

**FORMATIONS OF DIASPORA NATIONALISM: THE CASE OF CIRCASSIANS
IN TURKEY**

by

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Submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

Sabancı University

Spring 2009

FORMATIONS OF DIASPORA NATIONALISM: THE CASE OF CIRCASSIANS IN
TURKEY

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DATE OF APPROVAL: June 19, 2009

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ABSTRACT

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PhD, Political Science

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Meltem Müftüler-Baç

Spring 2009, x + 360 pages

This dissertation aims to understand the multiple and yet interrelated formations of diaspora nationalism through the case study of an under-researched ethnic group in Turkey, Circassians. Based on semi-structured interviews with Circassian intellectuals and activists in Ankara and Istanbul, it aims to explore the dynamics and structures of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey. To explore the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism, there are four interrelated axes upon which this dissertation is based. Each of these axes is significant in the formation and as the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey. The first axis of this dissertation takes diaspora nationalism as a historical phenomenon with its ebbs and flows as the second axis regards the relationships of the diaspora with the host community, host state and the hegemonic nationalism of the host community. The third axis that this dissertation studies considers homeland as a dynamic construction, and the fourth axis concerns the gendered dimensions of diaspora in general and diaspora nationalism in particular. Through the exploration of these axes, this dissertation studies Circassian diaspora nationalism as a heuristic device through which diasporas, nationalism and ethnicity in a globalized world in general and Turkish politics in particular can be explored.

Keywords: diaspora nationalism, Circassians, diaspora, nationalism, gender

ÖZET

DİASPORA MİLLİYETÇİLİĞİNİN FORMASYONLARI:

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ ÇERKESLER ÖRNEĞİ

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Danışman: Prof. Dr. Meltem Müftüler-Baç

Bahar 2009, x + 360 sayfa

Bu tez, diaspora milliyetçiliğinin farklı fakat birbiriyle oldukça yakından ilintili formasyonlarını, üzerinde bugüne kadar çok az sayıda çalışma yapılmış olan Türkiye'deki Çerkesler örneğiyle anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, Türkiye'deki Çerkes diaspora milliyetçiliğinin yapısını ve dinamiklerini, Ankara ve İstanbul'da Çerkes entellektüelleri ve aktivistleri ile gerçekleştirilen yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar ile incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Çerkes diaspora milliyetçiliğinin formasyonları, çalışmaya temel teşkil eden ve birbiriyle ilintili dört boyuttan incelenmiştir. Anılan dört boyutun her biri Çerkes diaspora milliyetçiliğinin oluşum süreçlerinde yapı taşları olarak önemli bir role sahiptir. Boyutlardan ilki, diaspora milliyetçiliğini tarihi bir olgu olarak değerlendirmektedir. İkinci boyut ise ilk boyutla da ilintili olarak, diasporanın ev sahibi konumundaki toplum, devlet ve ev sahibi ülkedeki hakim milliyetçilikle ilişkilerini ele alır. Çalışmanın temel aldığı üçüncü boyutta ise anavatan kavramı dinamik bir kurgu olarak çalışılırken, dördüncü boyut kapsamında, diaspora ve diaspora milliyetçiliğinin toplumsal cinsiyete dair boyutları tartışılmaktadır. Tüm bu boyutları göz önünde bulunduran çalışmamız Çerkes diaspora milliyetçiliğini, küreselleşen dünyada ve Türk siyasetinde diaspora, etnisite ve milliyetçilik kavramlarının incelenebileceği bir gözlem alanı olarak ele almaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: diaspora milliyetçiliği, Çerkesler, diaspora, milliyetçilik, toplumsal cinsiyet

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is a result of a work that has been supported and encouraged by many people. I would like to deeply thank those various people who, during the years in which this endeavour lasted, provided me with courage and support on several levels.

I owe my gratitude to my advisor, Meltem Müftüler-Baç without whose support and patience this dissertation might not have been completed. During those years of research, she was always positive, caring and patient. This dissertation and I were lucky to have such an advisor. It is my pleasure to thank Ayşe Gül Altınay. Since my Phd courses, her work has inspired me and from the very beginning of this dissertation, she provided me with support, hope and excitement. I was lucky to work with her and enjoy the coexistence of critical thought and encouragement simultaneously. I would also like to thank Hasan Bülent Kahraman for believing in this dissertation and always leading me towards further research. I also would like to thank Dilek Cindođlu for her critical insights; it was a joy for me to work with her once again. I would also like to thank Ayşe Parla for her encouragement and critical feedbacks. I am also indebted to Ayşe Öncü and Ali Çarkođlu who read the proposal of this dissertation and provided me with new perspectives. Special thanks are also due to Ayşegül Baykan who constantly motivated me and believed in me during those years that I had the opportunity to work with her. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Yıldız Technical University for tolerating any kind of inconveniences and overlaps that were due to this dissertation.

On an institutional basis, throughout these years TÜBİTAK, Social Science Research Council and European Science Foundation provided me with the travel funds which enabled me to present this work in international seminars which contributed to the improvement of this dissertation. I am also indebted to the Political Science Graduate

Program at Sabancı University which provided me with academic freedom and a stimulating learning and working environment.

I would also like to thank the members of Circassianacademia. Within this group, Seteney Shami has inspired me since my undergraduate years. I met the rest of the group during the years within which this dissertation was being written. After discovering the existence of those people with close research interests and topics, I minimized my feeling of loneliness. Within this group, I would like to thank Zeynel Abidin Besleney who personally and kindly read some parts of this dissertation and provided me with critical insights and Ergün Özgür for her support and friendship. I would also like to thank Alice Horner for editing some parts of this dissertation.

I would also like to thank my friends whose friendships have been one of the most special things in my life: Burak Yüzgöl, Çağrı Yüzgöl, Emir Tunçman, Nilüfer Gündüz, Nurtaç Elçi Akpınar and Zeynep Özol. During these years within which this dissertation was written, their friendships and support had always been there for me. I am also indebted to Selcen Doğan Ağakay for her friendship and support. Among these friends, Mehmet Soylu Güldalı personally witnessed the hardest months of this dissertation; and his support, friendship and tolerance was enormous. I know that even the day of the defense would have been incomplete without him.

It is my pleasure to thank the “family” who, day and night, waited for this dissertation and never lost their patience and belief in me: Jane Doğan, Mihrican Ünal, Muhittin Ünal, Nesrin Doğan, Tekin Özdamar and Turhan Doğan. Not only their support and love but also their life stories and activism inspired this dissertation.

This dissertation would not have been possible without those activists who provided me not only with their life stories, thoughts and dreams but also with every document, support and excitement. I thank each of them for celebrating and encouraging me as if I was doing the most wonderful thing in the world: I do not think all researchers are that much lucky. Though they were left anonymous in this study, this dissertation came into being with their contributions, support and joy; and it was my pleasure and honour to meet them and cooperate with each of them to produce knowledge.

Finally, I should acknowledge that I alone am responsible for any kind of omissions and possible errors of this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. The Aims of the Study and the Research Questions.....	1
1.2. Research Design.....	5
1.3. Methodological Caveats	8
1.4. Significance of the Study.....	10
1.5. Organization of the Study.....	13

CHAPTER 2

STUDYING CIRCASSIANS IN TURKEY	16
2.1. Studying My Own Community.....	16
2.2. Circassians.....	28

CHAPTER 3

DIASPORA NATIONALISM	54
3.1. Diaspora as / at the Crossroads.....	56
3.2. Mapping Diaspora Nationalism of Circassians in Turkey.....	64
3.3. Discourses of Circassian Diaspora Nationalists on Turkish Nationalism	74
3.4. Diasporic Maneuvers	80
3.5. Conclusion.....	94

CHAPTER 4

HOST COMMUNITY AND HOST STATE	96
4.1. Circassians in Turkish Nationalist Discourse.....	99
4.2. Defining the Self and Being a Circassian in Turkey.....	135
4.3. Relationships with the State Apparatus	151

4.4. Conclusion.....	182
 CHAPTER 5	
DIASPORA IN TRANSFORMATION	184
5.1. Initial Encounters in the Soviet-Era.....	187
5.2. Encountering the Post-Soviet Homeland.....	200
5.3. Relating to the Homeland	206
5.4. New Claims of Citizenship.....	218
5.5. New “Others”	229
5.6. Changing the Boundaries of Knowledge: Talking about the Silence and the Break	243
5.7. New Visions of a Diasporic Future.....	247
5.8. Conclusion.....	252
 CHAPTER 6	
DIASPORA NATIONALISM AND GENDER.....	254
6.1. Gendering the Diaspora Literature	257
6.2. The Circassian Beauty	268
6.3. Gendering Diaspora Nationalism.....	295
6.4. Conclusion.....	316
 CONCLUSION	 317
 APPENDIX I	 327
 APPENDIX II.....	 330
 APPENDIX III	 335
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 336

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Aims of the Study and the Research Questions

Diaspora, which is a relatively old term used to refer to the histories of some particular communities, has acquired increasing scholarly attention since the 1990s. It has become a tool for social science to investigate the hybrid, transnational and global sites of identities and politics which challenge the national order of things, the naturalized and normalized understanding of the world of nations as a discrete partitioning of territory.¹ The concept of diaspora, rather than referring to particular experiences of some particular communities, has now become crucial for social science to rethink the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism in the context of shifting borders and processes of globalization.²

Focusing on a diasporic context, this dissertation aims to rethink nationalism and ethnicity as it employs the notion of diaspora as a choice which may serve to deconstruct hegemonic nationalism despite its ambivalence and fragmentation. However, regarding diaspora as a challenge posed *vis-à-vis* the nation-state is not sufficient to understand

¹ L. Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, (Duke University Press, 2001), 52-74, 55.

² S. Shami, "Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus," *Development and Change* 29(1998): 617- 646.

diaspora politics and diasporic condition. Diasporas' relationships with the nation-states are much more complicated; diasporas both challenge and corroborate nation-states' authority³ and national order within which nation-states are located. As diasporas have proved to be effective political groups in the 1990s as far as conflicts, wars and politics are concerned; diasporic communities are mostly bound by their own nationalisms. Diaspora nationalism or long distance nationalism which is identified as "a very distinctive, very conspicuous, important sub-species of nationalism"⁴ is being regarded as "an increasingly more likely and more important form of ethno-nationalist expansion and an even more potent phenomenon in international politics" as a result of the increasing global interdependence of the world.⁵ Such a form of nationalism is shaped not only by challenging the nation-state but also by a more subtle web of relations with the host community, homeland and other nationalisms, especially the hegemonic nationalism in the host society. These interconnections of diaspora nationalism are significant to understand not only the terms of survival, resistance and regeneration for diasporas but also nationalism in its simultaneously global and local, deterritorialized forms.

This dissertation argues that diasporas as global actors are formed through the interplay between various factors: external factors such as the relationships with the historical homeland, host communities, host states, other groups and international organizations; and internal dynamics formed through class and gender. It aims to understand these multiple and yet interrelated formations of diaspora nationalism through the case study of an under-researched ethnic group in Turkey, Circassians. The ultimate aim is to understand the dynamics and structures of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey through the exploration of several factors which, this dissertation claims, are significant for and as the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism.

Similar to Hall's and Gieben's use of the notion of 'formations' in their explorations of modernity,⁶ I employ the notion of 'formations' in two meanings. 'Formations' refers

³ B. Axel, "Context of Diaspora," *Cultural Anthropology* 19(1)(2004): 26-60, 54.

⁴ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 101.

⁵ Z. Skrbis, *Long-distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Pub., 1999), xiii.

⁶ S. Hall and B. Gieben, *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

to both political, social, economic and cultural processes as the motors of the formation processes; and articulation of these processes into multiple domains such as the polity, the economy, the social structure and the cultural sphere. Thus, the concept of ‘formations’ used in the title of this dissertation aims to explore both the activities of emergence and their outcomes: both process and structure.⁷

Hence, this dissertation aims to explore formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism to situate diaspora as an actor in world politics, politics of the homeland, politics of the host community; to locate diaspora in a more complicated web of relationships, bargains and strategies; and to situate it in the debates on gender, ethnicity, nationalism and globalization. Moving away from the idea of ‘victim diaspora’, Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey is regarded as actors who participate in several networks of relationships with the homeland, host community, and international community.⁸ However, the ultimate aim is not to have a monograph on Circassian diaspora and diaspora nationalists in Turkey but to locate diasporic communities and diaspora politics in a matrix of interrelated formations.

The basic research questions of this dissertation are the following: How are diaspora nationalisms formed? Through which processes is it formed and what are its configurations? To answer these basic research questions, there are four interrelated axes upon which this dissertation is based. Each of these axes that is considered significant in the formation and as the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey will be explored in a chapter of this dissertation.

The first axis is diaspora nationalism as a historical phenomenon with the constant construction of a vision of politics, identity and claims. The basic questions that this chapter deals are the multiple forms of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey; how Circassians in Turkey regard Turkish nationalism; and how Circassian diaspora activists regard nationalism in general. How do they maneuver *vis-à-vis* Turkish nationalism as the activists of a diasporic community?

⁷ S. Hall and B. Gieben, *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 7.

⁸ S. J. Tambiah, “Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Identities,” *Daedalus: Journal of Arts and Sciences* 129 (1)(2000): 163- 194.

The second axis concerns the relationships of diaspora with the host community, host state and the dominant nationalism of the host community. What are the relations between diaspora and host community? How are the relations of diasporic nationalism with hegemonic nationalism which is Turkish nationalism? Is it based on direct and total opposition or is it based on strategic and contextual bargains, flirts and cooperation?

The third axis pertains to the homeland and it takes “homeland” not as an objective historical fact but as a dynamic construction that attains meaning not only through the political developments but also through memories, discourses and narratives of individuals on “home” and “homeland.” The questions that the research asks on this axis are the meanings attached to the notion of the homeland by Circassian diaspora in Turkey; and diaspora activists’ relationships with the homeland and their transformation in the post-Soviet order.

The fourth axis regards the gendered dimensions of diaspora in general and diaspora nationalism in particular. It aims to ask and explore the following questions in terms of Circassians in Turkey: What are the gendered images and symbols of Circassians? What do these images imply for Circassian diasporic identity and Circassian diaspora activists? What do they imply for other discourses such as Turkish nationalism and Orientalism? What are the relationships of diaspora nationalism with gender? What does it mean to be a Circassian woman? Are there any duties, responsibilities, and expectations from the women of Circassian diaspora in Turkey? What does this imply for Circassian diaspora nationalism and its relationships with homeland and host community?

Through these four axes, this dissertation is an attempt to explore the configurations and genesis of Circassian diaspora nationalism; and to situate it in an array of contemporary debates on the processes of globalization, post-Soviet order, and the rise of identity politics.

Thus, this study is not a monograph on Circassian diaspora activists in Turkey *per se* but it studies Circassian diaspora nationalism as a heuristic device through which nationalist politics, ethnicity and national order of things in a globalized world in general and Turkish politics in particular can be understood. Taking diaspora as the crossroads where nationalism, ethnicity and globalization meet and cross each other, this dissertation is an attempt to better understand these crossroads.

