 1973, 257.

61 Interviews with people in the lowland villages of Galini, Mosaiko, Venna.

62 Batı Trakya Online News Portal, https://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya-efsaneleri/karaca-ahmet-ve-karaca-ayse.html, last retrieved 15.08.2021.

Ksanthian highland village of Emirli for a night but were refused. They were even declined when they asked for water to perform wudu. During their visit, the village population was 39. "We hope the population will never reach 40" they said in response to their mistreatment. 'Their prophecy was realized as the village population has never reached 40' the narrators remarked.

On another they the same saints visited Şahin. They were welcomed by all and hosted by a family. Before they left, they said 'May the blessings of Allah be upon this village' and it is believed to have been protected ever since. [63] Likewise, one of the pioneers of the small scale mahya in Yalanca, a seventy-six year old woman, stated that when the neighboring village Karamusa stopped the mahya, they were warned by the dede that the village would be evacuated within two decades. Today only five Muslim-Turk families live in the village. "Yalanca is facing the same fate because the young do not sustain the tradition" she reproached.[64]

Mahyas are organized on a large-scale basis with high number of people attending the celebration from neighboring and distant villages. The villagers organize the event collectively. Each family contributes according to its financial situation. Meat of slaughtered animals and rice are cooked and eaten together by the locals after performing prayers.

Prior to 2000, and to an extent still, the mahya tradition has been criticized as a superstition (hurafe), and unsuitable because it was against a major principle of Islam that animals can only be sacrificed for Allah the almighty. The journalist Dede was criticizing the mahya tradition in the highland village of Karaoğlan for their insistence on the tradition with a pinch of irony. Considering his critique of the extravagance in hatim ceremonies and of the minority elite exploiting the tradition, it seems that he has maintained his consistency over the issue.

63 https://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya-efsaneleri/karaca-ahmet-ve-karaca-ayse.html, last retrived 15.08.2021.

64 Interview with Saliha, Galini, 2012.

> Whoever you ask in this village will say 'Elhamdülillah I am a Muslim.' However, what they believe and do as religion is definitely prohibited by Islam. These are superstitions ingrained in our creed. Every year they organize a *mahya* near the tomb of the legendary Karaoglan's bride. They believe that Allah decides on the animals to be sacrificed. Someone in the village sees it in her/his dream; sheep, goat, camel...Thanks Allah[God] it is never an elephant(!) These poor people sacrifice from their own food to raise money to buy a camel for sacrifice in order to have rain and abundant harvest. However, abundance comes to the wealthy and notable men invited to the event. The poor folk put the rice in their handkerchiefs and eat it in a corner while the wealthy guests enjoy the meat.[65]

Post 1980s, probably affected by the ascendance of Turkish-Islam(Sunni) synthesis in Turkish politics, the sacrifice ceremonies, or mahyas have been exposed to Sunni impact. Therefore they have either been ingrained with Sunni motifs and discourse or redefined or renamed just like the aforementioned conversion of village kurban to hatim ceremony. The biggest and best known mahyas today are held in the lowland villages Kozlardere and Göynüklü.

The *mahya* organized annually in Kozlardere sets an example for the reflection of change in the narration of the historical background of the tradition and the change in the discourse. Due to links of kinship, this is a village I used to visit with my grandparents . As a child, I used to attend the Kozlardere mahya with them. The last time I attended was in July 2012 for the purpose of participant observation.

The religious and political elite had taken their seats in the mosque yard. Among them were the elected Mufti of Komotini İbrahim Şerif, the Turkish Consul General of Komotini, journalists, and several heads of minority associations. Compared to the past, a higher number

65 *Nokta,* nr.21, 7th October, 1988.

of people participated in the event. The number of participants was stated to be a thousand and five hundred. The parked cars lined up from the mosque until the end of the village main road. A bazaar was installed with stalls and street vendors. Cooks were hired from other villages and Komotini majority of whom were females.

Twenty cauldrons were placed under a huge tent in the backyard of the mosque. In the hot weather of July, the women cooks in their feraces were stirring the cauldrons soaked with sweat. A group of young men served the food and drinks wearing jeans and t-shirts with the biggest sponsor's name, a local villager who owned a automobile repair workshop, printed on them. Tablecloths were distributed with forks, handkerchiefs and sliced of bread wrapped inside. Then in large trays came meat and rice together and liquid yogurts (ayrans) ready in plastic cups.

Males and females were seated separately. Men occupied the mosque yard and the front of the mosque where they sat on rugs on the grass under the tree shades. Women in their feraces sat separately in grups in the shades of the trees. They were praying, murmuring the prayers while some were weeping silently as they prayed. A group of male and female Muslim Roma were sitting separately under a tree. They did not get mixed with other people as is usually the case in mevlids and wedding meals. It was an upsetting scene to be segregated although they are also Muslims- and a contradiction within the belief itself because according to Islam, all believers are equal and must be treated equally regardless of ethnicity and social status.

The hafiz delivered the noon prayer first and the congregation inside the mosque performed the prayer. Afterwards, he cited from Qur'an and then he cited the mevlid. After around an hour, he gave a sermon. His speech centered on the significance of preserving our culture as Muslim-Turks. Then some of the notables celebrated the village for the organization. No reference to the saint dede was made by either the hafiz or the notables. The speech time corresponded to the eating time and I barely

noticed anyone listening to the speech among the women where I was sitting.

The historical starting point of this sacrifice event as was narrated to me by a local Sunni relative is a bit different than the one narrated for the Rodop Rüzgarı newspaper which has been published since 2000. Below is the story narrated by the seventy year old Saniye:

> The early descendants of Kozlardere moved from a highland village called Küplü. Around a hundred fifty years ago, the village was inflicted with an epidemic. Many inhabitants died including new-born babies in a period of one year. Thirty-two young girls decided to run away from the village together in order to survive. However they got infected altogether on the way and died. They were all buried in the same grave, called 'The Thirty-two girls tomb' in Küplü. An adult male was sent to the town Gümülcine to look for a remedy. On his way out of the village, a dede(saint) appeared and asked him where he was going. The man told him about the epidemic. The dede told him to go back to his village and tell the people to sacrifice a calf for him on a specific date, assuring the man that the epidemic would end.[66]

At this point I was surprised because in Orthodox Islam and Sunni order, animals can be sacrificed for Allah(God) and nobody or nothing else. Therefore I interrupted her and asked: "Who is the animal going to be sacrificed for?" She replied without hesitation "For the dede". In fact, the prayers prior to the slaughtering of the animals refer to for Allah, but, in veneration, the name of the saint may also be also cited later. [67]

> The desperate villagers agreed to sacrifice a calf for the dede. They took a calf to slaughter on the 60th day of the summer. On

66 Interview with Saniye , Kozlardere, summer 2012.

67 People say "Allah, the Almighty, please accept our sacrifice for you and its merits for the soul of the Saint (name) or deceased (name).

> the day of sacrifice, the calf disappeared but suddenly returned and sat down on a spot near the mosque to be slaughtered.

Henceforth, the sacrifice for the dede, as believed to be the protector of the village has prevailed. I was told that the villagers did not perform the mahya one year in 1950s due to poverty, but in a couple of weeks several people died in the village. The villagers thought the dede was punishing them and immediately sacrificed a calf and organized the mahya.[68]

The narration in the Rodop Rüzgarı (newspaper) is as follows:

> The villagers of Küplü were suffering from epidemics. A number of people were dying. One day, an old man came to the village and was hosted by a family. After the meal, he went to the mosque and they performed namaz together. Dede told the men to sacrifice an animal, cook the meat and distribute it to the locals and incoming guests. [It is not specified for whom] After the conversation, the dede left the village. Immediately a calf was found and slaughtered. It was cooked with rice. A mevlid was chanted and after prayers were said, the cooked meat and rice were distributed to the participants. Th epidemics ended immediately like the blood which flowed from the calf. The happy villagers looked for the dede but could not find him again. They have carried on the tradition ever since in the belief that the dede is a divine power. They believe that this divine power is the protector of the village.[69]

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68 Ibid.

69 https://www.rodopruzgari.com/haber-arsivi/21026-kozlardere-k%C3%B6y%C3%BCnde-geleneksel-%E2%80%98k%C3%BCpl%C3%BC-kurban%C4%B1%E2%80%99-etkinli%C4%9Fi-binlerce-ki%C5%9Finin-kat%C4%B1l%C4%B1myla-ger%C3%A7ekle%C5%9Fti.html, last retrived 15.08.2021.

Both narrations carry Sunni and Bektashi motifs. However, in the second version of the story, there are more blatant Sunni motifs such as dede coming to the village mosque ; performing the prayer (namaz) and the chanting of mevlid. The description of the dede as a 'divine power' and 'protector of the village' resembles the patron saint notion in Christianity.

There is a similar tradition among the Greek Orthodox in Thrace and Greek Macedonia.[70]In Greek Macedonia, for instance, it is called "kourbani food", almost the same of the Turkish version *kurban* meaning sacrifice.[71] The Greek Orthodox have patron saints of towns and villages. In the villages they celebrate a day's festival for this patron saint which they call panayiri.[72]

§ 10.5 Bektashis/Alevis in Western Thrace

The current Bektashi villages lie on the highland zone between the province of Rhodope and Evros bordering Bulgaria on the north, Turkey to the northeast and Rhodope to the west. The number of native Bektashis is estimated to be 3,000 in 20 villages.[73] The most prominent homogeneous Bektashi villages are Ruşanlar (400 inhabitants) and Babalar(200 inhabitants) followed by Karaüren, Musacık, Salıncak, Köseler, Kütüklü, Çökekli, Mevsimler, Çilingir Mahalle and the Bektashi-Sunni mixed villages of Hebilköy, Büyükderbent, Demirören, Hacı Ali, Taşağıl,

70 Nikolaos Kokkas, "Religious summer festivals of the Pomaks in the mountainous area of Xanthi", Paper presented to 1st International Conference on "Greek Civilization" «The public festival: A diachronic glimpse at its socio-economic and political role», Town of Soufli – Prefecture of Evros – Thrace - Greece (17-20 November 2005).

71 Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat*, 1997, 120.

72 Ernestine Friedl, *Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece,* New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962, 11; Personal memories from the panayiri in the nearby village Amvrosia.

73 Mavrommatis, "Bektashis in 20th Century Greece", 2008,242.

and Kaypak. In the past two decades, considerable conversion to Sunnism is claimed to have taken place, particularly in Hebilköy.[74] In 1826, the number of Bektashi villages registered as Seyid Ali Sultan waqf property was 24.[75]

Dedeağaç is considered to be the first Bektashi settlement in the Balkans. Thrace was conquered by Gazi Evrenos Pasha in 1361. Several waqfs and dervish lodges were built along the Via Egnatia for the security and maintenance of the route. [76] Dervish lodges(tekkes) had vital functions in the spread of Islam and Ottoman colonization. They were sent by the Sultan's order to the regions to be conquered beforehand to disseminate Islam. This was the most common method of Ottoman expansionism in the Balkans.[77]

Dervish lodges had significant social functions.[78] The dervishes and Bektashi dedes settled in small villages or vacant areas usually before the army and provided them with shelter, food and guidance in the course of the conquest. They were joined later by their followers. They did stockbreeding. They provided the bypassing travelers, particularly the poor with food and shelter and offered free educational services for the rurals. [79]

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74 Interview with Berna and Abbas from Roussa, Seçek Plauteu, 2016.