1.2. Research Design

Formations of diaspora nationalism can be understood not only through a discursive analysis of the relevant documents but also through exploring diasporic subjectivities in terms of experiences, life histories, conflicts, and discontents.

To study diaspora nationalism, this dissertation is based on semi-structured interviews with Circassian intellectuals and activists. 28 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with two groups of Circassians in Turkey which are not mutually exclusive; activists and intellectuals.⁹ All interviewees are Circassian activists who have been associated with and worked in Caucasian Associations, and intellectuals who, apart from their professional occupations, write books, articles, news, poems etc. and publish or translate books and pieces on Circassians. This dissertation will not be able to associate their personal works on Circassians with their interviews but the interviewees of this dissertation are not only lawyers, business men/women, or teachers but those people in such occupations who voluntarily study Circassian culture, history, literature, and who voluntarily work in the Circassian organizations in Turkey. They are the intellectuals and activists of the Circassian community in Turkey.

6 of the interviewees were female, and 22 interviewees were male. A focus on women in the in-depth interviews might have enabled us to hear the voices of women calling themselves Circassian nationalists who are invisible in the magazines, internet based discussion groups and Caucasian Associations. In the magazines published by Circassians in Turkey, most authors are male; and discussion e-mail groups which have been new channels of communication for the Circassians in Turkey since mid 1990s often prove to be masculine sites. Furthermore, Caucasian Associations are masculine sites of politics. A study that focuses on particularly women would have helped us to hear the voices of women in the diaspora. Yet, hearing the voice of women in the Circassian

⁹ For the interviewees, see Appendix I.

diaspora is beyond the scopes of this research; and this dissertation on diaspora nationalism works within these limitations of Circassian diaspora in Turkey. Hence, the imbalance between the number of the male and female interviewees is a reflection of the Circassian organizations in Turkey.

All of these interviewees were selected from the decision-making groups (from associations, foundations, platforms and youth committees) in Ankara and Istanbul. The two cities are selected because for the Circassians in Turkey, diaspora nationalism has been basically an urban phenomenon. Migrations to urban areas throughout the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey prepared the ground for its emergence in cities such as Ankara and Istanbul where Circassian Associations were established and became active. These two cities became the places where diaspora nationalism of Circassians in Turkey emerged.

In terms of the selection of the interviewees for this research, the basic concern has been to include Circassians activists and intellectuals from different groups and organizations. As no diasporic group is a monolithic block, Circassians also display a huge amount of heterogeneity in terms of ideology, attitudes towards homeland and diaspora politics. In one of the interviews, when I demanded help in terms of my list, one of my interviewees, looking at my list of interviewees, warned me that I had a very difficult task at hand because “each of those people is a republic in themselves.” Yet, capturing that heterogeneity in terms of groups, organizations, perspectives and political affiliations was among the aims of this research. To ensure the inclusion of diasporic heterogeneity in the research, I preferred to share the list of future interviewees with all of the interviewees after the interview; and I asked them for further advice. Hence, the list and the choices of the interviewees were a result of a series of collective thinking between the researcher and the researched. My interviewees not only came up with additional names for me to interview but they also sometimes helped me in terms of contacting the next interviewees.

The interviews focused on how women and men calling themselves Circassian defined their identity, masculinity, femininity; how they constructed and experienced diasporic condition and Circassian identity in Turkey; how they defined their relationships with the state apparatus, homeland and current debates in Turkey. The interviews were done between February 2007 and June 2008. The number of interviews conducted for this research was determined by the “theoretical saturation” which refers to the phase in

interview research within which the new interviews are more likely to confirm earlier insights.¹⁰ 10 of the interviews were conducted in Ankara and 18 were conducted in Istanbul. The places where interviews took place were offices, cafes, restaurants, Circassian organizations and homes of the interviewees.

Before and during the interviews, confidentiality and anonymity was assured and this dissertation maintains these ethical rules. Before the interviews, the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the interview and the possible range of future uses to which it might be put. They were informed that their identities would be kept anonymous and that I had a responsibility to ensure that their physical, social and psychological well being was not adversely affected by the research.¹¹ Except one case who did not want any recording; in each of the interviews, an audio device was used with the permission of the interviewee; and with the premise that there could be off-the-record answers based on the request of the interviewees and they could stop the interview at any time. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, within the text, quotations from the interviews are introduced with a pseudo-name. Furthermore, some personal information which may be crucial to better understand the quotations from the interviews is not discussed in some cases since the group of Circassian activists and intellectuals in Turkey is a relatively small group composed of members who are well-known by the community and those groups and people interested.

In terms of age, the interviewees' ages ranged between 34 and 88. In terms of ethnic composition, the respondents were Kabardian, Abkhaz, Abzakh, Beslenei, Ubykh, Chechen, Shapsug and Chemguy. In terms the place of birth, they were born in İstanbul, Kayseri, Düzce, Adapazarı, Eskişehir, Çanakkale, Bilecik, Samsun, Bilecik, Maraş, Sivas, Ankara, Amasya, Antalya, and Adana. 6 of the interviews were born in cities as the rest were born in the villages of these cities.

The interviews lasted between 70 minutes and 330 minutes. The total amount of time spent during interviewing is approximately 80 hours which were transcribed as 750

¹⁰ K. Gerson and R. Horowitz, "Observation and Interviewing: Options and Choices in Qualitative Research," in *Qualitative Research in Action*, ed. T. May (London: Sage, 2002), 199-224, 211.

¹¹ J. C. Richardson and B. S. Godfrey, "Towards Ethical Practice in the Use of Archived Transcribed Interviews," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6(4): 2003, 347-355, 348.

pages in addition to field notes taken right after the interviews. Transcriptions were completed by me in almost 6 months. As all the interviews were conducted in Turkish, the transcribed texts of the interviews were also in Turkish. The quotations used in this dissertation are translated into English by me. In cases where I felt that the translation was missing and lacking in terms of meaning, I put the original Turkish phrase into brackets in italics. I also tried to be careful about silences or reactions such as smiles, laughs and variations in intonation.

This study considers interview “as a site of knowledge construction, and the interviewee and interviewer as co-participants in the process.”¹² Hence, rather than informants or respondents, the interviewees of this research are regarded as co-producers of knowledge. Furthermore, the interview responses are treated in this dissertation not as giving direct access to ‘experience’ but as actively constructed ‘narratives’ involving activities which themselves demand analysis,¹³ the ultimate of which is *verstehen* in the Weberian sense.

1.3. Methodological Caveats

Like most social science research, the research undertaken has some limitations. First limitation concerns the activists interviewed. In terms of the interviewees, males overweigh the females while older people overweigh the younger ones. The distorted distribution of the interviewees in terms of age and sex is a result of the characteristics of Circassian organizations in Turkey: they are dominated by elders and men. Hence, this research is bound with these limitations of the phenomenon which is being studied. A further research may decompose and demystify these so-called traditional and

¹² J. Mason, “Qualitative Interviewing: Asking, Listening and Interpreting,” in *Qualitative Research in Action*, ed. T. May (London: Sage, 2002), 225-241, 227.

¹³ D. Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2000), 36.

organizational hierarchies through focusing extensively on women and young people but this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Secondly, ethnic groups, just like any other communities are not homogeneous entities. Within them, multiple groups with different or differently ranked priorities, interests and discourses coexist. Not all people who identify themselves as Circassians in Turkey choose to be members of Caucasian Associations or consider themselves as Circassian activists. The identifications, relations and discourses of Circassians in Turkey are much more varied and complex than those of the Circassian activists. A study that aims to include all these groups requires a more extensive research that should be conducted in multiple cities among multiple status groups with the use of multiple research techniques. Hence, rather than being a study on Circassian diaspora in Turkey, this dissertation is the study of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey which is embraced by a group of people prioritizing their Circassian origins. As such, it tells a lot about Circassians in Turkey but it is not a complete analysis of it. Circassian nationalists are, by no means, the sole representer of the Circassians in Turkey but their claims to represent the community and the recognition of this claim by the Turkish state, historical homeland and other institutions make them crucial.

Thirdly, diaspora nationalists, by no means, form a homogeneous entity; within the diasporic community there are multiple nationalist groups that are differentiated along ideological, regional and ethnic/tribal lines. The term 'diaspora nationalists' denotes multiple groups with different priorities and ideological positions. Yet these groups share some minimal consensus on identity, history, culture; and they are able to assume a homogeneous voice and act as an entity at some particular historical moments. Diaspora nationalism of Circassians in Turkey should be read within such a chaotic, and yet, orderly context.

Fourthly, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, "Diaspora Nationalism," most of the Circassian activists and intellectuals interviewed for this research do not call themselves 'Circassian nationalists.' Their definition of nationalism is different than the demands of cultural rights, group rights, protection and development of ethnic identity; a reference to a sacred historical homeland etc. Therefore calling them diaspora nationalists was my decision as the researcher. In several instances within which I asked them about diaspora

nationalism, they did not like and accept the identification since diaspora nationalism, as a term, sounded quite similar to Turkish nationalism or Russian nationalism which they encountered each day. Rather than a limitation, this imposition of the researcher in terms of identification should be stated as a caveat of this dissertation.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This dissertation aims to contribute to literatures on diaspora, nationalism, gender, and ethnicity and nationalism in Turkey on several grounds.

Firstly, it contributes to the literature on diaspora. Since the 1990s, as diaspora politics has proved to be effective in many parts of the world, diaspora studies have increased. Ironically, the notion of diaspora becomes more blurred in such a context. I argue that rather than identifying diasporic experience and identity with some particular communities, literature and theoretical debates on diaspora should be supported by multiple case studies that explore the fields of meanings, experiences and practices pertaining to the diasporic communities. This dissertation aims to provide a case study of an under-researched diaspora. Proliferation and amplification of the case studies of diasporas will further our understanding of diasporic experience, condition and strategies in particular, and the theories of diaspora in general.

Furthermore, most of the diaspora studies explain their focus on diaspora in terms of the tensions between the nation-states and the diaspora communities. Yet diasporas are living communities and political groups. From such a perspective, diasporas should be analyzed not just as a particular kind of politics that locates itself *vis-à-vis* the nation-states but also as political bodies that are formed through the interplays of several discourses, such as nationalism, gender, citizenship and militarism. Hence, understanding and exploring the particular discourses and strategies that make such a politics possible and ‘meaningful’ is crucial. Exploring the ways in which diaspora communities enhance

nationalisms is one of the ways to understand diasporas and their politics. Such an approach contributes to diaspora theory by transforming diaspora from a “*vis-à-vis* the nation state” position to the crossroads where multiple discourses on gender, nationalism, ethnicity and globalization form the diasporic sites.

Secondly, this dissertation is a contribution to the theoretical literature on nationalism. Most studies on nationalism start with the fact that not all nations or nationalisms have nation-states. Yet such an acknowledgment remains as a caveat in the theories of nationalism. What these theories focus is nationalism with nation-states, hence ‘successful’ nationalist projects that invent, imagine, and create the nation. This dissertation contributes to our understanding of nationalisms without nation-states by exploring the question of how the nation is imagined in the absence of a nation-state but in the presence of a claimed and imagined homeland and multiple attachments.

Thirdly, this dissertation is a contribution to gender studies. A closer look at women’s studies in Turkey reveals that they have evolved throughout time; they have studied women through a Kemalist ideological framework, through sociological village studies, through modernization theories and finally, through feminist frameworks that have been dominant after the 1980s.¹⁴ In the 1990s, women's studies in Turkey have re-read nationalism, Kemalism and modernism from a gender perspective. They have questioned the Kemalist project of modernity and nation-building as a profoundly gendered project that has created a new form of patriarchy. Such a perspective and analysis have proved to be crucial for social science to question and de-sanctify Kemalist, modernist nationalism and its myths on woman’s rights, emancipation of women and Westernization. Yet, to the extent that women's studies focus solely on Kemalist nationalism as the constructor, liberator, emancipator or the oppressor, they run the risk of ignoring and overlooking other nationalisms in Turkey that simultaneously construct masculinities and femininities. Hence, “feminist scholarship has created its own margins and silences reflecting the exclusionary cultural politics in Turkey throughout Republican history”.¹⁵ Ironically desanctification of Kemalist nationalism as ‘the nationalism’ has created its own

¹⁴ Y. Arat, “Women Studies in Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 9 (1993): 119-135.

¹⁵ A. Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 57.

sanctification and recreated the silences and voids that are at the heart of the Turkish official historiography which these studies aim to deconstruct and challenge.¹⁶

This dissertation claims that Kemalist nationalism is the hegemonic nationalism in Turkey but not ‘the nationalism’ in terms of permeating into, constructing, engendering and constraining the gendered sphere of the social meanings and practices. ‘Other’ nationalisms that coexist with, that are related to but different from Turkish nationalism also construct the discourses and experiences of masculinity and femininity in Turkey. Such a perspective does not only deconstruct and re-read the ‘other’ nationalisms from gender lenses but it will also give gender studies in Turkey “a more complicated historical diversity than is permitted by the opposition male/female, a diversity that is also differently expressed for different purposes in different contexts.”¹⁷ This dissertation aims to contribute to the discovery of multiple masculinities and femininities that are essential subtexts of multiple nationalisms which are unequal players of the same social and political geography.

Finally, this dissertation which studies Circassian nationalism in Turkey is a contribution to the literature on ethnicity and nationalism in Turkey. Circassian community in Turkey is an under-researched ethnic group. Within the academic studies on ethnic groups in Turkey Circassians are either unmentioned or added into the research as footnotes or parentheses. Studies and debates on ethnicity in Turkey are dominated by a focus on “the Kurdish question”¹⁸ and studies on minority groups focus on Jewish, Greek and Armenian groups.¹⁹

This study argues that a better understanding of ethnicity and nationalism in Turkey

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ J. Scott quoted in J. Squires, *Gender in Political Theory* (Malden, Mass: Polity Press, 2000), 130.

¹⁸ See for instance, M. Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999); W. Jwaideh, *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi Kökenleri ve Gelişimi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999); K. Kirişçi and G. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (International Specialized Book Services, 1997); E. J. Zürcher, ed., *Türkiye’de Emik Çatışma: İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2005).

¹⁹ See for instance, A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001); R.Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999); “Bir Zamanlar Ermeniler Vardı!..” sayısı, *Birikim* 194 (2005); Y. Koçoğlu, *Hatırlıyorum* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003).

should include analyses of the other ethnic groups whose histories and experiences are shaped not only by explicit oppression, assimilation or conflict but by a more subtle set of relationships, tensions and flirts with official historiography and Turkish nationalism. A deconstructionist approach towards 'the nationalism' requires not prioritizing and reifying one ethnic group among many others as 'the most oppressed' but exploring the various spaces in which meanings and practices of ethnicity, identity and citizenship are created and recreated. These meanings and practices that pertain to ethnicity and citizenship should be read not only through the notions of assimilation, oppression, conflict or ethnic 'problem' but also within their own complexity, with the recognition of the multiplicity of actors that shape and are shaped by the terrains of nationalism, ethnicity and citizenship.

Hence, a study on Circassians in Turkey will not only contribute to our understanding of the multiple sites of ethnicity in Turkey but also allow us to explore nationalisms of the 'others' who locate themselves *vis-à-vis* and through Turkish nationalism. This study aims to analyze Circassian nationalists as actors who interact with and articulate multiple discourses on nation, nationalism, diaspora and Turkish nationalism.

Bringing Circassian nationalism into dialogue with official historiography and the recent literature on Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms will enrich our understanding of ethnicity and nationalism in Turkey. Shedding light on the spaces within which multiple ethnic identities and nationalisms in Turkey are played out will contextualize Turkish official historiography as a political discourse that creates ethnic hegemony through legitimizing a particular historical approach. In addition, an analysis of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey will contribute to our understanding of how ethnic groups in Turkey locate themselves *vis-à-vis* and through Turkish nationalism and historiography. Such an approach that underlines the multiplicity of ethnic groups and identities that are formed in close relationship with Turkish nationalist historiography can bring nationalist historiography and Turkish nationalism into its full dimensions.

1.5. Organization of the Study

The following chapter, “Studying Circassians in Turkey” aims to discuss first, my experience as a researcher with Circassian origins during the fieldwork conducted for this study and second, a brief history of the Circassians in general and in Turkey in particular.

Chapter 3, “Diaspora Nationalism” aims to explore the theoretical debates on diaspora and diaspora nationalism, their changing meanings and roles in world politics since the 1990s. After discussing how the notion of diaspora is employed in this study, the chapter briefly explains why Circassians in Turkey are regarded in this study as a diaspora, rather than an ethnic group or a minority group. The next part aims to map diaspora nationalism: it argues that Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey has four interrelated forms since the nineteenth century. After analyzing the discourses of diaspora nationalists on hegemonic nationalism, Turkish nationalism; the final part of the chapter discusses how diaspora nationalists situate themselves and maneuver within/through/*vis-à-vis* nationalism in general and Turkish nationalism in particular.

The next chapter, “Host Community and Host State” explores diasporic relations with the host on two interrelated and yet, separate levels: community and state. To unfold these relations, this chapter first locates Circassians within Turkish nationalism. This dissertation takes Circassian diaspora nationalism not as a phenomenon that takes place in isolation but through profound and continuous interactions with Turkish nationalism. Literature on Circassians lacks how Turkish nationalism deals with Circassians, how Circassians are located by the hegemonic nationalist discourse in Turkey. However, understanding Circassian community in Turkey requires an analysis of the discursive constructions of Circassians in Turkish nationalist discourse. To explore how Circassians are located, identified and categorized in Turkish national discourse, this part of the chapter analyzes the nationalist texts that may be considered the constitutive elements of Turkish nationalism such as the texts produced by Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Mustafa Kemal, Recep Peker, Afet-İnan, etc.; the political party programs and the nation-

state policies to the extent that they pertain to Circassians in Turkey.

The next part of the chapter explores how Circassian identity is being defined and experienced in Turkey through the narratives of Circassian diaspora nationalists. To better understand these narratives, the Circassians' perceptions on how they are received and perceived by 'the Others' are examined. Finally, relationships with the Turkish state are explored. In this exploration, the narratives of Circassian activists on *MİT* (National Intelligence Organization) and education in Turkey are interrogated to better understand the complex nature of the relationships between Circassian diaspora and Turkish state.

Chapter 5, "Diaspora in Transformation" aims to explore Circassian diaspora nationalism in line with the post-Soviet transformation, the processes of globalization, the rise of ethnic nationalisms and identity politics in the 1990s. It analyzes the transformation of Circassian diaspora in the 1990s on three interrelated levels. The first level concerns the homeland: after examining the relationships of the Circassian diaspora with the Caucasus and the meanings Circassian activists attached to the notion of homeland during the Soviet Era and Cold War, this chapter discusses the transformation of these relations into new and systematic encounters, and new problems of establishing new relations with the homeland. The second level of transformation concerns the relations with the host community: the transformation of Circassians' relations with the Turkish state and how Circassians, as an ethnic group in Turkey situate themselves in terms of the current ethnic problems in Turkey, namely the Kurdish question and claims of Armenian genocide. The third level aims to explore the transformations on the community level and understand how the Circassian community's constructions of its past and future have been transformed.

Chapter 6, "Diaspora Nationalism and Gender" starts with the theoretical debates on nationalism, diaspora and gender to understand how a gendered reading of diasporas and their nationalisms may contribute to social science. The next part explores the construct of Circassian Beauty as a gendered image and interrogates its implications as an Orientalist figure, as an historical and popular image in Turkey, and as an item on the agenda of Circassian diaspora nationalists. The chapter then re-reads Circassian diaspora nationalism through gendered lenses. As diaspora nationalisms are sustained by particular constructions of masculinity and femininity, the nationalist discourse in diasporic contexts links itself to the homeland and the host country through these gender constructions. Re-

reading diaspora from a gender perspective will shed light on the centrality of the reproduction of particular types of masculinities and femininities within diaspora nationalism which strategizes, bargains and narrates from “in-between.” Finally, I will employ the notion of diasporic patriarchy in order to unfold the gender dimensions of the Circassian diasporic identity and diaspora nationalism in Turkey.

CHAPTER 2

STUDYING CIRCASSIANS IN TURKEY

This chapter aims to explore first, my experiences in the field in terms of studying Circassians which is my own community and second, history of Circassians in general and Circassians in Turkey in particular. The first part of the chapter aims to explore my experience as an insider researcher since interviews on which this study is based took place within a series of negotiations between the researcher and the interviewees. This part aims to understand what such a position meant for this research. The second part aims to give a relatively brief history of Circassians which is to some extent narrated by the Circassian diaspora activists. Hence, this chapter serves as an introduction to the research and the group, Circassians in Turkey which this dissertation studies.

2.1. Studying My Own Community

Before the field, when I was writing the research project, I thought that a set of problems might result from my identity as a Circassian throughout the research. Such an identity might have several effects: in terms of documents, it might ease the problems of accessibility and trust; in terms of interviews it might either establish bonds of trust between the interviewees and interviewer or result in resistance on the side of the

interviewees in terms of sharing some of their experiences, feelings or perspectives with someone from their own ethnic group –whom they are likely to know by kinship, kin surnames, networks etc.

In the literature, several accounts of social scientists -especially anthropologists- explore the implications of insider position for the research.¹ For instance, Soraya Altorki who conducted fieldwork among members of her own status group in her own society in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia states that despite certain immediate advantages such as the intimate knowledge of the vernacular, the ability to quickly “set up shop” in the field, and familiarity with the people and environment; a number of problems also had to be confronted such as the requirement of abiding by the norms expected of her as a native; overcoming the reluctance of informants to provide her with direct answers to her questions concerning religious practices and intra-family conflicts; and resocializing herself into her own culture.² For Stephenson and Greer, while familiarity with the culture under study may be a bonus, prior knowledge of the people studied provides no guaranteed advantage.³ According to Ganguly, though the status as a daughter/son of the community might make it difficult for the researcher to negotiate questions of authority, such a position might also provide an exemption from the hostility and indifference that some researchers face in the field.⁴ Given these methodological debates and my expectations before the research, I will now share my experiences in the field.

First of all, the initial reactions to my research by the informants were always in the form of appreciation: they appreciated me for studying such a topic and a community “which needs to be studied carefully.” I was celebrated as the researcher “who will now

¹ For further debates on the complexities of researcher’s identity and positioning as an insider, see for instance, L. Abu-Loghodi, “Writing against Culture,” in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. R.G. Fox (Santa Fe: School of American University Press, 1991), 137-162; R. Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993); D. K. Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); K. Narayan, “How Native is a “Native” Anthropologist?” *American Anthropologist* 95(3) (1993): 671-686.

² S. Altorki, “At Home in the Field,” in *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, eds. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 49-68, 49.

³ J. B. Stephenson and L. S. Greer, “Ethnographers in their Own Cultures: Two Appalachian Cases,” *Human Organization* 40(2) (1981): 123-130, 129.

⁴ K. Ganguly, “Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood,” *Cultural Studies* 6(1) (1992): 27-49.

understand us” *vis-à-vis* other researchers whom they regarded as unable to understand Circassian culture, community and history.

During the initial contacts and the interviews, the people I interviewed regarded me as one of themselves. Some of them had ties of kinship and friendship to my family while some of them knew my family name. “In a society where family is an all-important institution in structuring social relationships, it stands to reason that the people ...wished to place me within the context of a family.”⁵ In my research, the relationships of my family established my *entrée* into the community while some people whom I interviewed also knew me or my name from the Circassian associations where I voluntarily worked in the youth committees some years ago.

Yet my position as an insider was not an absolute. These positions of insider and outsider are fragile notions in terms of boundaries as “my participant-informants positioned me as insider and outsider, demonstrating how the rigidity of these boundaries can collapse.”⁶ Thus, the shifting positions of outsider and insider were prevalent in my research: while I was continuously celebrated as ‘one of us’ (with the phrases such as “you know it too,” “you know the community well” etc.), I was also sometimes transformed into the outsider position since I was an urban Circassian raised in the cities, not in the villages; since I did not know the Circassian language; since –based on those- there was a high possibility that I might not exactly know the traditions (*xabze*).

Despite my changing positions as an outsider and insider, I was most often regarded as “our researcher who will understand us better.” Due to being considered “our researcher who will now understand the Circassian community in Turkey,” I was provided with every kind of material that, they thought, would interest me during and after the interviews: they shared their family trees, books, reports, photographs, magazines and contacts with me. Some informants shared their evenings after work and Saturday mornings with me so that we would work better. Hence, they regarded my research very important and each of them stated this not only verbally but also through their actions, the gifts they gave me, the times

⁵ S. Shami, “Studying Your Own: The Complexities of a Shared Culture,” in *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, eds. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press,1988), 115-138, 129.

⁶ N. Halstead, “Ethnographic Encounters. Positionings within and outside the Insider Frame,” *Social Anthropology* 9(3)(2001):307-321, 307.

they spent with me etc. Though most of them published several books, articles or stories on Circassians, they stated that it was “different that I wrote and studied Circassians.” To that extent, I was considered different from them as a researcher “who knows how to do it scientifically” and also I was considered different from other researchers in terms of my insider position.

Lewis states that such an insider position is different from the outsider position as far as the relations between the community and the researcher are concerned:

“There is a growing fear that the information collected by an outsider, someone not constrained by group values and interests, will expose the group to outside manipulation and control... The insider, on the other hand, is accountable; s/he must remain in the community and take responsibility for her/his actions. Thus, s/he is forced through self-interest to exercise discretion.”⁷

Hence, the researcher constitutes a threat of exposure and judgment for the communities. On such a threat, Altorki states that while the question of exposure to the public can be bridged by trust and confidence in the researcher, the threat of judgment is harder to overcome for the insider.⁸ In my case, age became a very critical variable that structured my relations in the field. As a younger Circassian, I already was not considered in a position to judge them since Circassian culture, traditions and hence codes of behavior always prioritize the elders over the younger ones.

In terms of trust, as the insider I almost had full trust in the field. However, the concept of trust is a relative concept and it needs to be clarified: what I experienced in the field was the trust of a Circassian to another Circassian. They trusted me to the extent that they trusted any Circassian whom they knew or they did not know. Thus, in some instances, issues of mistrust were a reflection of mistrust in the community itself and its members. When I was demanding his consent to use a recorder, Gürtuğ, for instance, looked at my recorder and stated that “I, too, would use a voice-recorder like that if I were an agent.” During the interview, while telling about his life history, he mentioned that

⁷ D. Lewis quoted in S. Altorki, “At Home in the Field,” in *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, eds. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 49-68, 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

these information that he was telling already “existed in the files of those people who were after him” and I mentioned that I did not know and I did not have access to those kinds of things. After some time, when asking questions about the state, I provoked Gürtuğ a little to further explore the origins of his thoughts on me, ‘the researcher’ whom he never met before:

“Setenay: The state... When we started the interview, you told that these [information] existed in the files.

Gürtuğ: You will add these; then, it will get richer. [*Bunları da ilave edersiniz, zenginleşir.*]

Setenay: Will I? ...Will I just wander like that if I had such an access?

Gürtuğ: I am joking. Here there are so many people like that. [*Öyleleri çok burada.*]

Setenay: I do not have these [access to those]. I wish I had those so that I would not wander around so much [for interviews].

Gürtuğ: No, we do not have anything secret. [*Yok, gizli bir şeyimiz yoktur.*]⁹

What Gürtuğ referred as “here” was the Circassian association in Ankara; and his expectations of me were reflections of his expectations from the Circassians. What shaped his expectations from me whom he never met before was the myth of *MİT* (National Intelligence Organization) which was prevalent in every interview in different forms and levels. As the myth of *MİT* will be further explored in Chapter 4, “Host Community and Host State”, the basic idea included in the myth is that any Circassian can be a member, collaborator, agent or something of *MİT* or other mechanisms of surveillance. Therefore, without knowing me in person, Gürtuğ started the interview with the possibility that I might be something else than a PhD student. As a Circassian and as a researcher specialized in “Political Science,” my research was suspect. The myth of *MİT* was so dominant in the interviews that I sometimes caught myself thinking whether or not I interviewed any of these “collaborators.”

Another instance of suspicion took place in the interview with Nurhan. Nurhan was the only person who did not consent to the use of the voice recorder at all as some other

⁹ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

interviewees preferred to close the recorder while answering some questions. While rejecting the use of the recorder which was among her personal rights as an interviewee, Nurhan stated that as a Circassian in Turkey she was terrified after the assassination of Hrant Dink.¹⁰ Interview with Nurhan took place in March 2007, two months after the assassination of Hrant Dink. Then Nurhan stated that she could not purchase a subscription of the newspaper *Agos*¹¹ since she was warned by her maid that there was the branch of an ultra nationalist political party nearby. Interestingly, Nurhan, who was a retired person in her early 70s, was taking care of the sick people in her family for the last ten years and she had not been active in terms of participating into Circassian events, associations etc. Yet, as one of the earliest interviews of my research and closest to the assassination of Hrant Dink, she believed that she had to be more cautious in terms of issues of ethnicity. Interview with Nurhan made me concerned about the future interviews since her fears and concerns that had been triggered after Hrant Dink's assassination overcame her fifty years of friendship with many members of my family that goes beyond generations. After such an experience of closure, I chose to give a break to the interviews. I had my next interview two months later.