75 Refik Engin, *Amuca Kabilesinde ve Trakya'da Kurban Gelenekleri*, Can Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, 49; Fahri Maden, "Kızıldeli Sultan Tekke'sinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Faaliyetlerine Yeniden Başlaması", *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi,* nr.53, 2010, 115-126.119.

76 Irene Melikoff, "14.-15. Yüzyıllarda İslam Heterodoksluğunun Trakya'ya ve Balkanlar'a Yerleşme Yolları", 178-190, (in) Zachariadou, *Sol Kol,* 1999.

77 Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600, 2nd* Edition, Butler &Tanner Ltd, UK, 2000, 198; Melikoff, "14.-15. Yüzyıllarda İslam", 180.

78 Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam,* 1973, 255.

79 Ziya Kazıcı, *Osmanlı Devletinde Toplum Yapısı,* Bilge Yayıncılık, İstanbul, Aralık 2003, 119-123.

The Bektashi order is a softer version of Orthodox Islam, incorporating elements from shamanist Turkish beliefs, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Neo-Platonist, Nestorian and Christianity on the way from its birthplace Horasan to the Balkans.[80] It has a mystic and humanistic philosophy. The Bektashi priests (the sheikh, dervish, dede) allowed wine, ignored religious differences and social status in their relations with people and did not restrict women contrary to the Sunnis. Bektashism was first adopted by the Turcoman tribes and later it became the cult of Janissaries.[81] The nomadic tribes of Yuruks and Turcomans in Balkans (Dobruja and Deliorman in Bulgaria, the Rhodopean mountains of Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly in Greece)were Bektashis. [82]

The nomadic Yürüks believed and worshipped a sky God and the spirits of earth and water. They did not have an ecclesiastical class but held their ancestors in high esteem. That is why they used 'dede' to refer to any holy place including trees, bushes, mountains, hills where they worshipped the Sky-God.[83] They were administered by their own leaders until the modernization reforms of the early 19th century. The common characteristics of several Yuruk tribes were hospitability and high esteem for women. Hasluck claims that they tended to treat the Sunni Imams with hospitality and offered them money and gifts not to interfere in their beliefs.[84]

Bektashism was voluntarily adopted by Christian Bogomils due to a number of commonalities with their belief. The churches, sanctuaries, graves considered holy by the native Christians were attributed to Muslim Bektashi saints.[85]The transference of the holy places in rural areas

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80 Irini Lyratzaki, "Alevi-Bektashi communities in southeastern Europe: spiritual heritage and environmental consciousness", *Mediteranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos*, 95-107, 98.

81 Ibid.

82 İnalcık, 194.

83 Frederick W. Hasluck, F.W, *Christianity and Islam Under The Sultans*, 1879-1920, (eds) Margarat M.Hasluck, New York: Octagon Books, 1973,133-134.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid., 9.

was not ordered by the authorities but by the Bektashi dervishes.[86] The Christian saint was identified with the Muslim successor by the ambiguous ideas of 'metempsychosis'.[87] For example, saint Elias and Khidr were believed to be the same person, reincarnated at different periods.[88]

Hasluck narrates a great number of such cases in Anatolia, Thrace and Greece depending on his extensive visits in the then Ottoman lands between 1899 and 1916 as an archeologist. Later these shrines would be frequented both by Christians and Muslims. For example, the church of Saint Demetrius in Salonika would be renamed as Kasımiye, after the 6th Imam of the Bektashis. It remained as a place of pilgrimage for Christians even after conversion.[89]Furthermore, what attracted both Muslims and Christians to a sanctuary was its reputation for healing rather than the religion it represented.[90] For the Bektashi, the religion of the saints was not significant because they were meant for the entire world.[91]

Despite the destruction of a number of Ottoman relics after the region was ceded to Greece, some Bektashi shrines have survived until today.[92]The most significant is the shrine of Seyid Ali Sultan dervish lodge in the vicinity of Ruşanlar within the township of Dimetoka.[93]He is considered to be among the saint soldiers of the Rumelian conquest and is venerated annually by sacrificing animals and citing prayers in his honor. The establishment is encircled by short walls of rocks. There is a 600 - year old mulberry tree in the yard of Seyid Ali Sultan Shrine, just like the

86 Ibid., 57.

87 Ibid., 58.

88 Ibid., 73.

89 Ibid., 16.

90 Ibid., 69.

91 Ibid., 72.

92 For more information about Bektashi shrines in the Balkans, see Refik Engin, *Balkanlardaki Yatır, Türbe, Tekke ve Zaviyelerimiz*, İstanbul, Akademik Kitaplar, 2014.

93 On the history of the Seyid Ali Sultan dervish lodge, see Fahri Maden, "Kızıldeli Sultan", 2010, 115-126.

mulberry tree in the yard of Hacı Bektaş Veli's convent in Nevşehir, Turkey. As inscribed on the wall of the big hall, it was built in 1401 and restored in 1759 and 2000.

On the north is the building called Paşa Konağı where Bektashi religious functionaries; dervishes, dede(s) and baba(s) lived in the past. Today it is home to the caretaker family. The shrine of Seyid Ali Sultan stands in the middle. There is a small mesjid next to the türbe, a large kitchen-house for cooking (aşevi), and the hall (meydan) where rituals are held attached to a large room for meetings and conversations. Inside the shrine, there is the tomb of Seyid Ali Sultan, a wooden coffin covered with a green fabric on with lied headscarves, towels, kerchiefs as offerings. It is surrounded by a wall of iron bars. On the outer floor of the bars stand twelve candlesticks. Next to the tomb there is a Qur'an on a high stool. Behind the shrine, there is a graveyard where previous heads of the shrine are buried.

The room attached to the hall is humbly furnished. There are big cushions to sit on the ground from one corner to the other with pillows neatly arranged. In the middle stands a stove for heating in winter. On the wall are the framed portrait of Hz. Ali and another depicting Hz Ali with the twelve imams. There is also a white sign on the wall inscribed 'Hz. Muhammed', 'Hz. Fatma', 'Hz. Ali', 'Hz. Hasan and 'Hz. Hüseyin'. On another wall two saz (musical instruments) are hung.[94]

For the first time in minority history, the Alevite-Bektashi place of worship, *cemevi,* was officially recognized in Büyük Dervent by Greece in April 2021.[95] In this mixed Sunni-Alevi-Bektashi village previously Alevis met in their houses to perform the *cem* ritual. The *cemevi* was also given

94 For more detailed descriptions see also Mavrommatis,"Bektashis in 20th century Greece", 2008, 242-243.

95 "Greece officially recognises Alevism, worship house opens in Evros", available online at: https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/04/16/greece-alevism-worship-evros/, last retrieved 05.06.2021; https://azinlikca1.net/yunanistan-bati-trakya-haber/item/45540-buyuk-derbentte-cemevini-ziyaret-etti, last retrived 05.06.2021.

authorization to engage in social services such as food distribution in the area. Berna stated that this was the result of an earlier application in 2005. It is considered a victory for the Bektashi community whose religious identity was previously subsumed within Sunnism.[96]

Berna related it not to the sensitivities of Greece against the community but to the efforts of Alevi-Bektashi associations in Turkey who struggled to have the ECtHR to recognize Alevism as a separate creed. The decision binds not only Greece but all members of the CoE. As the first authorized cemevi after Lausanne, debate about whether Greece is trying to divide the Muslim community is rejected by the Alevi Thought Hearth (Alevi Düşünce Ocağı) Director Orhan Bermek, who stated that Greece implemented a ECtHR verdict by recognizing a community that has always been there.[97] He emphasized that

> All CoE members, except for Turkey, have recognized the Alevi places of worship in their territories at equal status with all other sanctuaries and therefore provide them with funding on an equal basis.[98]

Stelya argues that international media and human rights reports might have contributed to the Greek decision on the recognition of Alevi places of worship as he mentions rumors in diplomacy and media in Athens about 'Turkey making Sunni propaganda in Western Thrace' prior to the Greek decision.[99]He also adds that the Human Rights report released

96 Personal Communications with Berna, May 2021.

97 Declaration of Bemek, "Greece abides by the decision of European Court of Human Rights", website of Alevi Thinking Center, http://aleviocagi.org/yunanistanda-ilk-resmi-cemevi-faaliyete-gecti, last retrieved 05.07.2021.

98 Ibid.

99 Nikolaos Stelya, "Yunanistan, Aleviliği resmen tanıdı: Sınır kentindeki cemevine onay", https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yunanistan-aleviligi-resmen-tanidi-sinir-kentindeki-cemevine-onay-haber-1519343, last retrieved 08.07.2021.

by the US Foreign Ministry claims that Alevis in Western Thrace have been suppressed by the Sunnis received coverage in the Greek media.[100]

On the other hand, author-researcher Ayhan Aydın who has written books on Alevism and Bektashism in the Balkans and Anatolia, claims that the Greek decision to officially recognize cemevi should be taken with a pinch of salt. He draws attention to the ban on free assembly by underlining the prevailing ban on Turkish signs of minority associations. Indeed if Greece was sincerely sensitive about ECtHR decisions, she would have implemented it for the Ksanthi Turkish Union as well.[101]

Aydın refers to probable controversies over the creation of a schism within the minority;

> We hope that the Alevi-Bektashi community of Western Thrace do not get squeezed in between the Turkish and Greek confrontational national policies and that no new problems are added to those they have already suffered so far.[102]

Alevi Federations Head Celal Fırat supports the decision with the hope that it will be followed by Turkey;

> Contrary to the skeptical approach of some people against Greece, it is a positive step, and that it should set an example for Turkey.[103]

In the minority press, *Birlik* evaluates the visit of the Vice Minister of Education and Religious Affairs Sirigos to the cemevi in Hebilköy as an

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100 Ibid.

101 Cited in Ali Kemal Erdem, "Yunanistan'ın cemevi kararı ne anlama geliyor?" Independent Türkçe, available online at: https://www.independyturk.com/node/346426/d%C3%BCnya/yunanistan%C4%B1n-cemevi-karar%C4%B1-ne-anlama-geliyor-t%C3%BCrkiyeye-%C3%B6rnek-olsun-diyen-de-var, last retrieved 05.07.2021.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

attempt to divide the minority. [104] *Azınlıkça* and *Rodop Rüzgarı,* on the other hand, have a neutral approach as they only mention the opening of the cemevi and Sirigos's visit with no comment.[105]

Unlike in Ksanthian highlands, even the old inhabitants of Ruşanlar speak Turkish like the lowlanders. The middle-aged and the young speak Turkish fluently and almost with no accent. The elderly continue to wear the traditional ferace and headscarf . However, unlike in Ketenlik, the middle-aged and the young female high school and university students do not wear the headscarf. Their perception of the Ksanthian highlanders is that 'they are too conservative.'[106]

The trajectory of social change is not different than other villages in this isolated area. The trend was education in Turkey prior to 2000. Many rurals resorted to the Turkish Consulate to have schools arranged for their children after primary school. Like in the lowlands, this trend was reversed after late 1990s with the introduction of quota for entrance to university in Greece. Likewise, inhabitants used to buy property in Turkey particularly for their children to live after graduation. In the past two decades, however, the trend is to receive education and remain in Greece. Therefore, they have also renovated and built nice houses in the village.

Whereas many Ksanhtian highlanders preferred Imam Hatips due to incompetence in Turkish language, this was not the preference of the Bektashis. A narrator from the village of Babalar, a doctor in Turkey, for instance, stated that he was sent to an Imam Hatip school in Turkey in

104 "Boşuna Uğraşmayın, Başaramayacaksınız", *Birlik*, https://birlikgazetesi.org/bosuna-ugrasmayin-basaramayacaksiniz, last retrieved 20.08.2021

105 "Sirigos visited the cemevi in BüyükDervent", *Azınlıkça*, https://azinlikca1.net/yunanistan-bati-trakya-haber/item/45540-buyuk-derbentte-cemevini-ziyaret-etti, last retrieved 20.08.2021; "Cemevi is opened", Rodop Rüzgarı, https://www.rodopruzgari.com/haberler/28040-cem-evi-a%C3%A7%C4%B1ld%C4%B1.html, last retrieved 20.08.2021.

106 Interview with three locals, Seçek, August 2016.

1984 and had to hide his religious identity for six years until graduation.[107]

Ruşanlar consists of 120 households and around 400 inhabitants. It is on a valley, therefore not all houses are not two-storey like in Ketenlik. It is a typical transnational rural community, and many families are fragmented. More inhabitants seem to have immigrated to Turkey than Germany. The average household has a pickup truck, a car and a motorbike. Berna narrates;

> The housing craze has swept us, too. However, we have not built luxury houses like in the lowlands and the Ksanthian highlands. We are not ostentatious. We always have some savings. We neither use credit cards nor take bank loans.[108]

Due to scarcity of arable land, major income source is husbandry. Cultivation is only for animal fodder. Seasonal labor abroad is the major income source of the middle-aged, which has replaced seafaring, a popular and profitable job of pre -1990s.

> This was the job of my father's generation who got retired in late 1990s. A number of men retired from seafaring in the village and around the area. They were well-paid and have good pensions. This is how we (three siblings) all studied high school and university in Turkey. We all rented houses. We did not apply for government scholarships.[109]

The villages in the area were within the "restricted zone" until mid-1980s, which was abolished almost a decade earlier than the Ksanthian highlands. Berna reiterated that the only advantage of being in the restricted zone was the conversation of Ottoman relics. "The Ottoman

107 Personal Communications with Kerem, Bursa, September 2017

108 Interview with Berna, Seçek, August 2016.

109 Interview with Berna, Seçek, August 2016.

legacy; monuments, tombs, dervish lodges were able to survive intact here".[110]

During the reign of Murat I, Seyid Ali Sultan, the son of Hacı Bektaş Veli, was granted the territory around the Secek plateau. He settled there along with Turkomans from Anatolia. It is claimed that these people named their new villages after their previous villages in Anatolia. They are believed to have lived in the region until 1919 when they immigrated back to Turkey to escape from Bulgarian cruelty.[111]

In 1920, Bulgarian villages were evacuated as they immigrated to Bulgaria by a population exchange between Greece and Bulgaria. During the Greek Civil War, these villages were repopulated by Muslims uprooted from northern highland villages by the Greek army. The emptied houses were burnt down by the military to prevent their use by the communist guerillas. The inhabitants were able to return upon the end of civil war but not all returned.[112]

The current inhabitants of these villages are Pomak Turks[113] who suffered the most during Bulgarian occupations. In order to prevent another Bulgarian invasion on the allegation of 'ethnic kin', the Greek state

110 Interview with Berna; Interview with Özcan, Filliara, summer 2017. Özcan is a graduate student in Archeology, Turkey. He stated that over half of the photos of Ottoman tombs and monuments in Western Thrace he took as part of a research for a Turkish project of Ottoman legacy in the Balkans belonged to this district.

111 "On the history of the region", *Seçek Azınlık ve Kültür Derneği, Aylık Yöresel Araştırma Kültür ve Tarih Dergisi,* Agustos 2011, Yıl.1, s.3; Interview with key informant Berna, and Ali from Roussa, Secek Plateau, summer 2017. Maden, "Kızıldeli Sultan", 2010,124.

112 "On the history of the region", Seçek Azınlık ve Kültür Derneği, *Aylık Yöresel Araştırma Kültür ve Tarih Dergisi*, Agustos 2011, Yıl.1, Sayı 3; Interview with key informant Berna, two locals of Roussa, Secek Plateau, summer 2017.

113 A current Dede, Mehmet Koç, in a talk with some representatives of Cem Vakfı from Turkey in 2004 reveals that their origins are Pomak, also making a differentiation between Pomaks as Bektashis and Sunnis who call themselves "Aren". Available online at: http://www.cemvakfi.org.tr/balkanlarda-alevilik-bektasilik/yunanistanda-seyyid-ali-sultan-kizildeli-dergahi/, last retrieved 12.02.2017. This is the first time I encounter the

prohibited speaking of Pomak language after the second Bulgarian occupation until the deterioration of Greek-Turkish due to Cyprus conflict. In the Seçek plateau, locals from Ruşanlar spoke Turkish fluently. I was told that Pomak is only spoken by the elderly. My key informant Berna in her mid -thirties remarked, 'We (my generation) have grown up in Turkish.'[114]

She stated that they cite prayers in Turkish, but excerpts from the Qur'an in Arabic. They do not read and cite the Qur'an entirely but partly. I was also provided with the photo of an ancient prayer entitled "*Kelime-i Şahadet"*(the Islamic confession of faith) written in Slavic language and Arabic. It is cited during the cem ritual along with prayers from the Qur'an, hymns in unison (gülbank) and poems (nefes) in Turkish language. Berna told me that once the villagers decided to cite the prayers in Turkish language. However, they felt that the Turkish reading did not yield the same spiritual effect, thus, they started to cite them in Arabic again.[115] Berna emphasized:

> This is the only connection we have with Arabs. It is the original language of Qur'an and makes a spiritual impact. This is natural for the Muslim peoples of Rumelia who do not associate themselves with Arabic culture.[116]

Their fasting is different than that of Sunnis. They fast for fourteen days in the month of Muharram. When it ends, ashurah is cooked in the convent and distributed to all in the village and neighboring villages.

> During the fasting period, we drink water only when we have to take medicine but put sand or salt in it so that it will not be pure. When we break the fast, we avoid rich meals and eat simple things like a slice of bread with some cheese, a few olives. We do

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meaning given to "Aren", as previously Aren was told to denote Pomaks with a brunette complexion and also the word means "male" in Greek language.

114 Interview with Berna, Roussa, summer 2016.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

> not eat meat, because it is very rich in protein and gives satisfaction. We wear our worn-out clothes and never put make up on our faces or shave. We do not attend or organize any weddings or celebrations. We avoid any kind of entertainment and spend the fasting period in isolation. It is a sad period for us as we mourn the death of Hasan and Hüseyin without water in the desert of Kerbela.[117]

Dergah (the convent) and cemevi are two separate places of worship. They go to the convent only on specific dates and for certain prayers and duties. The convent, Seyid Ali Sultan Dergahı was the center of Balkan Bektashism through the end of the 19th century.[118]It is claimed to be regaining its former significance following the abolition of 'restricted zone' in mid 1980s. Alevi-Bektashis from other regions such as Macedonia and Edirne were coming here to take authorization (icazet) because their ancestors had taken the authorization from here. [119]

The rurals gather regularly every fifteen days in the cemevi. In every village there is a "dede", sometimes two dedes. They are all subordinate to the Head postnishin (title given to the head of the convent) who is called the "Başhalife (The Head Caliph) When the Head Caliph demands to resign due to old age or health problems, he is replaced by the dede who has served the longest time regardless of age. Bektashism was stated to be first systematized by Balım Sultan, who was born in Dimetoka, but educated in the school of Hacı Bektaş Veli in Nevşehir. He was successor to Mürsel Bali, the spiritual son of Seyid Ali Sultan. After it was established by Seyid Ali Sultan, Mürsel Bali and Balım Sultan were the successor Heads of the convent.[120]

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117 Ibid.

118 Maden, "Kızıldeli Sultan", 2010,124.

119 Interview with Berna and Abbas, Seçek, summer 2016.

120 Maden, ""Kızıldeli Sultan", 2010,116

A person can be Bektashi /Alevi by birth but they are not be allowed in the cem ritual unless they declare themselves part of the community. People are considered "disavowed"(ikrarsız) until they get married. When they become avowed(ikrarlı), they have to take a person as a (spiritual) brother or sister (*musayiplik*). These persons and their children are not allowed to get married, or get offended with each other. Therefore, people usually prefer to become avowed after marriage although it is also allowed before. The procedure for a person to become avowed is to demand it and bring a sheep or goat to be slaughtered. After that, a cem ritual is organized and the meat of the sacrificed animal is distributed to the avowed persons. The disavowed are not allowed to eat it.[121]

The mosque was stated to be built in early 1800s, which corresponds to the period of the abolition of Janissary corps by Sultan Mahmut II. It does not have a minaret. The imam does not seem to have a significant role in the village. He is appointed by the Mufti of Dimetoka. It was stated that he delivered the call to prayer on Fridays and on Ramadan and Sacrifice Fest days. The religious fests are the only dates when all village males go to the mosque to pray namaz collectively. The imam performs marriages as the dedes are not legally recognized. The imam is a member of the village community. He was claimed to frequent the village coffeehouse like the village males, chat and drink with them. The rest of his family are *"avowed"*[122]Bektashi, except for himself.[123]

Inter-group relations are claimed to be less confrontational as a consequence of their creed. Furthermore, due to scarcity of arable land, like the Ksanthian highlands, conflicts and resentments over issues of inheritance which plague the lowland villagers do not exist here.