The problems of caution and suspect did not take place in other interviews in such explicit forms. Yet I do not think that the examples of Nurhan and Gürtuğ were exceptions; these two examples were just the ones who were very concerned and restless. During the other interviews, the fragile questions were answered in lower voices; for instance, the stories on *MİT* were always told in these lower voices. Furthermore, sometimes some parts of the life histories, some thoughts and concerns were told just after the interviews when we were chatting: such as the punishment of Meral for not singing the Turkish national anthem in the school ceremony; Nesibe's concern about what her son who had a Circassian name and no Turkish name would do during the military service [*"Ve ismi de X, üstelik başka, Türkçe ismi de yok, nasıl olacak bilmiyorum."*]; the debate of Yasemin with a film

¹⁰ Hrant Dink was a Turkish Armenian journalist and columnist. He was the editor-in-chief of the bilingual Turkish-Armenian newspaper *Agos*. He was assassinated in Istanbul in January 2007 by a 17-year old Turkish nationalist. As the event led to public protests in Turkey, media covered both the assassination and its afterwards widely.

¹¹ *Agos* ("Furrow") is an Armenian weekly newspaper published in Istanbul, Turkey. Established on April 1996, it has a circulation of around 5,000. Hrant Dink was its chief editor from the newspaper's start until his assassination in January 2007.

producer working on a film on imperial harem, and her ideas that Ottoman palace mimicked Caucasian life styles and that Caucasian women in the Harem were stronger in personality and authority than they were being imagined.¹² [*“Yok öyle bir şey. Oradaki kadınlar başat roldeydi. Bir tanesi padişaha meydan okuyor. Ben diyor sizden daha eski bir tarihe sahibim.”*]

It is not a coincidence that these three examples of disclosure after the interviews come from female interviews. Gender has been another significant variable in my research experience. As a result of the traditional limitations of the Circassian culture and my gender as the interviewer, women were more comfortable during the interviews in terms of talking about the personal while men were more constrained. Unlike male interviewees, they also asked me a lot of personal questions.

During most of the interviews, I was there not only as a researcher but also as a person whose life history and identity was part of the interview. As such a position is valid for all researchers, I was always personally included in the accounts of the interviewees: “You bear the name, we have the theme of Seteney Guashe”; “In those days, you were not born yet”; “The Kabardian dialect you speak... has the voices of the forest... You are not able to say it but they whistle”; “Especially in Uzunyayla where you, too, belong ...maybe you heard about it, there were confrontations among your people [*sizinkilerden*] too.” As some of these information were given by me, some were being known implicitly as part of the knowledge of the community. Thus, I was always reminded that they knew me personally and my life history was embedded in their personal histories. Furthermore, as acquaintances, my interviewees usually asked and told me about my relatives as well as their relationships with them. Some older interviewees knew my family tree better than I had ever known.

Therefore I was received and treated as a “daughter” of the community. Seteney Shami, in her study of her own community, Circassians in Jordan, explores her position as the “daughter:”

“In the Circassian research, I felt that all avenues were open to me. Common ethnicity overrode class and gender differences. Being the daughter and

¹² Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul; Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul; Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

granddaughter of people whom my informants knew or could remember, would immediately establish the atmosphere of trust which is essential for good rapport. In addition, the fact of my being Circassian established in my informants' eyes enough motivation on my part to be involved in such a research project. While other anthropologists may often have to justify their interest, mine was automatically put down to "ethnic patriotism." This allowed me access to information, opinions, and emotions that I have no doubt would have been denied to a non-Circassian. On the other hand, it also laid a heavy responsibility upon me. To a community that was undergoing a great deal of change and anxiety about its ethnic identity, my research seemed to confirm its "specialness" and the reality of its cultural distinctiveness. Often my informants would thank me for my efforts, irrespective of whether they expected to see any results from the fieldwork."¹³

Another anthropologist, Gönül Ertem in her research on Circassians in Eskişehir highlights her position as a researcher from Ankara who is "not really Circassian and who just knows that she had a great-grandmother who was known to be Circassian:"¹⁴ "I ask my reader to travel through discourses, places, relations of authenticity, difference and change, as I did as a *misafir kız* among the Cherkess. In the *Misafir Kız* role, I was at different moments taken into different groups as a guest-daughter, as an elder sister as well as being trusted as an independent 'Cherkess' women."¹⁵

In terms of negotiations of positionality, my negotiations were similar to Seteney Shami's experiences in the field. In terms of the expectations from the daughter, my education did not provide any flexibility or autonomy. Furthermore, through my position as the daughter, the power asymmetry between the researcher and the researched was continuously transcended. Being the insider, I was supposed to know and fit into the cultural repertoire indispensable for membership in the community. For instance, in the interview with Zekeriya, aged 88, the so-called hierarchy between the researcher and the

¹³ S. Shami, "Studying Your Own: The Complexities of a Shared Culture," in *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, eds. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 115-138, 136. I argue that Seteney Shami's position in the field might not only be due to her Circassian identity but also to the fact that she was the granddaughter of İsmail Berkok, the author of the book *Caucasus in History*. Berkok was one of the Circassian diaspora nationalists of the late Ottoman Empire and Republican era and made travels to Caucasus as a soldier of the Turkish state. I argue that he was a very unique and a very well-known person in the Circassian diaspora.

¹⁴ B. G. Ertem, *Dancing to Modernity: Cultural Politics of Cherkess Nationhood in the Heartland of Turkey* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2000), 54.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

researched was toppled from the very beginning. After I informed him about my affiliations, my research, the principles of anonymity etc. and took his permission to use a recorder, Zekeriya told me to sit down. I sat down. Meanwhile, he was wandering around to have some walking exercise. Worried that such a distance would impede conversation and also the recording; and also restless to be sitting while an elder Circassian was standing up –which would be considered against ‘tradition’; I stood up and I told Zekeriya in a very low voice that “I wish you had sat, too.” [“*Siz de otursaydınız.*”] He asked me whether he would not sit down if I did not ask him.¹⁶ [“*Sen söylemezsen ben oturmayacak mıyım?*”] Calling me “donkey” without raising his voice, he pretended that he was angry and he slapped in my face very slowly, without hurting. I immediately apologized and sat. As I was very ashamed at that moment, I later realized that that instance was the establishment of the power relationship between us. Despite my tension during the interview as a result of this event, Zekeriya did not feel any tension or he did not imply anything about that moment: the relation was fixed and that symbolic act of fixing the hierarchy was bygone for him. At that instance of our encounter, Zekeriya established that he was the *thamade* who had the ultimate say in all matters as I was the young Circassian. He enjoyed reiterating the usual and ‘traditional’ scenario of Circassian social life: *thamade* who leads the young Circassian in a semi-harsh and semi-humorous manner and the young Circassian who just collapses out of shame. Later on I realized that to the extent that the scenario was performed, Zekeriya was indeed disclosing his own identity and affirming the existence of the Circassian identity and community.

As I was expected to abide by the norms as the insider, I tried to be careful about these norms; I tried not to ask elders their state of their health directly; I tried not to sit cross-legged; I tried not to turn my back etc. Yet I believe that abiding these roles as the insider consolidated the interviewees’ trust in me since during the interviews, they, frequently, and voluntarily transcended those cultural limitations and norms. They, who were not supposed to use the names of their wives and children according to traditions and who would be careful about that in daily life, told me very personal details such as how they got married, how they got divorced, what they thought about their children’s future

¹⁶ Zekeriya, interview by author, 28 February 2007, İstanbul.

marriages etc. Hence, as the researcher who also knew how to abide by the rules of the community, I was let to go beyond the traditional boundaries.

My position as the daughter of the community also enabled them to ‘protect’ me through warnings. Some of the interviewees had some warnings regarding my research. For instance, Nurhan, after she shared her concerns about the assassination of Hrant Dink, warned me about the risks involved in my research: “Are you doing that research on the future of Circassians, diaspora? When your mother told me, I found it a little risky. It is not risky for me of course, but it may be risky for you.”¹⁷

As the daughter, my experience in the field was similar to Schramm’s research experience in Ghana: “Yet in none of my interviews with a Pan-African-minded person was I allowed to take up the position of the sole investigator. The dynamics of question-and-answer were rather unpredictable and I myself was often therefore being turned into a subject of research.”¹⁸ As Schramm explains her experience as a stranger who was marked in very negative terms such as alien, intruder and enemy; she states that the continuous friction that she experienced in field forced her to acknowledge that she had a white subject position and that it was not a neutral one.¹⁹ Unlike Schramm, my position was an insider position and yet mine was not a neutral one, too.

During the interviews, I was turned into a subject of research on several grounds because for the interviewees I was more than a researcher. Most often after the interviews and sometimes during the interviews, I was being tested by my interviewees who were checking whether or not I knew the meaning of my own name; whether and to what extent I could speak Circassian; and whether I knew *xabze* etc.

The younger male interviewees and female interviewees of all ages asked my future marriage plans as some of my questions regarded masculinity, femininity, marriage, and the gendered dimensions of Circassian diaspora in Turkey. For instance, after one of the interviews, a female interviewee asked me about what I thought about marriage and then

¹⁷ Nurhan, interview by author, 23 March 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁸ K. Schramm, “ ‘You Have your Own History: Keep Your Hands off Ours!’: On Being Rejected in the Field,” *Social Anthropology* 13(2) (2005): 171-183, 182.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

advised me to marry a Circassian or at worst an American or Englishman since I, as a Circassian, “would not be able to make it otherwise.” In another instance, again a female interviewee asked me about marriage. When I told her that I did not exactly know about my future decisions, she said “Then you are saying you will marry whoever comes, aren’t you?” [*Ha kim olsa evlenirim diyorsun, öyle mi?*]

Yet these reactions were not tensions that were related to our interviews. They were related to my position as the insider, as the daughter of the community. On that level, I was more than a researcher; I was associated with the young Circassians and the present situation -or even the future- of the Circassian community in Turkey as Zekeriya concluded the interview on his larger perception of me and my research:

“[With those organizations] the culture persisted. Without them ...Circassian language would have been forgotten to a greater extent. Just like Seteney who is 21 years old and does not know Circassian despite her interest, everybody would be Seteney. [*Herkes Seteneyleşirdi.*] Well, they would have forgotten Circassianhood, they would have had the idea that s/he was a Circassian and that Circassians had a culture. Now Seteney is dealing with that. If you go to the Uzunyayla association, you will learn a thousand words in two or three months. There is also one in Bağlarbaşı [association]. Look for an opportunity to go to one of them.”²⁰

As the insider position enriched my research, expectations from me were also high. As they shared their experiences with other researchers, I “would be different from those researchers who could not understand” the Circassians in Turkey and their culture. For instance, Nezhik wished that I would be a girl who would serve the Kabardian culture.

As some accounts in literature highlight that some considerations may inhibit a researcher working in his or her own society from the possibility of expressing opposite views;²¹ in my case, more than the question of potential and severe ostracism, what concerned me most during the interviews and writing the dissertation has been the confidentiality of data. Several accounts state this as a common concern for indigenous researchers since it is known from experience what will happen to informants if such

²⁰ Zekeriya, interview by author, 28 February 2007, İstanbul.

²¹ Colson quoted in S. Altorki, “At Home in the Field,” in *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, eds. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 49-68, 62.

information is traced back to them²² and researcher is concerned about the misuse of the published information by governments and power elites against the people studied.²³ Meanwhile, most of my informants seemed not to share my concerns: most of them insisted me to use their own names and stated that they had “nothing to hide.” I think that apart from the cultural trait of courage that Circassians attributed to themselves, this may be due to the fact that they live with several myths of surveillance such as the myth of *MİT* which will be explored in Chapter 4: hence their fears and concerns are normalized and demystified. Also as the activists, their insistence that their names could be used implied that they ventured any kind of risks involved in their activism. Furthermore, most of them were like Gürtuğ in their belief that there were “several files about them” so they thought there was nothing new to add to them.

In short, I argue that insider position, studying his/her own society had some advantages and disadvantages for the researcher. In terms of disadvantages, first, the researcher may be drawn into too much details, community gossips, internal conflicts, very personal tensions etc. Moreover, the over-narration of these tensions, debates etc. may be utilized by the interviewees as a means to overcome and ignore the more ‘risky’ questions. Secondly, the research experience is overtly more personal than an outsider researcher would have experienced. Humiliation, shame, responsibility, concerns over the inability to meet the expectations and concerns about community’s responses may be among the experiences of the insider researcher in the field. Thirdly, insider research means experiencing constant negotiations and constantly shifting positions. As this happens also in the research of outsiders, the negotiations are quicker and sharper for the insider researcher who plays several roles at the same time so it is harder to negotiate the relationships in the field.

In terms of advantages, first, it is relatively easier to build trust as an insider. Secondly, once trust is built, unrestricted access to documents, materials and further help is possible. Furthermore, acquainted with the culture, structure, debates and politics of the

²² Stephenson and Greer quoted in S. Altorki, “At Home in the Field,” in *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, eds. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 49-68, 62.

²³ S. Altorki, “At Home in the Field,” in *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, eds. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 49-68, 62.

group and given that these acquaintances are known by the interviewees, they share stories, ideas and details that they might not have shared with other researchers. In my case, some life histories that were not told by the interviewees themselves were completed by the other interviewees who, in their very detailed discussions about the community and multiple groups in the community, were unaware that they were sharing what the others did not tell about themselves. Hence, I was also informed about what the interviewees concealed during the interviews. Though I did not add or use these details which they did not share with me in the interviews, the opportunity to think about their reasons of concealment enabled me to understand them much better. Thirdly, I also argue that as an insider, the researcher who is expected to abide by the norms is able to grasp the norms and observe them in practice much better unless s/he normalizes these codes and norms. Fourthly, I believe that an insider position may change interviewees' interest in the research, researcher and the interview. As the insider, I believe that I often heard the most interesting and less censured forms of stories, events and narratives since my interviewees believed that "I would understand them" much better than a non-Circassian researcher.

2.2. Circassians

The Circassians referring themselves as Adyge are the indigenous people of the North-West Caucasus.²⁴ Circassian community is composed of several tribes, clans, and each of these has different dialects, languages, folklore and traditions. Yet, historically in Turkey and in the other host countries within which Circassians are settled, they are named as Circassians as a rubric.

²⁴ For a detailed analysis of geography, languages, history, traditions and culture of Caucasus see for instance J. Colarusso, "Peoples of the Caucasus," in *Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, ed. P. Pike (Eastword Publications: Ohio, 1997); A. O. Erkan, *Tarih Boyunca Kafkasya* (Çivi Yazıları: Istanbul, 1999).

This study employs the name Circassian in a different sense which is larger from the former definition that focuses on the North-West Caucasus. It uses “Circassian” as a historical category rather than the name of an ethnically homogenous group. The term Circassian here includes Adyge (including the Kabardian, Shapsug, Hatukuey, Beslenei, Bzedoug, Abzakh and so on) and other tribes (Chechens, Abkhaz groups). Though Chechens and Abkhaz are not considered to be Adyge, these groups are historically and spatially inseparable from the Adyges of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. Therefore, despite the debates on the term Circassian and variations with which the term is used in the Caucasus and other diasporic communities, this dissertation on Circassians in Turkey employs the term Circassian as a historical rubric for peoples originally from North Caucasia that have been settled in Turkey in the nineteenth century.²⁵

Employing the term Circassian as a historical category of identification, this part aims to explore the history of Circassians in general and Circassians in Turkey in particular. In addition to exploring the literature on Circassians, this part also aims to explore history with the help of interviews that this study is based on. Hence, literature review will be supported by explorations into how Circassian diaspora activists in Turkey narrate on particular historical transformations.