> Hatred is considered a great sin. People who have arguments and refuse to greet or talk to each other are encouraged to reconcile by way of intermediaries (a relative, friend, dede). Otherwise

121 Interview with Berna, Seçek, summer 2016.

122 Interview with Berna and Abbas, summer 2016.

123 Interview with Berna, summer 2016.

> they are faced with the threat of getting secluded from the community. Upon death, none of the rituals are performed for him or her as he/she is considered blasphemous. For this reason, the villagers do not dare to stay offended.[124]

The inhabitants of Ruşanlar identify themselves as 'Bektashi' but in the recent decades they also use the term Alevi as a supra religious identity in the hyphenated form Alevi-Bektashi.[125] Berna narrates;

> In the past, people were not familiar with the term 'Alevi'. If you asked my grandparents, they would not understand what was meant by Alevi because they identified themselves as Bektashi. With the advent of technology, access to all sources of information has become easy. Consequently, within time we have got accustomed to the term 'Alevi'. As we assume ourselves descendants of the people of Seyid Ali Sultan's epoch, like Alevis, now we do not mind using the term. However, Alevi and Bektashi are different concepts. In Alevism, the posts of dede, baba, mürşit is transferred from father to son. Lineage matters. In Bektashim, anyone who qualifies can be dede, mürşit or baba regardless of lineage. Therefore we are in fact Bektashis.[126]

The inhabitants of Ruşanlar have multiple identities, yet, they prioritize their 'Bektashi' identity.[127]

> If a nationalist Greek dictates us 'You are Greek Muslims' we would definitely reject it and say 'No we are Turks' but otherwise to a moderate Greek we would say 'We are Pomak-Turk Greek citizens.' To a Turk from Turkey we would say 'Of course we are

124 Ibid.

125 Interview with Berna, Abbas, Seçek, 2016; Narrations of Zuhal, Istanbul, 2020.

126 Ibid.

127 Mavrommatis, "Bektashis in 20th Century Greece", 2008, 221.

> Bektashi Turks'. We are fine with our Pomak and Turkish identities. The Bektashi identity is the most significant for us and of course it is not separable from being Turk because we conduct our prayers and rituals in Turkish.[128]

The declaration of identity is contextual. Nevertheless, the assertion of a naturally perceived identity (Turkish) is reiterated when faced with an essentialism that dictates an identity. The reaction is counter- essentialism which Marcenau explains by referring to Arendt that "[..] the only viable strategy when an identity is under attack is to respond by embracing this very identity".[129]

> There has never been a contestation over Pomak versus Turk identities in this geography. We have never established separate Pomak Cultural Associations like in İskeçe. Because we are Bektashi, we are also Turks. These two identities are inseparable. We speak Turkish in the village, we worship in Turkish in the convent.[130]

On the other hand, the Alevi-Bektashi community is stated to have undergone too much Sunni influence in the recent decades. Apparently, a considerable number of persons in the neighboring villages have converted to Sunnism. Some are claimed to have converted by marriage with Sunnis in the nearby villages. Others converted as a consequence of education in theology schools in Turkey. 'A number of people in Hebilköy went astray. Many were avowed Bektashis. It is a great sin.' Berna reproached.

> They went to Imam Hatip schools in Turkey. They influenced their parents, family and the kin to convert to Sunnism and have

128 Interview with Berna and Abbas, Seçek, summer 2016.

129 Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times,* NY, 1968, cited in Mirca Madianou, "Contested Communicative Spaces:Rethinking Identities, Boundaries and the Role of the Media among Turkish Speakers in Greece," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, May 2005, 521-541, 537.

130 Interview with Berna, Seçek, August 20126.

> been successful. Those were young people with whom we used to party together. They have become bigots- even more conservative and religious than those of the folks in suburban Komotini. Their relatives, brothers and sisters in our village, though, keep their Bektashi creed. Anyway we do not mind their new orientations ... people are free to decide on their beliefs...but we really get offended when they interfere in our creed and rituals, try to attract us into themselves or look down upon us.[131]

In a similar fashion, Belli expressed his surprise during his visit to Hebilköy in 1996:

> I thought the entire inhabitants of Hebilköy was Alevi but there were also Sunnis. The village sets a perfect example for the peaceful and harmonious cohabitation of both sects. The cemevi is next to the mosque. The locals refer to cemevi as 'cemaat evi'.[132]

Villagers' narrations reveal that practice of religion did not have an essentialist character then.

> The call to prayer is delivered once a day- in the evening. During the day everyone is busy on the fields. Alevites also keep their prayers limited. I come across the village imam coming from his field with a scythe on his back, walking up to the mosque to cite the evening prayer. He says he has been hoeing weeds all day. I ask 'What kind of Islam is this? Is it enough to deliver the call to prayer and perform namaz only once a day? He points to the scythe and says 'Too much work we have... what can we do?'[133]

Belli asks a middle-aged local man painting the outer walls of the cemevi.

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131 Ibid.

132 Belli, *Gerilla Anıları,* 1998, 209.

133 Ibid., 219.

> Do you perform the cem? Do you whirl? Do you commemorate Pir Sultan Abdal? He says, 'They ask me the same questions whenever I go to Turkey. Look here, in this village there is a nice harmony. If we go to extreme in our worship, so will the Sunnis. Therefore, it is best to keep the balance.'[134]

Nonetheless, no incidence of violence was narrated between the Sunnis and Bektashis in the area. There are inter-marriages in between. Sometimes the spouses keep their sect and sometimes they choose Sunnism. It was narrated that two daughters of a dede from a highland village married men in Kurcalı and became Sunnis whereas the dede kept his faith and travelled all the way to Seyid Ali Sultan Dergah for rituals.[135]On the other hand, there are some reported cases of fanatical neighbors who refuse the Bektashi neighbor's gifts of sacrificed animal meat on the belief that it is 'haram' (forbidden by religion) because it was not slaughtered in the Sunni way.[136]

As a closed community, the Bektashis do not accept outsiders to the cem rituals. Indeed, it was for me difficult to find locals for my interviews as I was rejected by a number of people. A lawyer narrator in Komotini, Berk, stated, for instance, that he was once accepted to the cem ritual where he participated as a guest. As a fond of the Bektashi culture, he said:

> Born into a Sunni family and culture, I consider myself closer to Bektashism. Because the Greeks strive to attract them to their side, they do not trust outsiders who want to participate in the cem.[137]

Some religious and political actors were also criticized for trying to assimilate them into Sunnism. The Seçek Cultural Association, founded

134 Ibid.

135 Interview with Berna, Seçek, summer 2016.

136 Narration of an old man from Demirören, Seçek, August 2017.

137 Interview with Berk, Komotini, summer 2012.

in 1997, was criticized for trying to introduce Sunni rituals such as mevlids and hatims, Qur'an citing events.

Some visiting Sunni scholars from Turkey asked to cite the ezan and pray the namaz together with the villagers. When I asked if the villagers pray the namaz with the visior(s), she said, "Oh no, they sit somewhere and wait for them. Some of them do it just as a gesture of hospitality".[138] On the other hand, she stated that the previous Turkish Head of Religious Affairs, Mehmet Görmez, was very respectful and nice during his visit to the area. 'Unfortunately not everyone is like him' she sighed.[139]

Seyid Ali Sultan convent organizes two major events; The November Sacrifice (Kasım Kurbanı) and the Seçek Plateau Oil Wrestling Event. However, the latter was organized by the Seçek Minority Cultural Association since 1997, the year it was founded, until 2019, when the conflict between the association and the convent peaked. The Sacrifice Feast is organized every November for commemoration of the Muslim saint Mürsel Baba, Seyid Ali Sultan's spiritual son. The same tradition is called 'Kasım Baba Kurbanı' taking its name from the saint Kasım and is maintained by the Amuca Turkish clan's descendants (Bektashis) in Istanbul and some villages of Kırklareli.[140]

Animals are slaughtered and cooked together with rice and distributed to participants. Prayers are cited. Representatives of Bektasi religious functionaries from Kalkandelen, Northern Macedonia, Edirne, the local (Christian) Metropolitan, the Mayor of the district, journalists, scholars, locals and other interested people participate in the ceremony.

138 Interview with Berna, Seçek,summer 2016.

139 Interview with Berna, Seçek, summer 2016.

140 Engin, *Amuca Kabilesinde,* 2004, 83.

§ 10.6 Redefining cultural and religious festivals : a novel survival strategy?

10.6.1 *Ketenlik Youth Festival*

Ketenlik Youth Festival is organized by the Youth Association of the village and takes place in the village every summer in August. The idea of a youth festival was proposed for the first time by the association of young university students(GAT) established in 1996 under the University Graduates' Association. The first youth festival was held in the highland village Şahin in 1996. This was one year after the abolition of restricted zone in August 2016. It was organized as a celebration of the abolition of restricted zone with the purpose of bringing together the Ksanthian highlanders with the lowlanders and town-dwellers. The next year, in 1997, the youth festival was held in Ketenlik, where I was among the participants. GAT organized it in different highland villages afterwards.

In 2007, the young inhabitants (secondary, high school and university students and graduates) of Ketenlik took over the festival and turned it into an annual tradition ever since. With funding from sponsors and income from festivals, they have built a library, a two-class nursery school and a museum in the village. [141]

Despite its distant location, the festival attracts minority members from the entire region. It lasts for two nights. It is sponsored by the villagers, minority and Greek Orthodox shopkeepers, local craftsmen and businessmen. A music band is invited from Turkey to give a concert for the festival every year. I attended the festival in August 2017 when I was doing fieldwork in the same village. The festival area was professionally arranged on a valley surrounded by hills and trees. Around the rectangular festival area were food and drink stalls, with young and middle aged

141 Interview with Erman, Head of Ketenlik Solidarity Association, Ketenlik, summer 2017; Booklet of the same Association, 2017.

males and females who wandered around chatting and conversing. A large platform (stage) with concert equipment was situated in a corner with around twenty rows of seats in the front.

The first row of audience was occupied with the minority notables; the Mayor of Miki, the elected Mufti of Ksanthi, the Ksanthian minority MPs and journalists, a representative from the Turkish Consulate in Komotini. In the middle and back rows the locals and guests were seated. The young people preferred to stand up. Among the crowd, except for the performers, the only traditionally dressed females were a group from the neighboring village of Miki. They were wearing the traditional red-black checkered aprons on their feraces, a colorful and laced headscarf and a second white long one over it which hang down to their waists. Their necklaces were visible around their throats.

The festival organization was unexpectedly professional. It was much better organized compared to the one in 1997. The restricted zone was abolished only two years ago and the Greek government was sensitive about the highlands. On the festival evening, two buses, one from Komotini and one from Ksanthi traveling to Ketenlik had to stop on the road because it was blocked by a freshly excavated pit by a caterpillar that was standing aside. This was criticized as a barrier against participation in the festival. We had to get off the buses and walk quite a distance to the village. I was surprised to read in a former Turkish Consul Gürün's memoirs that in 1973 when he was travelling to Ksanthian highlands after getting permission from the Greek Prime Minister, the same road was blocked and they had to wait for two hours at the Governor's Office.[142]

At the stage were two young local university students, a male and a female, as presenters. The female presenter wore a beige silk headscarf and a long elegant gown of the same color. The male presenter wore a pair of linen trousers and a white shirt. They presented the festival program in both Turkish and Greek languages interchangeably. 'There are young people born and raised in Athens and attending universities there.

142 Gürün, *Bükreş-Paris-Atina: Büyükelçilik Anıları*, 1994, 233.

They do not speak or understand Turkish.' stated Erman, although I did not ask why the presentation was bilingual. He must have felt the need to do so due to my identity. 'This is a sensitive issue' he went on.

> We want everyone to understand, to enjoy, to participate in the festival. It is ours. We do not want to alienate any local due to language burden. Three years ago we organized a play in Greek language which offended some minority notables. Then we convinced them of our reasons.[143]

Erman had an impartial and careful approach to the organization and the handling of the festival. They tried to stand at equal distance to the main actors in the triadic nexus (Turkey and Greece). He continued,

> We do not want to provoke Greek nationalist concerns. Government officials, the police come here and watch the festival. They have not caused any problems for us so far- not even for the library which was built without license.[144]

Then the program started. The first show was a play. Dressed in traditional clothes, boys and girls acted a scene of marriage ritual. Another theatre group played a part (Eşofmanlı Şevket Hoca) from the Turkish comedy show "Güldür Güldür" broadcast on a Turkish TV channel every week. The next group of boys and girls performed a rock dance. They were dressed in black trousers, long-sleeved white shirts and red headscarves. Ksanthi Turkish Union Folk Dance group performed a dance show. Except for this folklore group, all the female performers wore headscarves. The synthesis of traditional and modern, religious and secular was stunning. Finally, the Turkish rock group Koliva gave a two-hour concert sweeping away the audience.

What attracted my attention was the logo of the Ketenlik Youth Association which was imprinted on the booklet, on the gate of the village waqf house where they occasionally met and on the festival banners. It

143 Interview with Erman, Kendavros, August 2017.

144 Ibid.

was a man figure in red and blue standing within entwined blue circles. Erman explained to me that the figure represents the minority, the blue color Greece (the Greek flag) and the red color Turkey (the Turkish flag). In the middle stands the minority represented by the figure (man), at an equal distance to both but his arms open extending to the sky. The logo is an eloquent depiction of two homelands and the passion for independence and neutrality.

The Ketenlik youth exhibit strong agency, different than the century old survival strategies of migration and return migration, free-riding, clientelism, nepotism and engagement in secret networks.

10.6.2 *Seçek Oil Wresting Tradition*

Seçek is the plateau considered to be the historical homeland of oil wrestling, a tradition that dates back to the times of Seyid Ali Sultan. Secek Oil Wrestling is a six hundred year old tradition organized in honor of the Bektashi saint soldier Seyid Ali Sultan, or Kızıldeli. Seyid Ali Sultan came from Horasan with his forty followers, saints, referred to as 'Kırklar' and visited Hacı Bektaş Veli in Nevşehir,. They joined Yıldırım Bayezid's army in the colonization of Rumelia. I deliberately avoid to use the term 'Oil Wrestling Festival' because the locals state it is part of their liturgy and name it 'Seçek Yayla Geleneği', or 'yayla' meaning plateau, also used interchangeably with 'eyla' in the vernacular language.

Seçek Plateau Oil Wrestling tradition dates back to the 13th century Ottoman conquest. According to the legend, after the conquest of the region, Seyid Ali Sultan looked for a place for his army to rest. He pulled an arrow to choose the area. At the point where the arrow stuck, forty fountains sprang flushing water. The place was then called "Kırkpınar";

meaning 'forty fountains'. [145]It was stated that Oil Wrestling Tradition was held in this area until the change of borders after the Balkan Wars. From then on, it was held in the nearest border town, Edirne. (Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling Contest).[146]

Seçek Oil Wrestling is held for two days. A local man volunteers to be the major sponsor of the tradition and is therefore called Ağa. He purchases the animal(s) to be sacrificed, covers all the expenses, and checks whether the rituals are done in accordance with the rules of the tradition. The events starts on a Friday. The animal is slaughtered a night before with a ritual including certain prayers from the Qur'an, hymns and poems cited by the shrine's members [mürsit] in the presence of the Ağa. In early morning on Friday it is cooked with rice to be served to visitors all through the day. A week later on Thursday, another animal is slaughtered as the last sacrifice. A cem ritual is held in the convent where the locals gather and everyone's consent is taken.

The first day, of the 'yayla' starts with the Ağa taken from his house with a ritual. There is a crowd of (Bektashi) participants from Ruşanlar and villages in the vicinity. They cite prayers and poems as he comes out of his house. One of the participants (a man) carries a long Greek flag, and another one carries the flag of Seyid Ali Sultan Convent. A laced white horse awaits him in front of his house. Then an orchestra of five musicians play Ottoman marches and sing folk songs and Ottoman marches like Gazi Osman Paşa.

The Ağa wears the traditional costume. He appears and greets the people who applaud him. Then he gets on his horse and together they go to the Seçek plateau. As he enters the area previously arranged for the Oil Wrestling tournament, surrounded by fences, he greets the audience on

145 Interview with Berna; for a different version of the story, see Turkish Cultural Foundation official website, http://www.turkishculture.org/lifestyles/turkish-culture-portal/wrestling/kirkpinar-oil-wrestling-551.htm, last retrieved 21.08.2021.

146 Ibid.

his horse. Then he gets seated on the grandstand. The orchestra continues to play there in intervals.

Abbas narrated that prior to 1996, it was more of a tradition than a festival. 'In fact', he said 'It was a male tradition. Males and females opened the wrestling day with sacrifice and prayers at the convent. Then the men walked up to the Seçek plateau and wrestled among themselves.'[147]

When I went to the area, it was the second day of the Seçek Oil Wrestling in August 2016. The Ağa and the minority notables (Heads of Associations, some MPs, journalists) had taken their seats in the protocol section of the grandstand. A local speaker was at the platform announcing the speakers. I was told that on the first (starting) day of the Event, in the protocol guests were the Turkish Consul General of Komotini and the elected Muftis. On the second day, the first speakers were the Seçek Cultural Association Head, and the local Christian Mayor who gave a short speech.[148] The third speaker was the Head of DEB party who gave a long speech emphasizing the discriminations and minority rights violations that were going on. I heard a local man murmuring from behind 'He is giving a very political speech... This is supposed to be a cultural event.'

After the speeches of the protocol, the first round of oil wrestling started. Participants were young men under thirty who were shining due to olive oil on their bodies in their leather pants coming under their knees. The wrestlers were local Turks, local Greek Orthodox, Turks from Turkey and Turks and Bulgarians from Bulgaria. The orchestra of local musicians started playing as they wrestled. Each tournament phase

147 Interview with Berna, Seçek, summer 2016.

148 İlhan Toksöz, "Batı Trakya Türk Topluluğunun Rodoplardaki Buluşma Noktası: Seçek Yaylası Tarihi Seçek Yağlı Güreşleri ve Kültür Etkinlikleri", *Millî Folklor*, 2011, Yıl 23, Sayı 91, 164-174, 169.; see also the official website of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, https://www.abttf.org/haber-detail.php?id=5487&kid=104, last retrieved 20.08.2021.

lasted for twenty minutes. In the intervals, local minority association's children's club[149] performed folk dances.

Outside the fenced area were peddlers(Muslim Roma) selling items ranging from cookies to clothes. While the men were sitting on the grandstand watching the event, the women were wandering around the stalls. They seemed more interested in seeing around and shopping. In late afternoon, I had to leave with the last car going to Komotini. The bus had already left. As I did not have a car, there was no way to go back home which was 100 km away.

In 2017, a serious split emerged between the Seyid Ali Sultan Dergah and the Seçek Cultural Association which led to fierce arguments, reciprocal slander between the locals siding with the Dergah and the Dernek (Association). The events reached the level of reciprocal accusations of being Greek state spies versus trying to assimilate the Bektashis into Sunnism. Consequently, two separate Oil Wrestling Tournaments were held; one by the Convent and another by the Association. In 2020 and 2021, Seçek Association did not organize an Oil Wrestling event apparently due to pandemic.[150] The Oil Wrestling Tradition was organized by the convent (Dergah) in 2020 and 2021.

In his fieldwork in the area in 2008, Mavrommatis wrote that changes made to the Oil Wrestling Tradition by the Seçek Association was not accepted by a number of local Bektashis who argued that the tradition was being changed due to Sunni impact, which he called a 'progressive Sunnification'.[151]

During my visit to the area, my key informant and two other informants stated that before the Seçek Cultural Association undertook the event, mevlid was never chanted, emphasizing that it was not a Bektashi

149 Güney Meriç Azınlık Eğitim ve Kültür Derneği.

150 "Seçek Association Oil Wrestling Event has been cancelled", Azınlıkça Newsportal, https://azinlikca1.net/yunanistan-bati-trakya-haber/item/31882-secek-dernegi-yagli-gures-ve-etkinlikleri-iptal-etti, last retrieved 20.08.2021.

151 Mavrommatis, "Bektashism in 20th century Greece", 2008, 246, 247

tradition. In fact, mevlid is a poem written by Süleyman Çelebi, a Turkish-Muslim poet, and is a chant during the religious ceremonies. It is neither in the Qur'an, nor in the Sunna. High Board of Religious Affairs in Turkey, a Sunni institution, has an indifferent attitude to mevlid as they state that mevlid does not have any reference to Islam but it is acceptable to chant it at home and/or in the mosque.[152] However, it is a Sunni tradition in Western Thrace and Turkey.

The Association was also blamed for commercializing the Oil Wrestling Tradition.

> Everyone in charge during the Oil Wrestling days is paid. In the past, however, people worked voluntarily and for good deeds.[153]

The informants also added that previously the two-day event started on a mid-week day but the association started the events on Fridays which is the holy day for the Sunnis. They also claimed that when the Ağa and the villagers reached the plateau, the men were asked to collectively perform the namaz. The women automatically left aside. This was stated to be against the tradition.

> Namaz is not in our rituals. There is no separation between men and women in our rituals. We pray together. However, the association made such a change by separating the women during the prayer on the plateau. [154]

Namaz is not a major form of worship in Alevism although it is mentioned in the poems and script of Pir Sultan Abdal and Hacı Bektaş

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152 High Board of Religious Affairs official website: https://kurul.diyanet.gov.tr/Cevap-Ara/791/mevlid-i-serif-okumanin-sevabi-var-midir-?enc=QisAbR4bAkZg1HImMxXRn5PJ8DgFEAoa2xtNuyterRk%3d, last retrieved 16.08.2021.