²⁵ As there are some opinions that Circassian as a term is an ambiguous one; Adyge, Abkhaz or smaller identities such as Chechen should be the means of identification and organization; that Caucasus today embraces a different definition and use of the term Circassian; this study takes historical coexistence in social life and organizations as significant. It is not meaningful to define Circassian solely as Adyge; since 19th century many groups coexisted with Adyge and used the label to define themselves. Hence, within the scope of this study, it is not meaningful to define Circassian solely as Adyge and exclude other groups. As contemporary debates among Circassians on the rise of different identities and organizations signify some change, whether or not such a political and social crystallization of other identities will have long term influences as far as Circassians in Turkey are concerned is yet to be seen.

2.2.1. Immigration

As the Caucasus had been the subject of one of the main clashes between the Ottoman State and Russia,²⁶ the immigration which Circassian community in Turkey today calls “Great Exodus” took place after Crimean War (1853-1856) at the peak of Russian expansionist policy. Though the flight from the Caucasus started in the 1820s on a small scale and gained speed in the early 1860s as some Circassians has fled “to escape the forced sedentarization and Christianization programs of the Russian state,”²⁷ immigration reached its peak in the mid 1860s after Russia issued a decree commanding Circassians to abandon their homelands. The final pacification of the Northern Caucasus and the first exodus came in 1864.

Though immigration had been unanticipated and troublesome in terms of extent, Ottoman government strategically encouraged and accepted the immigrants as new human capital to strengthen the presence of Muslims in the areas inhabited by Christians, to employ Circassians as a military force in the suppression of nationalist movements, to fortify the Ottoman army especially *vis-à-vis* the Russian Army, and to settle them as a buffer against the separatist powers in the country.²⁸ Apart from the Ottoman government's strategic acceptance of the immigrants; religious propaganda, social structure of the Circassian society and personal networks with the Ottoman Empire had also been influential in starting the mass immigration to Ottoman lands.²⁹

Pushed out by the Russian expansion into the Caucasus, and encouraged by the Ottoman Empire, large numbers of Circassians immigrated to Ottoman lands, into Anatolia,

²⁶ M. Budak, “The Caucasus in Ottoman-Russian Relations,” *Eurasian Studies* 1(4)(1995): 101-128, 101.

²⁷ D. Quataert, “The Age of Reforms,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914*, eds. H. Inalcık and D. Quataert (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994), 795.

²⁸ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 32; A. Kaya, “Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey,” *Mediterranean Politics*, 9(2)(2004): 221-239, 223.

²⁹ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 33.

Syrian Province and Balkans.³⁰ Yet the immigration process was far from being unproblematic.³¹ The major ports of entry for the immigrants were Trabzon, Samsun, Istanbul and Varna, each of which suffered shortages of food, medical facilities and housing due to the massive influx of immigrants which in some instances, led to disruption of public order and economic activity.³² According to one account, this mass displacement led to the death of one third of the people who fled their native country which is estimated to be 1.2 million.³³ Overwhelmed by the constant influx of immigrants, Ottoman state formed the Commission of General Administration of Immigrants (*İdare-i Umumiye-i Muhacirin Komisyonu*) in 1860 to deal with the settlement of the immigrants and control the ports of entry. The Commission immediately started negotiations with the Russian government to spread the deportations over a long period of time, establish better quarantine stations at the ports of deportation and provide the immigrants with some basic

³⁰ For Circassian diaspora in other countries, see J. Colarusso, "Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics," *The World & I* (November 1991): 656-669; M. Krusynski, "Circassian Princes in Poland: The Five Princes," accessed March 2005, accessible at <http://www.circassianworld.5u.com/kruszynski.html>; A. McGregor, "The Circassian Qubba-s of Abbas Avenue, Khartoum: Governors and Soldiers in 19th Century Sudan," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 10(1)(2001): 28-40; S. Shami, "Nineteenth Century Circassian Settlements in Jordan" in *Studies in History and Archeology of Jordan IV*, ed. A. Hadidi (Jordan: Department of Antiquities, 1992); S. Shami, "Prehistories of Globalization: Circassian Identity in Motion," *Public Culture* 12(1)(2000):177-204.

³¹ One of the eyewitnesses of the immigration, Ottoman Sanitary Inspector Dr. Barozzi describes the immigrants in Samsun in May 1864 as:

"Everywhere you meet with the sick, the dying and the dead; on the threshold of gates, in front of shops, in the middle of streets, in the squares, in the gardens, at the foot of trees. Everywhere dwelling, every corner of the streets, every spot occupied by the immigrants, has become a hotbed of infection... I undertook to empty this hotbed of pestilence. Even the porters refused to venture in the interior of this horrible hole (a warehouse)... There are at present 70,000 or 80,000 individuals without bread, and there is no one to keep them down in case of disorderly conduct... In a few days hence this number will be doubled... This immigration is an actual calamity." (*The Times*, 13 June 1864, 10, col. 4.)

³² A. U. Turgay, "Circassian Migration into the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1878," in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 216.

³³ J. McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims* (Princeton, New Jersey: Darwin Press, 1995), 36. The conditions of displacement, the use of sea way instead of land in most of the cases, the diseases etc. is also the starting point of the monologue of Circassians with Black Sea. Several Circassians in Turkey today refer to their older relatives who refuse to eat fish of the Black Sea with the impact of the bitter memories of the Exodus. Hence the demand "to reconcile with Black Sea" is no coincidence.

immediate needs before embarkation.³⁴ As these appeals were ignored by the Russian government, little financial support came from Europe.

The initial settlements were unplanned; and up to 1863, most of the immigrants were settled in Anatolia. When the number of immigrants swelled in 1863, the Ottoman policy of settlement shifted from one of expediency to planned settlements, and most of the Circassians were sent either to the areas where the Muslim population was in a minority such as Adrianople, Danube, or to the depopulated regions such as the vilayets of Diyarbakır, Aleppo.³⁵ One of the basic disagreements between Ottoman and Russian governments concerned the places of settlement of Circassians, and Russia had been successful in preventing the settlement of Circassians and resettling the groups that were already settled in areas close to Russian borderlands.³⁶

Eventually, after the flow of immigration began to ebb in the early 1870s, the Commission of General Administration of Immigrants was abolished and its duties were given to the Immigrants Administration (*Muhacirun İdaresi*) which would be further supported by the Charity Organization (*İane Komisyonu*) that was established by the order of the Sultan who stated that the arriving immigrants were “destitute and in need of charity and mercy and had taken refuge here because of the enemy's aggression on their lands, it was essential for the entire population of Istanbul to fulfill their [Islamic] obligations of hospitality and protection as already evident in the willingness of everybody to aid the immigrants”.³⁷ After 1887, the Ottoman government encouraged Muslim immigrants and revived the old High Immigration Commission (*Muhacirin Komisyonu Alisi*) which would be renamed as High Islamic Immigration Commission (*Muhacirin-i İslamiye Komisyon-u*

³⁴ A. U. Turgay, “Circassian Migration into the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1878,” in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 203.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁶ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 49.

³⁷ K. Karpat, “The Status of the Muslim under European Rule: The Eviction and Settlement of the Çerkes,” *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Brill: Leiden; Boston; Köln, 2002), 647-675, 660-661.

Alisi) in 1897 functioning under the chairmanship of the Sultan and superseding the authority of all other existing bodies.³⁸

As the number of immigrants from the Caucasus into Ottoman Empire range between 350,000 and 1 million in Russian sources, official documents of the Ottoman Empire indicate that up until June 1864, 595,000 Circassians had been settled in various parts of the empire.³⁹ Yet, given the possibility that not all immigrants had been settled by the Commission, the number can be taken as a minimum. Karpat states that between 1859 and 1879, two million people, most of whom were Circassians had left Russia; only 1.5 million had survived and settled in Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰ Circassian accounts similarly range between 1 million and 1.5 million.⁴¹ Another account states that after the exodus only 20% of the North Caucasian population, “only a demographic ‘toe-hold’”⁴² remained behind, with the exception of the Ubykhs⁴³ who were all expelled.⁴⁴

The relationships with the other groups of the empire after settlement were mostly characterized by religion: while most of the opposition came from non-Muslim groups such as the Christians in Syria who asked the Porte to stop sending immigrants and Greeks who were complaining about the raids of the Circassians to the Greek and Bulgarian villages in

³⁸ Ibid., 663.

³⁹ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 56.

⁴⁰ K. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914, Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, 1985), 69.

⁴¹ See for instance İ. Berkok, *Tarihte Kafkasya* (Istanbul, 1958), 529; İ. Aydemir, *Muhaceretteki Çerkes Aydınları* (Ankara, 1991).

⁴² L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180, 66.

⁴³ For Ubykhs this would imply the end of their language. Today, the language of the Ubykh is no more spoken by anyone. See the novel by B. *Shinkuba, Bir Çağa Tanıklık- Son Ubyh* (Tümzamanlar Yayınları: Istanbul, 2002). The documentary *Son Sesler* produced by İsmet Arasan in 1988 also deals with the end of the Ubykh language and “the creepy loneliness of the last Ubykh, Tevfik Esenç who is the only Ubykh that can speak the Ubykh language”. (<http://www.intersinema.com/haber/haber.asp?id=880>) With the death of Tevfik Esenç, Ubykh becomes a dead language.

⁴⁴ J. Colarusso, “Peoples of the Caucasus,” in *Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, ed. P. Pike (Eastword Publications: Ohio, 1997).

Macedonia; the friction between local Muslims and the refugees was relatively minimal.⁴⁵ The religious-cultural factors which had precipitated their exodus from their homelands proved to be instrumental in facilitating their adjustment to the new socio-cultural environments of Syria, Anatolia etc.⁴⁶

According to some accounts, Circassians did not consider their new situation as permanent but rather regarded it as “a step back for a leap forward” which aimed to get the support of strong states, especially Ottoman Empire; save the Caucasus from Russian conquest and form a massive return movement.⁴⁷ Russian newspaper, *Russkiy Invalid* for instance claimed that 200,000 Circassians who settled in Ottoman lands had burned their houses in order to return their homeland.⁴⁸ Yet the initial attempts to return proved unsuccessful; while the Russian government banned the return of the Circassian immigrants by denying Circassians under Ottoman rule -even short-term- visas after 1865, the Ottoman government approached the demands negatively.⁴⁹ Within this context, Turco-Russian War of 1877-1878 was regarded as an opportunity by the Circassians to gain their independence through an alliance with the Ottoman Empire which intended to attack at Russia taking advantage of an uprising in the Caucasus and hence used Circassian voluntary armies that were formed out of the immigrants in Ottoman lands. Yet Ottoman Empire lost the war; Abkhazians rebelled and the Second Exodus took place.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Turco-Russian War of 1878-78 forced large groups of Circassians to leave their homes in Serbia and

⁴⁵ Some exceptions include the conflict between Chechnians and Arabs in Diyarbakir, Mardin, Nizip and Shirvan, and the conflict between the nomadic Turks and Circassians in Uzunyayla, Kayseri.

⁴⁶ K. Karpat, “The Status of the Muslim under European Rule: The Eviction and Settlement of the Çerkes,” *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Brill: Leiden; Boston; Köln, 2002), 647-675.

⁴⁷ Ö. A. Kurmel, “Kuzey Kafkaslılar’ın Siyasi Tarihi,” in *Dili, Edebiyatı ve Tarihi ile Çerkesler*, ed. H. Ersoy (Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1993), 11-32, p.14. The existence of this mentality is validated by the account of Mehmet Fetgeray Şoenu who in 1923 stated: “to explain the immigration the elites of the time were advising that for a better leap forward, a withdrawal was necessary.” (M. F. Şoenu, *Çerkes Meselesi*, (Bedir Yayınları: İstanbul, 1993), 41.

⁴⁸ G. Çemişo, *Dönüşün İlk Adımları* (Ankara: Kafkas Derneği Yayınları, 2000), 21.

⁴⁹ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 46.

⁵⁰ Ö. A. Kurmel, “Kuzey Kafkaslılar’ın Siyasi Tarihi,” in *Dili, Edebiyatı ve Tarihi ile Çerkesler*, ed. H. Ersoy (Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1993), 11-32, p.14.

Bulgaria.⁵¹ Between the years 1881 and 1914, there was a further immigration of approximately 500,000 Circassians,⁵² while, in the wake of the Second World War, six hundred North Caucasians who had been accused of collaboration with the Germans settled in Turkey.⁵³

One silent fault line among the Circassians in Turkey today is the question of whether Circassians were exiled or they migrated in a semi-voluntary manner. Though this fault line is not much voiced among Circassians; since the 1990s, the Caucasian (*Kafkas*) Associations and some Circassian nationalists have preferred the exile discourse, and called it the “Great Circassian Exile” (*Büyük Çerkes Sürgünü*) which has been symbolically commemorated every year, on May 21. During the last decade, statements on Circassian exile became public notices in some newspapers. The idea of genocide is the less pronounced one among the claims of Circassian diaspora.⁵⁴

As immigration is called as tragic by the Circassians, immigration in itself is remembered as an event about which their elders would not talk much:

“We used to know that we are a different nation since our childhood times. The tragedies that they used to mention in their chats were not told to the young people. They never talked about the diseases and problems that they had during immigration. But in some moments we used to hear by accident. Well, they kept their silence; they did not transform that experience to their children. They did that consciously so that the children would not be demoralized, depressed.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ K. Karpat, “The Status of the Muslim under European Rule: The Eviction and Settlement of the Çerkes,” *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Brill: Leiden; Boston; Köln, 2002), 647-675.

⁵² K. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1985), 141.

⁵³ L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180, 63.

⁵⁴ For such an argument of Circassian genocide, see for instance A. Leitzinger, “The Circassian Genocide,” *Euroasian Politician* (October 2000).

⁵⁵ Timuçin, interview by author, 25 August 2007, Çanakkale.

2.2.2. Circassians in the Ottoman Empire

Within the Ottoman Empire, Circassians became part of the political apparatus and elite since the era of Abdulhamit II (1876-1909): employed within armed forces and government, and settled in Armenian and Arab villages which worked for the suppression of these groups when necessary, Circassians' relationships with their homeland were also seen as a potential gateway for the propaganda of Panislamist thought in Russia.⁵⁶ Yet Circassians are also claimed to have established various organizations such as Circassian Party which was against the reign of Abdulhamit II.⁵⁷ One should also mention that in the same period which is considered to be the beginning of “golden years” for Circassians, the first attempt to write Circassian history by a group of Circassian historians led by Ahmet Mithat, one of the leading figures of Young Ottomans, was prevented by the Sultan.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the theater within which the theatrical play, *Çerkes Özdenleri* written by Ahmet Mithat was played was demolished with the order of Abdulhamit II. Some accounts claim that the theater was demolished because of a journal sent to Abdulhamit II that the play was about the claims of Circassians for independence and freedom.⁵⁹

As the Second Constitutional Period (1908) implied the formation of a public sphere in the Ottoman Empire in general, it led to the emergence of Circassian organizations and publications in particular. Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association (*Çerkes İttihat ve Teaviün Cemiyeti*), established in 1908 and closed in 1923 declared its aims as informing Circassians culturally, supporting trade among Circassians and providing the land to be harvested in addition to serving for the protection of the constitutional

⁵⁶ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 98.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁵⁸ İ. Aydemir, *Muhaceretteki Çerkes Aydınları* (Ankara, 1991), 68.