153 Ibid.

154 Interview with Berna and Abbas, Seçek, August 2016.

Veli. However, it is not prohibited either. For instance, the verses in a testimony considered to belong to Hacı Bektaş Veli in a hand-written journal of Ali Behçet Efendi's grandfather, namaz is mentioned.[155]Likewise, Pir Sultan Abdal, one of the major spiritual leaders of Bektashism, mentions namaz in one of his poems: "Pray for five times never delay it / Do not think you'll stay in the world forever".[156]

Secek Association was accused of having a corrupt administration and embarking on an implicit project of Sunnification. In addition to mevlid, namaz, and the shifting of the start of the Oil Wrestling to a Friday, the Association was also encouraging *hatim,* the Qur'an citing ceremony during the month of Ramadan. On the 27th, the night of al-Qadr, the Association organized dinners in the past successive three years. That specific night was stated to be the date for *cem* ritual in the convent.[157]

> Ever since the Secek Association was founded, they have never emphasized our Bektashi identity in any of their discourses or publications because they said 'we do not want to offend our Sunni brothers'.[158]

A supporter of the Association from Babalar, on the other hand, stated that the association could have made mistakes in administration and in their relations with the folk. However, he emphasized,

> We are Bektashis but we are also Muslims. Some of us perform the Friday prayer, keep the fast during Ramadan and also during the Muharram. Mevlid is neither Sunni nor Bektashi tradition.

155 İsmail Güleç, "Bektaşiler namaz kılar mı?" , https://www.fikriyat.com/yazarlar/ismail-gulec/2020/01/24/bektasiler-namaz-kilar-mi, last retrieved 16.08.2021.

156 Original verses of Pir Sultan Abdal: Pir Sultan Abdal'ım ölürüm deme/ Kıl beş vakit namaz kazaya koma/Sakın bu dünyada kalırım deme/Tenin teneşirde özün saldadır."

157 Interview with Berna and two other locals, Seçek, summer 2016.

158 Personal Communications with Berna, August 2017.

> Therefore, the reactions against the namaz and the fasting cannot be generalized to the entire Bektashi community.[159]

Berna clarified that it was people's free will to worship whatever they liked- that they were not against any kind of sect or religion but that they wanted respect for the seven hundred years old Bektashi creed and traditions in the region.

> We are not against hatim, the citing of the Qur'an or the fasting during Ramadan. However, it is not good will to invite people to iftar on the night of cem. Why not do it some other time? Let our Sunni neighbors invite us to their hatims and mevlids. Let us invite them to our kurban .[160]

The events in 2017 erupted upon the appointment of a local Sunni man as the Head of the Seçek Association. Despite objections, the association did not step back. Berna narrated:

> In fact our objection was not only to the appointed man's sect, but the administration which acted as a family dynasty, passing from father to son-in law, with all the daughters having active roles in the administration. All elections were won by a member of the same big family. Now we hear that the votes were stolen. Some ex members admit it. They have offended so many of us that the number of their active members fell from 500 to 140.[161]

In 2017, to lower the tension that had peaked, the association organized a tea party on Seçek Plateau on the 26th July, two days before the Oil Wrestling Tradition. However, it turned into a power struggle. Two buses, from Ksanthi and Komotini were brought minority members to the plateau. Bektashis on the side of the Dergah did not participate in the event. However, the speech given by the then Turkish Consul Ali Rıza

159 Personal Communications with Enver, September 2017.

160 Personal Communications with Berna, September, 2017.

161 Personal communications with Berna, summer 2017.

Akıncı offended the Bektashis as he criticized them for creating unrest and division within the community and questioned their purpose by referring to a Turkish proverb 'Is your purpose to eat the grapes or to beat the vine grower?'[162] After his speech, a jury from the audience rated the pastries and desserts arranged on a long table.

Bektashis responded by referring to another Turkish proverb, 'The one who comes from the mountain tells the locals in the plain to get away' (*Dağdan gelen bağdakini kovar*) meaning that no authority or person had the right to change a seven-hundred year old Bektashi tradition.[163]

> Among many things that upset us was the fact that not a single minority journalist came to the village to inquire what was really happening. They listened to one side only (the Secek Association) and wrote accordingly. People who claim to have come to the Seçek Plateau did not come to listen to us but to blame us and organize a pastry-desert competition. Is this tea-pastry night a new invention? And at night, when the mountain roads are dangerous?[164]

As a result, the Secek Association, backed by the Consulate and many minority notables, organized the Oil Wrestling Event on 27th and 28th July 2017. In the meanwhile, they applied to the Greek government to have authorization for the Oil Wrestling Tradition which they received. The Dergah supporters blocked the area by organizing a sit-down protest and blocking entrance to the area with their tractors. The escalation of the dispute necessitated the police to intervene.

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162 'Maksadınız üzüm yemek mi bağcıyı dövmek mi? 'The video speech is accessible online at: https://www.facebook.com/ramadan.molla/videos/10214782729150058/, last retrieved 20.08.2017.

163 Personal communications on the phone with my key informant Berna, July 2017.

164 Ibid.

> They told us to leave the area. We refused. Only five or six women left the area because they had small children with them. We told the police that they need to handcuff each of us otherwise we would not leave. It was an extremely hot day. One of the young policeman fainted. Some of use rushed to get some water for him. Afterwards the police waited in vain. [165]

On the other hand, the Secek Association stated that the proponents creating the division were a tiny group of people. On the other hand, the Dergah supporters stated that the association's supporters were a tiny group of people with three Bektashi guides (mürşit) involved. The Secek association and its Bektashi supporters together with the Sunni notables, on the other hand, blamed the supporters of the Dergah for acting as secret agents of Greece. Reciprocal slander escalated.

The Association blamed the Dergah circle for taking 400 thousand euros from the Greek government to create the division. They also published a declaration over the resignation of the Ağa who was threatened by banishment by the Dergah and the cutting of his pension by the government.[166] The Dergah, on the other hand, blamed the Dernek (the association) for carrying out a Sultanate with funding from Turkey. They were questioning the accumulated wealth of the administrators in recent years which would not be possible with husbandry and seasonal labor abroad.[167]

It is no secret that cultural associations in Western Thrace are established by funding from Turkey, the EU and Greece. Due to the unjust ban on the adjective of Turkish in the names and on the signs of associations, exemplified by the case of Ksanthi Turkish Union, Turkey funds them. On the other hand, Greece funds the Pomak and Roma associations.

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165 Personal Communications with Berna, who was among the protesters, August 2017.

166 Published on the facebook account of the Secek Association, https://tr-tr.facebook.com/Secek1997/, last retrieved 20.08.2021.

167 Personal Communications with Berna, August 2017.

The dilemma here is the inability of the minority to establish an independent cultural organization for a number of reasons including lack of unity, lack of a strong bourgeoisie class, fragmentation due to migrations and the geography.

The events created such a grave division that unrelated persons, like me, were criticized by others who believed that the Dergah supporters were Greek agents, for having 'liked' the Dergah's posting of the Oil Wrestling Program on facebook. The minority MPs Ayhan Karayusuf and Mustafa Mustafa, liberal journalists and reporters who attended the Dergah's Oil Wrestling Event in mid-August 2017 were severely criticized by the minority media and notables.

On the other hand, it would be too naive to think that the Greek state was not involved in the issue. In 2008 and for three successive years, the Seçek Oil Wrestling was claimed to be funded by the Greek state when a group of between twenty and thirty Bektashis organized it in the highland area called *Bela Voda*. Berna stated that they were punished by the Dergah and excluded by the locals for years.[168]

In 2017, the Association supporters put pictures of a few Dergah supporter technicians who repaired and painted the local Metropolitan's house on facebook stating that this was the evidence of being secret agents on the Greek side. The post offended the Dergah circle as well. They were punished for their misbehavior as they got a warning from the postnishin, that a second misbehavior would be their banishment from the Dergah.[169]

> Existence of agents for Greece within the community is no secret. However, the Dergah punished them in the past and continues to warn and punish them. The problem is -it is difficult to find out who they are. Whenever the Dergah suspects some peo-

168 Personal Communications with Berna, September 2017.

169 Personal Communications with Berna and two other locals, August 2017.

> ple, they try to keep them away from the decision-making mechanism. We want neither Greece nor Turkey to interfere with our traditions. We strived hard to prove this to the world around us. We even drove out the local priest who wanted to attend the event in order to prove that we are not siding with the Greek government. For the first time we had to behave rudely to a priest for this reason.[170]

The Head postnishin was dismissed by a majority vote of Dergah clergy for not acting in conformity with the common decisions in the dispute between the Dergah and the Dernek. Apparently, 28 representatives from all of the Bektashi villages (including the mixed ones) convened at the Dergah to make a decision about him. Out of 28 votes, 1 was invalid, 2 against whereas 25 voted in favor of his dismissal. 'Could all the dedes and other seniors from the entire Bektashi area be sold out as was claimed by the Secek Association and its supporters? This is not possible...' Berna remarked.

Following the accusations and slander of 'being sold out to the Greeks', the Bektashi community in the Dergah circle has developed paranoia. Whoever I contacted in order to talk upon the schism between the Dergah and Dernek refused to speak to me except for my key informant Berna. They previously reserved community started to regard everyone outside the community as a potential spy. This perception reached such a level that they refused even to give a lighter to a passerby. 'If anyone takes a photo of a hello, of something simple like giving a lighter, the next day the rumors will be heard about our secret coalitions with state.' Berna reiterated.[171]

The protest was reported to have targeted the Association and not the minority notables or Turkish authorities. 'We sent them all invitations to the Oil Wrestling Tradition' Berna remarked but none attended.

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170 Personal Communications with Berna, August 2017.

171 Personal Communications with Berna, Ruşanlar, September 2017.

> What these people (the Sunnis) do not know and understand is the fact that decisions are taken by the common will of everyone in the dergah. Dergah postnishins are both religious and secular leaders. Consequently, any postnishin who acts against the common decision are punished. Their status is removed. They are declared 'düşkün' (the person who went astray).[172]

The moderate Sunnis, on the other hand, stated that the dispute between the Association and the Dergah could have been eliminated years ago before things got out of control. As stated by Özcan, another informant from a lowland village nearby;

> They did not want to confront with the Dernek because they had been funding it for years. They believed that with Turkey's support, this tiny group would get scared and retreat. They underestimated the tiny minority of Bektashis, a group they did not know well. With the help of technology, these people made their voices heard by thousands of Alevi-Bektashi groups in Turkey and also sensitive Sunni and non-Muslim people in Europe. The minority press was biased against this group and approached the issue from the notables' perspective. The notables are shocked because they had never expected this kind of a resistance. The triumph of the Bektashi people should teach them a lesson and set an example for the entire minority.[173]

Indeed, Minority University Graduates Association participated in the Oil Wrestling Tradition since 1980s. Berk, who was once active in the administration stated that since the Secek Association undertook the Tradition, the religious notables demanded the mevlid. Whichever village the Ağa was chosen from, the elected Komotinian Mufti would go there to perform the Friday prayer and participate in the mevlid.[174] Özcan

172 Personal Communications with Berna, Ruşanlar, August 2017.

173 Interview with Özcan, Sirkeli, summer 2017.

174 Interview with Berk, Gümülcine, summer 2017.

made a similar comment stating that the religious notables have dominated the mevlids in the region in the past two decades, interfering with the date and which imam or müezzin is going to chant the mevlid. 'They have turned the mevlids into political arenas' he remarked.[175]

175 Interview with Özcan, Sirkeli, summer 2017.

CONCLUSION

Concerns over sovereignty and territorial integrity have superseded minority rights throughout history. Nation-states have regarded minorities as potential threats to national unity and territorial status quo. Consequently, they were either assimilated, excluded, or forced to emigrate. The fate of Turkish-Muslim and Greek Orthodox minorities born after the World War I are no exceptions.

The Turkish- Muslim minority of Western Thrace, legal Greek citizens, are neither a *millet* nor citizens equal with the Greek Orthodox Greeks. Their position lies somewhere in between. This kind of an 'in-between millet and citizen' position has been both a legacy of the Ottoman millet system and a consequence of bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey.

Western Thracian rurals are a transnational community like many present day communities. Their historical homeland is Western Thrace, modern day Greek Thrace where they continue to live as a peasant community. A substantial number are transmigrants in Germany, where they settled as blue collar workers but transformed into white collar workers and entrepreneurs. The highest number of Western Thracian community live in Turkey as diaspora and transmigrants. Pursuant to their preferred places of residence, major cities such as İstanbul, Bursa and İzmir, they started as artisans, craftsmen, small shop owners, blue collar workers in

tobacco factories (in İzmir and around) and developed into white collar workers and entrepreneurs. Immigration from Western Thrace led to a concomitant social change, egressing from peasantry.

In their historical homeland Western Thrace, or current Greek Thrace, due to the mountainous geography, their villages are dispersed along the mountains, the plain and the middle line or belt in between, characterized as highland, lowland and middle-line villages. Geographic dispersion has been an impediment against group unity despite the relative improvement of roads post 2000. In the past it also signified differences in terms of socioeconomic status ; fertile landholder peasants of lowlands versus the deprived and isolated highlanders depending on husbandry and construction labor (1970s).

The Turkish speaking Roma, on the other hand, lived in segregated neighborhoods in lowland and middle line villages until 1990s when they started to move into the center with the surplus they made as workers in Germany and Athens. There exists an internal group boundary with the lowlander Turks at the center, highlanders at the periphery and the Roma at the outermost periphery. While with the advent of education, technology, internal migration to lowlands faded the boundary between lowlanders and highlanders, the position of the Roma has remained intact with inclusion on a marginal level of the few educated and wealthy.

Since they were identified as a Muslim minority with the change of borders in 1924 in the territory they had been living from time immemorial, they have been able to survive until today. Squeezed in between Greece and Turkey, they have devised certain survival strategies in the frame of changing historical circumstances. The literature review, narrations, observations and personal experiences as an insider reveal four major strategies of survival with new ones that ensued post the Greek democratization of minority policy in 1990s.

The first is recurrent migration. In fact, recurrent migration is a survival strategy adopted in the 19th century following the Ottoman retreat from the Balkans; from as far as Crimea, Macedonia, Bulgaria into

the then Ottoman region of Western Thrace, and later to Turkey and Germany. The first massive immigration to Turkey took place during the war periods (World War II, Greek Civil War) in Greece due to concerns of physical survival. Yet, majority of immigrants, or refugees in the extreme conditions of wars returned to Greece once the Greek state reestablished order and security in Western Thrace. The third migration wave took place due to state suppression and discriminations in the longer period between 1970 and 1990.

After the Civil War, the war-torn Greece resumed the interrupted process of state consolidation. Through introduction of mandatory conscription, welfare services, agricultural modernization and land reforms, educational reforms, the minority was treated as equal multicultural citizens for the first time. During the peaceful period (1950-1955), marked as the 'golden period' in collective memory, Turkey and Greece embarked on educational reforms which enabled upward social mobility for the minority rurals. In the long term, this led to the emergence of an educated class of professionals from the rural (as well as urban) community who would challenge and replace the old elite and their conventional methods against the violation of minority rights and play a role in the eventual democratization of Greek minority policy.

On the other hand, Turkish free-migration policy in 1950s triggered a massive wave of immigration to Turkey of the remaining large landowners and educated notables. The remaining small landholder and the landless highlander settlers in lowlands lacked the capital to purchase their lands whereas the local Greek Orthodox were funded by the Greek state to purchase them. This led to an ethnic change of big landownership in rural Western Thrace. Even worse, a substantial number of lowlander rurals including the sharecroppers and small to medium landholders followed suit and immigrated to Turkey. This resulted in a number of lowland villages, particularly Ksanthian lowlands being entirely evacuated or dwindling by 1960s.

The highlands and the Rhodopean lowland villages have been able to maintain their population intact compared to the Ksanthian lowlands

extending to the river Nestos which are evacuated or with few households remaining. It is in this part of Western Thrace, the Muslim Turk rurals were intimidated by particularly the exchanged Greek Orthodox settlers where the horrific murder was committed in 1954 that caused domino effect of fear and subsequent emigration.

The golden period for the minority was shadowed by the 6/7 September pogrom against the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul. Nonetheless, until late 1960s, the minority lived peacefully, benefiting from modern minority schools and surplus owing to agricultural modernization. As Greek citizens, they abode by the rules of the nation-state by performing their military duties, paying their taxes and enjoying religious and cultural autonomy. However, with the junta coming to power in 1967, a surveillance regime was introduced not only for the minority but the entire country.

The second major survival strategy has been good, neighborly relations with the local Greek Orthodox. Having a historical legacy of six hundred century cohabitation, Muslim and Christian communities lived in relative peace and solidarity, particularly in war times as the narrations during the World War II, the Civil War and the war in Cyprus demonstrate. In rural Western Thrace, intercommunal relations between the Turkish-Muslims and the Greek Orthodox Greeks have followed the pattern of traditional millet system; good neighborliness but profoundly set boundaries in terms socialization and intermarriage. Although the intercommunal relations have been influenced by political frictions between Greece and Turkey, they have not created significant region wide ethnic based conflicts. The pogrom of 1990 is an exception that took place in the town Komotini.

Although the Greek failure in Cyprus brought democracy to Greece by leading to the overthrow of the junta, it aggravated the existing oppressive and discriminatory surveillance regime for the minority. The deep state organization established during the junta period- Cultural Affairs Offices accountable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was institutionalized and vested with infinite initiatives to employ the discriminatory policies against the minority.

Violation of basic human rights and minority rights curtailed social development of the minority and induced emigration to Turkey and post 1989 to Germany. Several land expropriations deprived the minority of its major source of income. Curtailment in the freedom to exercise profession (through non recognition of Turkish university diplomas and denial of work permits) left the minority dependent on agriculture. Restriction on the purchase of immovables resulted in investments in kin state. Article 19 deprived about 50,000 minority members of citizenship. The ailing minority education compelled pupils to higher education in Turkey, many of whom remained in Turkey due to restrictions on the exercise of profession in Greece. This led to a serious brain drain and transfer of agricultural surplus to Turkey as investments in immovables.

A significant number of minority members immigrated to Turkey between 1970 and 1990 through illegal and legal means for reasons of education, settlement, and most important of all to escape the discriminations and oppression. Illegal migration took place from the Greek side of Evros river to the Turkish side by boats. Legal migration followed the pattern of obtaining travel visas from the Turkish Consulate in Komotini. Some have retained their passports and lived in between with residence permits that required to leave Turkey in three month intervals or work permits that extended this period to a year. Henceforth they lived in between Turkey and Greece, their children and even grandchildren continue to live this way even today (except those who became dual citizens in the past decade). A substantial number, on the other hand, were deprived of citizenship between late 1970s until 1998.

In 1989 and after, with the signing of the Single European Act which allowed for free travel and settlement within the EU member states, a period that coincided with the dark period of oppression and discriminations in Greece, a substantial number of rurals immigrated to Germany as guest workers, a process that started in mid 1960s but culminated early 1990s. Immigrants to Germany included transmigrants in Turkey who were not happy with the conditions but did not want to return to Greece either. Thus, the previous two-way migration pattern between Greece and Turkey acquired a third destination.

The third survival strategy is infringing law in everyday life. Everyday forms of resistance such as squatting, (illegal) logging, and poaching are rurals' way of dealing with the state oppression. As it was forbidden to repair houses, purchase houses and land from late 1960s until early 1990s, many rurals repaired and extended their houses by adding rooms illegally and secretly. If they somehow were able to obtain a repair license, they rebuilt the entire house with it. Many others extended their yards, gardens, even their fields by incorporating (illegally) public land in proximity.

The fourth survival strategy is free-riding, clientelism, bribery which can be encountered in everyday life and bureaucracy in a number of other states that emerged from the Ottoman Empire. Engaging in networks of espionage (either for Turkey or for Greece or for both) can be considered another (im)moral survival strategy albeit an exceptional one that does not apply to the entire community. This was not only unique to the minority locals, but to local Greek Orthodox, who gained significant wealth and power through the networks of espionage, while at the same time, performed the holy duty of protecting the homeland from the potential enemy Turkey and its (assumed) ally, the minority.

Minority members who overcame discriminations achieved it through clientelism and bribery. Voting for and working for particular candidates during election periods, bribing the authorities through middlemen or directly to get driving licenses, licenses to buy tractors or repair houses were conventional strategies of everyday survival. Clientelism was particularly popular during the parliamentary elections. The (Greek Orthodox) MP candidates employed men in each village to solicit votes for them in return for favors.

Few rurals struggled on their own, took individual initiatives to deal with injustices and discriminations. In dealing with their transactions, to overcome bureaucracy, therefore, they either remained passive or sought help from middlemen, minority MPs, minority journalists, religious elite as well as Greek Orthodox locals through clientelistic relations or from deep state through networks of espionage. The land disputes in 1950s, for instance, were brought to the then minority MP Osman Nuri by

rurals. He strived for their resolution by covering them in his newspaper and taking them to public authorities. This was a friendly period between Turkey and Greece. In the succeeding decades, however, minority MPs voices would not always be heard.

Some minority members were submissive to authority against discrimination and confiscation of their lands, believing that they were not strong enough to resist the state; nothing would change even if they did. They accepted the status quo with a fatalist mentality. Some even believed that they would be rewarded in the afterworld for the injustices they suffered from.

Submission to authority turned into pessimism and learned helplessness within time. This also holds for the educated; graduates from Turkish universities whose number began to rise in 1970s and later. Discouraged by the non-recognition of their diplomas of their colleagues in Greece, many settled in Turkey without any endeavor to seek employment in Western Thrace. Only two decades ago, there was no civil servant from the minority. Barely anyone applied for a civil servant position because they believed that it was not possible.

The struggle against the discriminations through independent minority MPs, protests against the expropriations of minority lands, protest marches against the state, the ethnic unrest that culminated with the pogrom against the minority in 1990- albeit not in the villages-, the international media attention and the involvement of international organizations, mainly the Council of Europe, induced a radical change in the Greek minority policy towards democracy. The mandatory reforms in the process of Europeanization strengthened democracy and human rights in Greece.

The post 1990 minority opening, concomitant with intensifying globalization have brought considerable affirmative social changes for the previously isolated village communities, particularly in the field of education and free exercise of profession. Educational migration to Turkey has diminished as the students have benefited from the quota for university education, they have preferred to study at Greek Universities.