⁵⁹ M. Bjeduğ and E. Taymaz, ““Sürgün” Halk Çerkesler,” *Birikim* 71-72 (1995): 118-124.

regime.⁶⁰ Though the association was sanctioned in accordance with the Law on Associations (1909) which prohibited the opening of political associations that were based on racial and national distinctions,⁶¹ it remained untouched until 1923. In 1911, it published the first Circassian newspaper *Ğuaze* in Turkish and Adyge which was published weekly and composed of eight pages, and established the first Circassian school *Özel Çerkes Örnek Okulu* in Istanbul and then in other cities of Anatolia. İzzet Aydemir informs us that the school was located in Beşiktaş, Akaretler. According to his account, courses taught at the school were Language; Circassian History; Geography; Circassian Language and Literature; French; Art; Circassian Language, History and Geography; Music; Circassian Pronunciation; Turkish; Sewing, Gym; and Modern Dances.⁶² Regarding the educational activities of Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association, one of my interviewees explains how he met the left-overs of the association in the 1960s:

“At the beginning of 1960s, we went to Düzce with a friend; we were going to stay there. Since Düzce is closer to Istanbul, there were so many books, newspapers, magazines; still there are so many leftover sources there. A woman told us that *Ğuaze* newspaper had been sent to their houses, she had read it, and there had been books sent. She told us that they had read those books in the schools; they had had Circassian mathematic books in Düzce. I just did not believe it, and I would not believe it if I had not seen a diploma in Circassian language. Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association supported normal schools in Circassian villages and it helped the opening of new ones.multiple associations were established though they were small.For sure, all of them became invisible. I asked the woman whether or not they had some of the books. My friend started to laugh, because that was his neighborhood. She said that they used to have them, we were talking in half Turkish and half Circassian, she was in her 60s, she said that there was none left. I asked what had happened to them. She said that the books were in Circassian, a lot of people were executed in that region, and there were stocks of the books to be delivered to other locations. I asked whether or not even one book was left. She told me that women tore all of them to pieces, she said “we, women, tore

⁶⁰ İ. Aydemir, *Muhaceretteki Çerkes Aydınları* (Ankara, 1991), 132.

⁶¹ E. Ulker, “Contextualising 'Turkification': Nation-building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11(4):2005, 613-636, 619.

⁶² İ. Aydemir, *Muhaceretteki Çerkes Aydınları* (Ankara, 1991), 123.

them to pieces. They were made of high quality paper, so it was hard to tear them. Finally, we threw them into the oven in the garden.”⁶³

Therefore Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association today is remembered as a Circassian organization that was not only closed in 1923 but also whose leftovers were also destroyed sometimes voluntarily by the Circassians themselves after some political events during the transformation from the empire to the nation-state. These schools and educational activities of Circassians in Ottoman Empire were going to be unprecedented in Turkey as far as Circassians in Turkey were concerned: there was going to be no publicly used Circassian school, textbook or course.

However, the importance of Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association is going to be a theme among the Circassian diaspora activists with 1990s. Interestingly, Circassians also meet the footprints of the association in Caucasia: “For instance, schools in Caucasia had been established by that organization. When I went to the Caucasus I met elder people educated in those schools. I met in one of the villages.In that school Turkish was also taught, apart from that the books were published in Turkey.”⁶⁴

As the teaching of Turkish in those schools is an indicator of how Circassian interests and Ottoman interests were embedded in those activities, the activists in the association were members of the Young Turk movement and the association had close relationships with The Committee of Union and Progress.⁶⁵

After intense debates in *Ğuaze*, the association also published a Circassian alphabet in 1919.⁶⁶ Though slavery was legally abolished, the committee also worked for the emancipation of Circassian slave girls during the last years of the empire.⁶⁷

In 1910, another organization, an Abkhaz-Circassian committee called Immigrants Commission (*Muhacir Komisyonu*) was established. The committee initially dealt with cultural activities such as forming alphabets, elementary books for reading and writing, and

⁶³ Rüstem, interview by author, 8 February 2008, Ankara.

⁶⁴ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁶⁵ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 134.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶⁷ I. C. Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Serüveni* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004), 141.

exploring the areas of settlement of North Caucasian tribes in the lands of the empire etc. and then worked for The Committee of Union and Progress in the Caucasus.⁶⁸

In 1914, another organization called North Caucasian Association (*Şimali Kafkasya Cemiyet-i Siyasiyesi*) was established and it particularly dealt with propagating Panturkism in the North Caucasus in harmony with the political interests of the Committee of the Union of Progress.⁶⁹ The association in its program stated its aims as to defend and protect the rights of the groups of the North Caucasus, establish and strengthen national solidarity and cooperation among these aforementioned groups, develop the national character, spread and publicize sciences and applied sciences, encourage art and trade, protect the orphans and families in need of help, increase the national population by struggling with diseases, and protect the purity of the line (*soy*).⁷⁰ Conversion of the national languages into writing, the establishment of national schools, establishment of branches in places where national elements exist were declared to be the instruments through which these aims would be fulfilled.⁷¹ The association also ordered its branches that

“Since the protection of the purity of the race and making the Circassian family life more comfortable is crucial, it will be provided that Circassian men are married to Circassian girls and the marriage of Circassian girls with elements that are not Caucasian and whose line is unknown, especially and solely, in the name of wealth will be prevented.”⁷²

Related to Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association (*Çerkes İttihat ve Teavün Cemiyeti*) and *Özel Çerkes Örnek Okulu*, Circassian Women's Mutual Aid Society (*Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti*) was established in 1918.⁷³ Between the years 1920 and 1923,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 132.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁰ M. A. Turan, “Osmanlı Dönemi Kuzey Kafkasya Diasporası Tarihinden Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti,” *Tarih ve Toplum* 172 (1998), 242-251, 243.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 247.

⁷³ Aydemir lists the name of women working for Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti: Hayriye Melek Xunç, Makbule Berzek, Emine Reşit Zalike, Seza Poox and Faika Hanım. İ. Aydemir, *Muhaceretteki Çerkes Aydınları* (Ankara, 1991), 122.

the organization published the magazine *Diyane*⁷⁴ which means “Our Mother” in Circassian. In 1922-23, the society was involved in integrating the North Caucasians who took refuge mainly in Istanbul during the Russian Civil War.⁷⁵

Throughout the period between the second half of the nineteenth century and 1920 the relations between the Ottoman state and Circassians were harmonious. Circassians were well accepted in state mechanisms such as palace, bureaucracy and military and the Ottoman state’s foreign policy that identified Czarist Russia as an expansionist force that was threatening the Ottoman lands was in harmony with Circassian interests in the Caucasus. Based on these conditions, Circassians were welcomed by the Ottoman center and any activity on the side of Circassians toward Caucasia was supported by this alliance of Circassians with the Ottoman state mechanism and by their embeddedness in the center. As an instance of this alliance that not only worked for the future of the Ottoman lands but also toward the future of the Caucasus after the Bolshevik Revolution, one of the interviewees narrates on his encounter with a Circassian participant of a meeting organized as a result of this alliance:

“The more or less important people were gathered in North Caucasian Association.I heard about that meeting from two people, but I did not see any documents.But I coincidentally met someone in the 1960s, we were young, and I was writing something and he told me that they had done things like that but they had been unconscious. He stated that there was an organization called North Caucasian Association, that he used to go there, the association was somewhere in Beyoglu, Bursa street. ...the man was not lying, he immediately told the date, it was just after the Mondros treaty. He said the meeting had been organized by the initiative of Rauf Orbay and 108 people had participated.that the participating people had been invited by name, that it had been something special.That they talked what they were going to do given the Ottoman Empire’s political situation. I asked him about the decision, he told that they decided to be loyal to the Ottoman state till its last moment, that they were guests here, that Ottoman state had done nothing harmful to them, that they were not like Albanians or Armenians. He added that they

⁷⁴ J. M. Çorlu, *Circassians in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1994), 11.

⁷⁵ L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180, 63.

elected a committee of seven people to announce their decisions and take advice from the Sultan but he could only count to five names.”⁷⁶

Hence, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with extensive participation into state mechanisms, the Circassian identity was embedded in Ottoman identity. Similarly, most of the Circassian bureaucrats’ and soldiers’ autobiographies emphasize the embeddedness of these two identities. From such a perspective, being a Circassian was harmonious with being a member of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, being a Circassian nationalist was not in conflict with being a patrimonial of the Ottoman Empire.

However, the alliance and the harmony of Circassians with the political system was going to change in the 1920s with the transformation from the multinational, multiethnic and multireligious empire to nation-state.

2.2.3. “Homeland” after the Bolshevik Revolution

Until 1917, migrant communities' relationships with the homeland had been quite stable. The revolution in February 1917 seemed to have bestowed the opportunity of independence on the Circassians. Initially named as Transitional Administration of Union of United People of the Caucasus Mountains, then as the Transitional Government, the representatives of the Northern Caucasus sent memorandums to the Ottoman Government and to other countries on May 11, 1918 and proclaimed the independence of the Republic of the Northern Caucasus.⁷⁷ It should be mentioned that Circassian immigrants in the elite cadres of the Ottoman Empire played a crucial role in the formation and maintenance of the networks between newly-formed Republic and the Ottoman government. The fact that the

⁷⁶ Rüstem, interview by author, 8 February 2008, Ankara.

⁷⁷ A. Saydam, “Freedom Movements in Northern Caucasia,” *Eurasian Studies* 2(1)(1995): 88-122, 111; Berzeg.

Republic of the Northern Caucasus was diplomatically recognized only by the Ottoman Empire is no coincidence: Circassian immigrants worked for the recognition of the independence of the Republic by the Ottoman Empire and other countries.

Yet, despite extensive networks with the Ottoman Empire and Circassian immigrants,⁷⁸ the Republic had collapsed *vis-à-vis* the Red Army in 1921 and members of the government fled to Turkey and Europe in order to represent the North Caucasus in Paris Peace Conference and organize the diaspora.

Due to the relatively friendly relations between Soviet and Turkish governments, immigrants of 1921 did not find the political freedom to organize in Turkey. Yet Circassian nationalists in Europe organized as the Promete Club in Poland and *Kafkas* in Paris. These two groups tried to announce their cause through their magazines. One special target was Turkey which was inhabited by the largest migrant Circassian community. However, due to Soviet disturbance, these magazines were banned in Turkey.⁷⁹ While the center of the magazine of *Kafkas* group which works like a government in exile was carried to Berlin just before the Second World War, the Promete group dissolved with the invasion of Poland.⁸⁰ Hence, Nazi Germany became the sole site of Circassian politics in exile. Though German government initially banned all anti-Soviet activities in accordance with the Non-Agression Pact between Nazi Germany and Soviet Union after 1941, the Nazi government needed the help of the Circassian nationalists in Germany to win the support of local people in the Caucasus.⁸¹ In 1942, North Caucasian National Committee was established to motivate the Soviet captives of Circassian origin

⁷⁸ For instance, after 1918, a committee which included Müşir Fuad Paşa from “*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*”, Hüseyin Tosun from Prince Sabahattin group, Namık İsmail from “*Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Sosyalist Fırkası*” and Mustafa Butbay from Northern Caucasus Association (*Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti*) was formed to work for the recognition of the Republic. What is interesting here is the composition of the group in terms of ideologies and political commitments and yet the ability to overcome these differences for Caucasian Independence. (M. A. Turan, “Osmanlı Dönemi Kuzey Kafkasya Diasporası Tarihinden Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti, *Tarih ve Toplum* 172(1998): 242-251.)

⁷⁹ Aydemir adds a third group to the list, Warsaw group. İ. Aydemir, *Muhaceretteki Çerkes Aydınları* (Ankara, 1991).

⁸⁰ Ö. A. Kurlmel, “Kuzey Kafkaslıların Siyasi Tarihi,” in *Dili, Edebiyatı ve Tarihi ile Çerkesler*, ed. H. Ersoy (Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1993), 11-32, 18.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

against the Red Army and make propaganda to influence the North Caucasus.⁸² Since German army stayed for a short period of time in the Caucasus, the Committee proved to be inactive. Yet, political activism in these war years resulted in wholesale deportations of Karachai and Balkars in 1943, and Chechnians and Ingush in 1944 under Stalin rule to Central Asia with the claim of cooperation with German armies. As they were repatriated under Khrushchev in 1957, these events had proved to be the starting point of several conflicts and turmoil that would be left unresolved until the 1990s.⁸³

The politics of the Circassian nationalists in exile after 1945 was shaped by the postwar arrangements and Cold War context. As North Caucasian National Committee, which was reestablished after the war, dealt with the problems of Soviet soldiers of Circassian origin who were at the lands of the allied countries when the war was over; another group, Free Caucasus group which was composed of nationalists that were in favor of monarchy emerged. In Wiesbaden conference in 1951 which had been convened with the support of America, as the Committee declared that they did not want to “change masters but to have independence,” Free Caucasus Group joined the conference as the representative of the North Caucasus and stated the importance of the collapse of the Bolshevik regime for the solution of nationalities problems and independence.⁸⁴ Within the Cold War context, these groups gradually lost their importance.

Given the failure of the Circassian political cadres in Europe in terms of gaining support for independence, and given the exhaustion of the population in the homeland, the Adyge were not qualified as a “nation” and divided into different administrative republics and districts which were the Adyge, the Kabardin, and the Cherkess.⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.; J. Colarusso, “Peoples of the Caucasus,” in *Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, ed. P. Pike (Eastword Publications: Ohio, 1997).

⁸⁴ Ö. A. Kurmel, “Kuzey Kafkaslıların Siyasi Tarihi,” in *Dili, Edebiyatı ve Tarihi ile Çerkesler*, ed. H. Ersoy (Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1993), 11-32, 22.

⁸⁵ S. Shami, “Engendering Social Memory: Domestic Rituals, Resistance and Identity in the North Caucasus,” *Gender and Identity Construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey*, eds. F. Acar and A. Gunes-Ayata (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 2000), 305-331, 306.

2.2.4. Circassian Community outside Anatolia

The end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire implied the containment of Circassian immigrants in several newly-formed nation-states, Syria and Jordan with a few in Israel and Iraq, and only one village in Yugoslavia.

In Jordan, where there are approximately 60,000 Circassians, Circassians compose a middle class urban community with favorable representation in government, bureaucracy, parliament and the military.⁸⁶ Jordan has long allowed Circassians their language rights.⁸⁷

Though Circassian community in Syria which is today composed of 40,000 Circassians had a primary school between the years 1928 and 1931 whose language of instruction was Adyge, the community had to cope with Arab nationalism, and it is claimed to be the largest current of the return movement that took place throughout the 1990s.⁸⁸ Given the Circassian history of having served first the Ottomans and then the French in what is now Syria, their position is considered to be extremely insecure since they are seen as non-Arabs whose tendencies are inimical to those of the Arabs.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ S. Shami, "Disjuncture in Ethnicity: Negotiating Circassian Identity in Jordan, Turkey and the Caucasus," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 12 (1995): 79-95, 83.

⁸⁷ In the summer of 1998, Prince Ali of Jordan who was raised by a Circassian family organized a trip with a team composed of ten security guards who were all dressed in the so-called authentic Circassian warrior costumes and riding horses. They traveled from Amman to North Caucasus through Syria and Turkey. "Circassian associations and some Turkish TV channels such as CNNTurk and NTV exposed the video-film of this journey with the soundtrack of Loreena McKennitt who also believes to be Circassian descent" which implied an increasing level of public visibility for the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. (A. Kaya, "Circassian Diaspora in Turkey: Stereotypes, Prejudices and Ethnic Relations," in *Representations of the Others in the Mediterranean World and their Impact on the Region*, eds. N. Kuran-Burçoğlu and S. G. Miller (The ISIS Press: Istanbul, 2005), 217-240, 217.

⁸⁸ Ö. A. Kurlmel, "Kuzey Kafkasyalıların Siyasi Tarihi," in *Dili, Edebiyatı ve Tarihi ile Çerkesler*, ed. H. Ersoy (Istanbul: Nart Yayıncılık, 1993), 11-32, 27.

⁸⁹ See for instance, J. Colarusso, "Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics," *The World and I* (1991): 656- 669.

The community in Israel which is composed of two villages and 3,000 people enjoys cultural privileges such as schools which use Adyge language as the language of instruction. Historically Circassians served Israel as an elite border guard.⁹⁰

The number in Iraq is altogether unknown, though surely small. Yet the recent political change in Iraq seemingly work as an opportunity for Circassians in Iraq to interact with other Circassian diaspora communities.⁹¹

In addition to the diaspora communities formed in the nineteenth century, secondary immigrations to Germany, Holland and the United States throughout the twentieth century led to the formation of small Circassian communities in Europe and America. These communities have their associations and especially the associations in Europe are closely linked to the Circassian associations in Turkey. One of the accounts claims that about 10,000 Circassians are living in the State of New Jersey, U.S.A.⁹² After the initiation of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* in Soviet Union, the Circassian societies in America had proved to be one of the first Circassian communities that had begun campaigns to promote trade, educational and economic assistance to the homeland.⁹³ The Netherlands Circassian Culture Association (*Tjerkessen Kultuur Vereniging Nederland*), established in 1979 in Almelo/The Netherlands states that today there are 1,000 Circassians in Netherlands, 15,000 in Germany and 150 in Denmark.⁹⁴

The histories, political participation strategies, rights, and discourses of Circassian diasporic communities have been to a large extent influenced by the politics and policies of the host community.

⁹⁰ See for instance, J. Colarusso, "Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics," *The World and I* (1991): 656- 669.

⁹¹ "Irak Çerkeslerinden Mesaj Var; Biz de Buradayız" at <http://www.adygaunion.com/tk/iraqcir.php>.

⁹² From the website of Caucasus Foundation (*Kafkas Vakfı*), <http://www.kafkas.org.tr/english/diaspora/amerika.html>.

⁹³ See for instance, J. Colarusso, "Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics," *The World and I* (1991): 656- 669.

⁹⁴ From the website of Circassian Association of the Netherlands, <http://www.adige.nl>.

2.3.5. From the Empire to the Nation-State: Circassians in Republican Turkey

As the largest wave of immigration was to Anatolia, Circassian community in Turkey today is considered the largest Circassian community when compared to Syria, Jordan and Palestine/Israel and other diaspora communities formed through secondary immigrations to Germany, Holland and the United States.⁹⁵ One account claims that “the final destination of about 90 percent of the total Circassian immigrants was today's territorial Turkey.”⁹⁶

However, the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey implied not only the formation of new diasporic communities tied to newly formed nation-states but also the very end of the fellowship that Circassian Turkish relations are based on.

For the Circassians in Turkey, Turkish War of Independence and the Çerkes Ethem affair constitute the turning points which have been constantly referred in both Turkish and Circassian accounts of Republican history. Within the Turkish War of Independence, two Circassian groups were visible: those who were for the Independence and who later became leading figures in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey; such as Ali Fuat Cebesoy,

⁹⁵ Although one can say that Circassian diasporic community in Turkey is larger than Circassian diasporas settled in other countries by comparing the number of Circassian associations in them, the exact number of people calling themselves Circassian in Turkey is not known today. Though it is an invalid indicator of the population, the latest official number that we have comes from the 1965 census within which 58.339 of the respondents declared Circassian as the mother tongue, 55.030 as the secondary one while 4563 of the respondents declared Abkhazian as the mother tongue and 7836 as the secondary one. (P. A. Andrews, *Türkiye'de Etnik Gruplar* (Ant Yayınları: İstanbul, 1992) 236-237.) Yet, there has been no such census including these questions since 1965. To overcome this handicap, before the last census, some diaspora nationalists via e-mail groups suggested stating that they spoke Circassian language in the census when they were asked the foreign languages they spoke so that Circassians would/could have some rough idea about their population. However, the question on the spoken languages was not included in the last census. Therefore one strategy to overcome the lack of demographical information for Circassians was not fulfilled. The claims on the number of Circassians living in Turkey have a range between two million and seven million.

⁹⁶ A. Akgunduz, “Migration to and from Turkey, 1783-1960: Types, Numbers and Ethno-Religious Dimension,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 24(1)(1998): 97-124, 98.

Rauf Orbay, Yusuf İzzet Paşa, Bekir Sami etc.; and those, with their loyalty to the Caliphate and Sultan, who are against the government in Ankara such as Anzavur⁹⁷ who was interestingly crushed by another Circassian, Çerkes Ethem. A third exceptional group *Şark-ı Karip Çerkesleri Temin-i Hukuk Cemiyeti*, established in Izmir in 1921 and composed of 22 members from Marmara region (Adapazari, Hendek, Düzce, Kandıra and Karasu, Yalova ve Karamursel, Bilecik, Eskişehir, Geyve, Bursa, Biga, Gönen, Erdek, Bandırma, Balıkesir, Manisa, Aydın and Kütahya) stated that the final source of annihilation for the Circassians had been the forced Turkification policies of the Committee of Union and Progress; that Circassians had been forced to fight first in the World War I and then in the War of Independence; and that they were at the time being forced to support “the throne of Mustafa Kemal.”⁹⁸ The association then declared its loyalty to the Greek forces.

Though Çerkes Ethem affair -that is the elimination of independent guerrilla forces in favor of a regular army-⁹⁹ is seemingly unrelated to ethnic and national causes as far as Circassians in Turkey are concerned,¹⁰⁰ its results had been destructive for the Circassian groups in Turkey.¹⁰¹

As early as 1923, all Circassian organizations were closed by the Turkish government. Shortly thereafter the building and library of the Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association (*Çerkes İttihat ve Teavün Cemiyeti*) were lost in a fire.¹⁰² Furthermore, the residents of 14 Circassian villages, approximately 10,000 people in Western Anatolia

⁹⁷ C. Şener, *Çerkes Ethem Olayı* (İstanbul: Okan Yayınları, 1986), 21.

⁹⁸ T. Z. Tunaya, “Şark-ı Karib Çerkesleri Temin-i Hukuk Cemiyeti,” *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler Cilt II* (Doğan Kardeş Yayınları: İstanbul), 606-614.

⁹⁹ W. Hale, *Türkiye’de Ordu ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: Hil Yayın, 1996), 67.

¹⁰⁰ Ironically, Çerkes Ethem was also unhappy about the label “Çerkes” that was associated with his name. He states: “There were several Circassian commanders which I served. They were not called Circassian. The way they use to call me, the label Circassian has been one of the injustices that I have been exposed throughout my life.” C. Kutay in C. Şener, *Çerkes Ethem Olayı* (İstanbul: Okan Yayınları, 1986), 119.

¹⁰¹ Another account on the Turkish War of Independence highlights the significance of power struggles within the multiple ethnic groups of the disintegrating empire and calls the War of Independence as a civil war. H. B. Kahraman, “Kurtuluş Savaşı Bir İç Savaştı,” *Tempo* (April 2009): 100-104.

¹⁰² L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180, 77.

(Manyas and Gönen) were deported to the country's eastern provinces though they were allowed to return subsequently.¹⁰³ Circassians had been implicitly and explicitly considered the relatives of Çerkes Ethem for a long time. Association of the name Circassian with “traitor” has led Circassians in some regions to hide their Circassian origins as much as possible. The ones whose Circassian origins were known had sometimes been called “grandsons / granddaughters of the traitor Ethem”. Since the 1960s, Çerkes Ethem has not been called “the traitor” in the history books. Yet the identification still persists.

After the announcement of the Law on the Maintenance of Order 1925, the newly-formed state had proved to be suppressive as far as the press was concerned which implied that North Caucasians were silenced in terms of organizations and publishing. In 1934, even the circulation of foreign emigrant populations, such as the Circassian magazines *Promete* and *Kafkas* produced in Europe and aimed at communicating with the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, was prohibited.¹⁰⁴

Thus, Çerkes Ethem affair, still a taboo in Turkish history, had profoundly affected Circassian diaspora in Turkey. What the affair of Ethem meant for Circassians is signified by a quotation from the interviews upon which this study is based: “Marmara region. For instance, my uncle’s name was Ethem. When he was born, because my grandmother named him as Ethem, all the villagers were offended and did not speak with my grandmother.”

However, it is not just Çerkes Ethem affair whose consequences were harmful as far as Circassians were concerned but there seems to be general “Circassian problem” as the title of Fetgerey’s letter to Grand National Assembly shows. During the one party period,

¹⁰³ In 1923, Mehmet Fetgerey Şoenu, a Circassian intellectual, one of the founding members of Beşiktaş Gymnastic Club (Beşiktaş Jimnastik Kulübü) would write a letter to the Grand National Assembly (Çerkes Meselesi Hakkında Türk Vicdan-ı Umumiyesine ve Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'ne Arıza). He states: “Circassians do not seek independence in this country. They are not here to take some parts of Turkey. This should be known by all. All should believe this as much as they believe God exists. Turks have embraced those poor people who have been expelled from their countries which is the most beautiful continent on earth sixty years ago by the orders of Grand Duke Michel and the one who has encouraged them by saying “the olders of those who will migrate are by older brothers and the younger of those who will migrate are my younger brothers” was a sultan at the time. And to explain the immigration the elites of the time were advising that for a better leap forward, a withdrawal was necessary.” (M. F. Şoenu, Çerkes Meselesi, (Bedir Yayınları: İstanbul, 1993), 41.

¹⁰⁴ L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180, 76.

between the 1920s and mid 1940s, Circassians lost all their social and political power as Circassians. There was no mentioning of the Circassian in-between those years. And the alliance between the state and the Circassians, Circassian soldiers, bureaucrats and intellectuals became invisible. Hence, first generation of Circassian activism which started with the Second Constitutional Period became invisible with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Some Circassian activists today explain this loss and removal of Circassian intellectuals and elements from the public sphere through the removal of the Ottoman Empire and 'anything Ottoman' as "the other":

"The other of the Turkish identity has never been the West.The other has been constructed as the Ottoman, the ancient regime and till recent years this has continued.Based on this, Circassians were associated with the Ottoman Empire: being a Circassian was inconvenient. When someone told that, I thought a lot about that. In Circassian families that have been urbanized and politicized in relatively early years, Circassian elements have vanished. Especially, they are from Republican People's Party. The person I met was from RPP for two generations; their father transformed nothing to his children, they only knew that they were somehow Circassian but nothing else. One day his child asked him the reason of this behavior, and he said that being a Circassian meant being Ottoman."¹⁰⁵

Another group explains this removal as assimilation of urban Circassians:

"Then they embraced a voluntary assimilatory process; they became silent. Though it was a significant group in terms of number, Circassian bourgeoisie, voluntarily got assimilated. After the 1960s, as urbanization started, we, people from rural areas discovered the city; and after that, intense attempts on organizing started. For instance, you can see that in any meeting of any association, the 99 percent of the activists over 30 years old are born in villages. It is impossible to find urban activists.The negative side of the massive assimilation of our feudal and intellectual groups is that our cultural heritage was gone with them because they had it. The good side is that the class hierarchy among those who remained has vanished."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Hakan, interview by author, 3 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁰⁶ Cahit, interview by author, 23 May 2007, İstanbul.

Between the end of the War of Independence and the 1950s, no organization was established by Circassians in Turkey. Yet, in the absence of the organizations and associations, family houses and offices proved to be the places of gathering as one of my interviewees highlights: “When the organizations were non-existent, our house was the association and my father’s workplace was the association.” With the establishment of the first Circassian associations, Friends Hand Mutual Aid Association (*Dost Eli Yardımlaşma Derneği*) with the collaboration of Azeri Turks in 1946, Caucasus Association (*Kafkas Derneği*) in Istanbul in 1952, and North Caucasus Cultural Association (*Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür Derneği*) in Ankara in 1964, Circassians started to establish urban and less active provincial associations.¹⁰⁷ Regarding the first association, *Dost Eli Yardımlaşma Derneği*, Zekeriya states

“When I started the university in year 1946, establishing a Circassian association, using the title Circassian was a little bit inconvenient, because of some leftovers from Ethem. This is why *Dosteli* was established. In that association, the elders, young people of the time used to go, play accordion and have fun. When Democrat Party won the national elections in 14 May 1950, the terms Circassian, Adyge, Kabardian and Caucasia had become easily pronounced words; in those years Caucasian Cultural Association was established. And North Caucasian Cultural Association was established.”¹⁰⁸

Circassians in Turkey have used Caucasian Culture Associations (*Kafkas Kültür Dernekleri*)¹⁰⁹ for interaction, socialization and cultural activities,¹¹⁰ magazines since decades and recently e-mail discussion groups for communication. The finances and activities of these associations and foundations are subject to regular government review which is considered to be a standard procedure both by the activists working in associations

¹⁰⁷ A. Toumarkine, “Balkan and Caucasian Immigrant Associations: Community and Politics,” in *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism: Studies on Political Culture in Contemporary Turkey*, eds. S. Yerasimos, G. Seufert, and K. Vorhoff (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon Verlag, 2000), 403-432, 405.

¹⁰⁸ Zekeriya, interview by author, 28 February 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁰⁹ As Shami highlights these associations are called “Caucasian” with the implication that “just as “Kurds are mountain Turks”, Circassians are “Caucasian Turks””. S. Shami, “Disjuncture in Ethnicity: Negotiating Circassian Identity in Jordan, Turkey and the Caucasus,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 12 (1995): 79-95, 84.