Furthermore, In mid to late 1990s and 2000s, when the democratization raised the living standards in Western Thrace through not only the elimination of discriminations but also welfare and social aid by EU funds, Turkey was suffering from an ailing economy and security issues related to the Kurdish question. Consequently, the first and arguably the largest return migration wave took place. Many transmigrant Western Thracians including households with ailing incomes, university graduates, white collar workers unsatisfied with their conditions returned to Western Thrace.

Narrations reveal that some unsettled issues voiced by the elite have different meanings for highlanders and lowlanders. The election of the Mufti by popular vote, for instance, is not considered a very significant issue by the lowlanders whereas it is more significant for the highlanders who hold the legitimate Mufti in high esteem. This owes to a certain extent to religion which continues to have a higher appeal in the highlands. This is one of the reasons the elected Mufti criticizes the lowlanders, for their insufficient adherence and loyalty to religion.

Furthermore, improvements in minority primary and high school education have generated different consequences in the highlands and lowlands. In the highlands, minority schools have maintained their popularity; students attend minority primary and high schools as well as Turkish Imam Hatips, whereas in the Bektashis prefer Greek secondary and high schools. In the lowlands, however, Greek public schools have become popular which resulted in the closing of a number of minority primary schools, owing also to the decline in child birth. This is the second reason the Mufti condemns the lowlanders, due to concerns that this will lead to eventual assimilation within the mainstream Greek society.

The democratization of Greek minority policy through the elimination of racist and discriminatory measures was meant to integrate the minority within the mainstream Greek society and institutions and prevent any future ethnic unrest like that of the protest marches in 1988 and 1990 which incited a pogrom.

The positive discrimination concerning entrance to universities might bear assimilationist connotations. However, despite a growing

number of minority students attending Greek public schools and universities for over two decades now, interethnic marriages and the preference to live and work in cities like Thessaloniki and Athens outside of Western Thrace have been few.

Democratization, or, the minority opening, has diminished the level of politicization over identity. Narrations of minority students at Greek universities reveal the relative silencing of their identities, the priority on learning, having professional occupations and subsequently abandoning parents' jobs (peasantry) or having their jobs in the future if the parents are university graduate professionals, white collar workers or entrepreneurs.

Nonetheless, the modernist-conservative factions prevail although not in the political sense but in terms of adherence to religious and traditional codes. The lowlander university students do now wear the Muslim attire, attend parties at night clubs, attend the Ksanthi Carnival with their masks and make up where they mingle with the Greek Orthodox crowd whereas the conservative students, particularly females adhering to Muslim attire just stand by and watch.

The conservatives criticize the dancing minority girls and boys fearing that they are about to get assimilated. Although it is not available to learn about their lifestyles , opinions and the risks for potential assimilation, which is by the way, an individual choice, I consider them as multicultural ways of entertainment that breeds mutual understanding and solidarity. As I have personally witnessed some of these girls fasting during Ramadan and praying in the mosque on specific occasions, I personally think that this sounds more like paranoia than reality.

Novel strategies of survival that ensued post 1990s after the democratization of the Greek minority policy are greater significance on education also by removing the barrier for females, with a shift in preference for Greek public schools and universities, investment on cultural traditions, reversal of the historical pattern of emigration to living in better conditions in Greece, seasonal migration for labor to sustain living standards at home and finally, (particularly the young generation's) preference for independent thinking, integration and invisibility.

RURALS

Seasonal or flexible labor migration that has escalated as a consequence of economic crisis that hit Greece in 2010s. Many young and middle-aged males, including university graduates, work as seasonal laborers in construction projects and shipyards in several European countries and in wealthy Gulf states. This new way of income generation predominantly in the highlands, which is becoming a trend in lowlands is a novel economic survival strategy.

During the dark period of discriminations, Western Thracian rurals were affected by discriminatory politics that targeted their income generation. Their lands were expropriated or threatened with expropriation, they were discriminated in clearing projects and distribution of fertile lands, fined for ploughing their lands when driving licenses we denied, had to live in old and worn out houses because they were not allowed to repair and buy houses or land. They were uneducated peasants and many lacked sufficient Greek language skills. Few had reading habits. Few were able to keep track of global and national social and political developments.

This made them prone to elite influence and elite-led action against the violation of their rights. Therefore, they were drawn into either the influence of hardliner (the old) or the moderate elite, an inclination often shaped by kin-state Turkey's position that favored the former. Depending on the elite preference for struggle, therefore, they either won or lost as the protests against the *İnhanlı* and *Yaka* expropriations reveal.

Post 2000, this kind of an orientation has changed. Democratization of minority governance led to a concomitant democratization within the family owing to greater significance attached to education including the girls. Elimination of discriminations has allowed for more equal employment opportunities based on merits instead of ethnicity.

Due the limited employment opportunities due to regional peculiarities of relative underdevelopment and the ongoing repercussions of countrywide economic crisis, many educated continued farming, or continued to live in the village although they worked in the town as white collar workers or self employed professionals such as medical doctors,

lawyers and dentists. This resulted in the proliferation of educated rurals who are not easily influenced by the elite like the rurals in the past.

Owing also to the abolition of the Black List by Turkey in 1990s, the educated rurals today have awareness about the word around them, express their opinions bravely as opposed to the past. For instance, initiated as elite-led projects, regional dissemination of local traditions, in this research *The Ketenlik Youth Festival* and the *Seçek Oil Wrestling Tradition*; have been redefined by the educated young as platforms to freely express themselves, enhance solidarity with their peers and others. They invite the elite and try not to outright oppose their opinions out of respect, however, they dislike their long, political, nationalistic speeches.

This is evident even in the conservative highlands, praised by the religious elite for adhering to religious customs better than the lowlands. These young people do exercise agency illustrated by their way of organizing the festival, for instance, bilingual (in Turkish and Greek) despite reactions, by the design of their logo which shows their position at an equal distance to Turkey and Greece but as part of both.

The Oil Wrestling Tradition of Bektashis is another case depicting strong agency, determination and struggle for independence in the organization of a religious event from the influence of minority elite backed by Turkey and the Greek state looking forward to exploit the benefits of a possible division within the minority.

Many rurals in this fieldwork reveal that they are content living in Western Thrace, Greece. Economic hardship and unemployment have been revealed as the most serious problems, which are the problems plaguing the entire country.

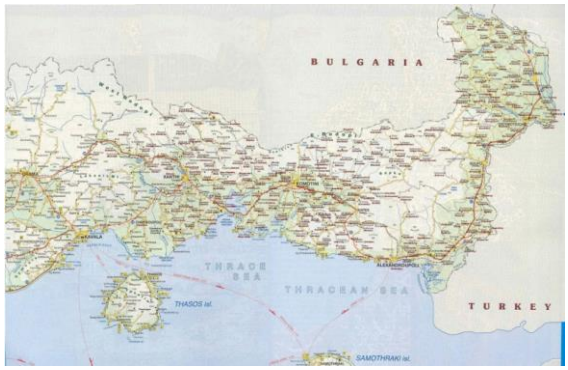
These new forms of struggle indicate determination and hope for survival as equal yet multicultural citizens living in harmony and solidarity with all peoples of Western Thrace, Greece.

A HISTORY OF SURVIVAL: THE WESTERN THRACIAN MINORITY RURALS

Appendix A Maps

A1: The region of Ottoman Thrace, from google-maps

A2: Map of Western Thrace, Greece, from google-maps



Appendix B: Photos
Villages and Rurals in Western Thrace

B1: The ruins of the two-storey house of Ali Ağa, Karamusa, (Mosaiko), photo by Şule Chousein Hasan

B2: Wedding procession with oxen carts, BAKEŞ, Komotini

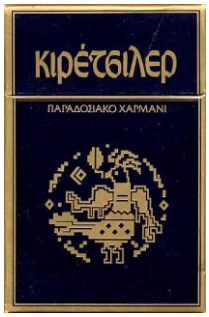
B3: 1950S: Queen Frederica and Muslim Girls Sewing Class, 1950s BAKEŞ, Komotini

B4: an old and a new house in the same yard, lowland village, Yalanca (Galini), - photo taken by Sule Chousein Hasan

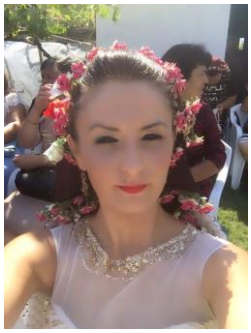
B5: Domruköy (Dokos) Stinging Tobacco, photo taken by Sule Chousein Hasan, 2017

B6: Picking tobacco, a labor intensive ethnic job in Western Thrace

B7: Cigarette brand “Kireççiler” named after the same village, photo from A. Dede archive,



B8: Traditional headscarf worn in weddings in the lowlands, Öksüzlü, 2017, photo taken by the author, the young woman is a working civil engineer, used upon her permission



B9: Mustafçova (Miki) Women and Girls in traditional clothes – Hikmet Cemiloğlu archive

B10: Highlander minority students on National Day procession, H. Cemiloğlu archive

B11: Talika : Rurals transportation until 1990- A.Dede archive, “Old Photos of Western Thrace”, a social media group.

B12: A hatim ceremony in Hebilköy, 2011, taken from a newsportal

B13: Kütüklü Baba Türbesi , a Bektashi shrine today both a shrine and a chapel, the evacuated village of Gereviz (Selino, Greek Orthodox village), all related photos of the shrine taken by Sule Chousein Hasan, 2020

B14: Inside Kütüklü Baba, icons of Mother Mary and Christian saints

B15: The tomb of Kütüklü Baba

B16: The Qur'an inside the shrine

B17: A road in Ketenlik (Kendavros), Ksanthi, 2017, all Ketenlik photos taken by Şule Chousein Hasan, August 2017

B18 : Ketenlik Village Library,

B19: Girls on motorcycles, Ketenlik

B20: A seven-year old on the road, Ketenlik

B21: Ketenlik Youth Association & Festival Logo.

B22: Presenters of the Ketenlik Youth Festival, August 2017

B23: Theatre show

B24: Seçek Oil Wrestling Tradition, Evros , August, 2016. All photos taken by the author Şule Chousein Hasan

B25: The bazaar and the local women in the area, August 2016

B26: The main sponsor, Ağa with a group of men, August 2016

B27: Seçek Oil Wrestling organized by the Seyid Ali Sultan Dergahı after the conflict, July 2021, photo from social media account of the Seyid Ali Sultan Convent. Ağa is seated together with his wife, photo shared on Seyid Ali Sultan Dergahı, facebook account.

B28: Inside the Convent, the tomb of Seyid Ali Sultan, August 2016

B29: An open confession to Islam (Kelime-I Şahadet) Slavic and Arabic, photo belongs key informant Berna from Roussa

B30: An Ottoman Title Deed (for land) that belonged to Hacı Yakup Ağa, shown to me by a descendant

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