¹¹⁰ None of these associations bear the name “Circassian” due to legal prohibitions.

and state authorities.¹¹¹ Until the 1960s, Circassian organizations and magazines were quite ephemeral and volatile; they appeared under the guise of North Caucasian “Turks”; and timidity and anti-communism gave the organizations and the publications their characteristics¹¹² which were going to be criticized by the later activists as exemplified by an interviewee:

“The Circassians in big cities were people with status, they only thought about not being disturbed and living with each other in comfort. It was the young people from the rural areas who started to think and analyze. ...For instance, in our youth, we used to keep those newspapers within which Circassians were mentioned once for days; if something was told about a Circassian, we used to talk about it for days. We had no written document, we had no history, we had nothing except what was told.I remember that when I got the book, “Caucasia in History”, the world was mine. There were the balls, dances of Istanbul Caucasian Cultural Association. When I saw any photograph or news from those activities on newspapers, we would be thrilled so that Circassians were alive, that they were able to tell that they were Circassians.Within limits, the aim was to establish an association there with families who knew each other, watch their own dances, listen to accordion, but they had no thought about homeland. They had no thought about the people. ...they were the founders, they had an aspiration; we cannot deny that. But there was not a firm thought. How can that be? You will be open to people, you will go to base, you are living in the city but there are other people living in less developed areas, you will see their problems. You will reach Circassian villages; you will help the student from Anatolia. None of this existed, they were living in welfare. They did not even use the bus; they had their balls in the most expensive places of Istanbul.”¹¹³

Starting from the mid 1960s, the discourses of the diaspora changed. The idea that Circassians were a Turkic tribe was rejected; the idea of return/repatriation, and the threats of assimilation and Turkification became dominant themes; slogans such as “our god is our

¹¹¹ Though not very common, in one instance the entire proceeding of the activity was filmed. The activity was the congress of North Caucasians held under the intentionally unassuming title of '125th Year Culture Week' on October 21-27 in 1989 within which the delegates reached a consensus to seek repatriation in Caucasus, to coordinate efforts among the scattered Circassian communities and to ensure the ongoing inter-communication of such groups. (See L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180; See for instance, J. Colarusso, “Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics,” *The World and I* (1991): 656- 669.)

¹¹² L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180, 141.

¹¹³ Timuçin, interview by author, 25 August 2007, Çanakkale.

freedom, our temple is the homeland” and “to serve a foreigner and neglect one's own interest is an error” were increasingly used.¹¹⁴ As the politically turbulent decade of the 1970s led to the emergence of two groups within the community: namely, the *devrimci* (revolutionaries) suggesting that Circassian rights could only be attained through a socialist revolution and the *dönüşçü/göççü*, (‘returnists’) who advocated a return to the homeland,¹¹⁵ the military regime of 1980 closed all associations, closely scrutinized the ones representing non-Turkish cultural movements¹¹⁶ and confiscated the official documents of all Circassian associations. One interviewee underlines his close experience of the *coup d’état* of 1980 in the associations: “September 12th knocked us down. We were just scattered. Of course I was arrested; I was the head of the association. In the interrogation, it was as if the responsibility of all history of diaspora was attributed to me. I was asked about the old, unliving Circassian people, what they did and what they did not do.”¹¹⁷

In the meantime, just like the period before 1946, alternative places functioned as associations for the Circassians in Turkey. One interviewee, for instance, explores those days after the *coup d’état* of 1980: “There was a place, a hamburger place; that was the meeting point, everybody would go there. Different locations like that became places to meet. At houses we continued to see each other. Also in universities there was a lot of movement.”¹¹⁸

Starting from the mid 1960s, universities became one of the places within which Circassian activists informally organized. Universities were the places in which young Circassians were “discovered and tied to the associations.” Hence, universities became a significant source of activists since the 1960s: “For instance somebody from Uzunyayla had been newly registered in the department of pharmacy. Somebody would just go to the

¹¹⁴ L. Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim Emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey* 13(1)(1994): 59-180, 141.

¹¹⁵ S. Shami, “Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus,” *Development and Change* 29(1998): 617- 646, 624.

¹¹⁶ A. Toumarkine, “Balkan and Caucasian Immigrant Associations: Community and Politics,” in *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism: Studies on Political Culture in Contemporary Turkey*, eds. S. Yerasimos, G. Seufert, and K. Vorhoff (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon Verlag, 2000), 403-432, 405.

¹¹⁷ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

¹¹⁸ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

department and write his name on the board. The person would show up and we would just take him.”

By the year 1984, the associations were reopened. Liberalization and the more liberal outlook of the Prime Minister Turgut Özal in terms of Kurdish cultural identity in Turkey contributed to the emergence of a political atmosphere within which associations representing non-Turkish communities and their activities can be renewed.¹¹⁹ This renewal was further supported by the *Glasnost* in the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War as far as Circassians in Turkey were concerned.

2.3. Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I argue that my position and my negotiations in the field as the insider researcher were significant for this research. Despite some complications in terms of negotiations during the interviews, such an insider position, I believe, created an additional space for this research and provided me with almost unlimited access, trust and details in the field.

The second part of the chapter examines the Circassian diaspora in Turkey in terms of historical turning points in Turkey, Russia and the Caucasus. Given such a history intertwined with the histories of other nations and nation-states, Circassian diaspora is a historical entity which is formed in constant interaction with the politics and history of the host state and homeland.

¹¹⁹ A. Toumarkine, “Balkan and Caucasian Immigrant Associations: Community and Politics,” in *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism: Studies on Political Culture in Contemporary Turkey*, eds. S. Yerasimos, G. Seufert, and K. Vorhoff (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon Verlag, 2000), 403-432, 405.

CHAPTER 3

DIASPORA NATIONALISM

Concerning the Label Emigrant

I always found the name false which they gave us: Emigrants.
That means those who leave their country. But we
Did not leave, of our own free will
Choosing another land. Nor did we enter
Into a land, to stay there, if possible for ever.
Merely, we fled. We are driven out, banned.
Not a home, but an exile, shall the land be that took us in.
Restlessly we wait thus, as near as we can to the frontier
Awaiting the day of return, every smallest alteration
Observing beyond the boundary, zealously asking
Every arrival, forgetting nothing and giving up nothing
And also not forgiving anything which happened, forgiving nothing
Ah, the silence of the Sound does not deceive us! We hear the shrieks
From their camps even here. Yes, we ourselves
Are almost like rumours of crimes, which escaped
Over the frontier. Every one of us
Who with torn shoes walks through the crowd
Bears witness to the shame which now defiles our land.
But none of us
Will stay here. The final word
Is yet unspoken.

Bertolt Brecht¹

The poem above by Bertolt Brecht has been one the most quoted poems throughout the recent years in the magazines and activities of the Circassian community in Turkey; and

¹ B. Brecht, "Concerning the Label Emigrant," in *Refugees: An Anthology of Poems and Songs*, ed. B. Coleman. (Ottawa: self-published, 1988).

it highlights the diasporic condition which Circassian activists and associations associate themselves with.

Though diasporas are heterogeneous and contested spaces, every diaspora constantly constructs a collective identity, a “common we.”² Exploring the processes through which the collective “we” is constructed is crucial to understand how diasporic identities that are actually contested, complex and embedded in multiple narratives of struggle assume a singular, unified and homogeneous form within the nationalist frame.³

Circassians in Turkey and other countries has remained under-researched compared to other diasporic communities such as Jewish, Armenian and Black diasporas. What is even less studied is the analysis of Circassian diaspora as embracing diaspora nationalism. Studying diaspora nationalism implies that diasporic subjects, within the constantly changing limits set by the politics of homeland, host community and international relations are actors that are capable of negotiating, acting, reacting, resisting and narrating.

This dissertation studies Circassians in Turkey as a diasporic community which is not a homogenous block but composed of multiple groups, organizations and cliques. To map Circassian diaspora nationalism, these multiple groups should be explored in terms of their perspectives and relationships with nationalism. Therefore, within all their heterogeneity, despite the lack of consensus even on the simplest debate i.e. such as the groups the word Circassian includes, there are some some common grounds through which Circassian activists deal with nationalism.

With these aims, this chapter will first interrogate diaspora literature. Then it will try to understand and map Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey; its historical forms, its relationships with the hegemonic nationalism and its maneuvers *vis-à-vis* Turkish nationalism in particular and nationalism in general.

²S. Schwalgin, “Narrating a “Nation in Exile”: (Re)Constructing Community in the Armenian Diaspora of Greece (Paper presented in *History-Migration-Anthropology: New Perspectives on Migration and Migration History*, University of Erfurt, November, 7-9, 2002).

³S. Houston and R. Wright, “Making and Remaking Tibetan Diasporic Identities,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 4(2)(2003): 217-232.

3.1. Diaspora as / at the Crossroads⁴

Throughout the 1990s, the debates on diaspora have peaked; technological, political and social changes (collapse of the Soviet Bloc, end of Cold War, communication technology etc.), the rise of the politics of identity, the claims to 'difference', a defense of multiculturalism and the questioning of the notions of national sovereignty and territoriality have all added new dimensions to the notion of diaspora. Thus, since the 1990s, social science has been face to face with a much complicated and yet, vaguely defined notion of diaspora which is simultaneously intertwined with the notions of nationalism, ethnicity and globalization more than ever. This dissertation claims that diaspora as a theoretical concept is the crossroads where ethnicity, nationalism and processes of globalization meet.

The notion of diaspora is studied by various disciplines such as history, international relations, cultural studies, political science etc. Yet the literature on diaspora is characterized by two complementary and two diverging approaches on the definition, characteristics and categorization of diasporas.

First, there is a consensus in the literature with respect to the proliferation of the meanings of the diaspora *vis-à-vis* its original meaning. In terms of the original meaning, the word “diaspora” is found in the Greek translation of the Bible, and it originates from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over).⁵ Therefore the original meaning of the term, associated with the experiences of the Armenians, Jews and Greeks, is “to sow widely”. Yet the notion of diaspora now has multiple meanings that may refer to immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, exile communities, overseas communities, and ethnic communities.⁶ Therefore, what had started as the particular

⁴ I initially used the word 'crossroads' as “place where roads meet and cross”. However the phrase 'at the crossroads' meaning “at a critical turning point (in life etc.)” also makes sense given the fault lines within the diaspora literature.

⁵ R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Pres Limited, 1997), ix.

⁶ S. J. Tambiah, “Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Identities,” *Daedalus: Journal of Arts and Sciences* 129 (1)(2000): 163- 194.

experiences of some specific communities now refers to a host of communities and groups that have very different histories and experiences.

Second, there is consensus in the literature with respect to the relationships between diasporas and processes of globalization. Diaspora literature underlines the changing meanings, relations and roles of diaspora as a result of the processes, technologies of globalization, and transnationalism that is associated with globalization. On such a ground, globalization has enhanced the practical, economic and affective roles of diasporas, proving them to be particularly adaptive forms of social organization.

Apart from the debates on the changing contexts of the diasporas, and their relationships with the processes of globalization where there is a consensus in the literature, there is also a debate on how to study diasporas: as a descriptive typological tool or as a social condition and process.⁷

The basic difference between two approaches concerns the definition of the notion of diaspora. As a starting point, the simplest and most general definition of diaspora refers to the dispersal of a people from its original homeland. Yet such a definition is criticized for being too broad to be useful.⁸ Studies of diaspora as a descriptive tool respond to the need for a more specific, yet a more applicable definition. One such attempt to list the key characteristics of diasporas has come from Safran who defines diaspora as a community whose members, having been dispersed from an original “center” to two or more foreign regions, retain a collective memory, vision, myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements; the idea of return; continuous relationships with that homeland which define their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity; a belief that they are not fully accepted in their host societies and that all members of diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland.⁹

Cohen further develops Safran’s list with additional emphasis on alternative routes to diaspora formation in search of work, trade or colonial ambitions; the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation; a strong ethnic group consciousness

⁷For such a categorization of diaspora literature see F. Anthias, “Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity,” *Sociology* 32(3) (1998): 557-580.

⁸ See for instance K. D. Butler, “Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse,” *Diaspora* 10(2)(2001): 189- 219.

⁹ W. Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora* 1(1)(1991): 83- 99.

sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate; a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and the possibility of a distinctive creative life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.¹⁰ Based on the modes and reasons of exile or migration, he categorizes diasporas as victim/refugee, imperial/colonial, labor/service, trade/business/professional and cultural/hybrid/postmodern diasporas.¹¹ However, including Jews and Palestinians, or Ancient Greeks and Russians within the same category, this account does not historicize the experiences and characteristics of various diaspora communities.

These ideal types of diasporas are criticized on several grounds. First problem is that few communities ascribe to all of these characteristics. Secondly, postulating the homeland as a diaspora's constitutive place of origin and naturalizing spaciality, these ideal-types are based on “dreams of boundedness and authenticity”.¹² In the case of diaspora, 'homeland' connotes not a singular identity based on a single place but “dislocation, contradiction, unforeseen cultural possibilities, multiple geographies of identity exceeding the boundaries of nation-states.”¹³ Thirdly, in this checklist approach the concept of diaspora is regarded as rooted in the group itself; and hence, it reifies diasporic identity. Yet identities are never fixed and simultaneous diasporic identities are possible even within a single diaspora.¹⁴ Therefore, rather than taking diaspora and diasporic identity for granted, the multidimensionality and heterogeneity through which these groups are formed, reformed and revived should be explored. Fourth, but not the last criticism underscores that diasporas are neither given nor fixed: diasporic communities wax and wane depending on the changing possibilities (obstacles, openings, antagonisms and

¹⁰R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Pres Limited, 1997), 26.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²B. Axel, “Context of Diaspora,” *Cultural Anthropology* 19(1)(2004): 26-60, 30- 32.

¹³D. Kondo, “The Narrative Production of “Home,” Community, and Political Identity in Asian Theater,” in *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity*, eds. S. Lavie and T. Swedenburg (USA: Duke University Press, 1996), 96-117, 100.

¹⁴ K. D. Butler, “Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse,” *Diaspora* 10(2) (2001): 189- 219, 193.

connections) in their host countries, homelands and transnational arena.¹⁵ Cohen's and Safran's approach takes diaspora as an unproblematic entity whose formations have been based on either the exact moment of migration or the relationship with the homeland after that particular moment. Thus, such an approach ignores the dynamic social and historical processes out of which these groups are created and constantly recreated.

These critiques lead us to the second approach that studies diaspora as a condition and as a process rather than as an ideal-typical community. Starting with the criticisms of the descriptive accounts, post-modern accounts focus on diaspora as a condition, experience, process and consciousness: as a part of a new vocabulary that “registers the constitutive potency of space, spatiality, distance, travel and itinerancy in human sciences that had been premised upon time, temporality, fixity, rootedness and the sedentary.”¹⁶ Here, diaspora is not a matter of categorization but a tool for the deconstruction of the categories themselves.

From such a perspective, the notion of diaspora denotes a specific type of experience and thinking, that is 'diaspora consciousness'. Diaspora consciousness is a characteristic of people living 'here' and 'there', a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue, and hence, distinct versions of modern and transnational experience.¹⁷ Furthermore, diaspora consciousness is considered to have the ability to question the configurations of power and the hegemony of the all-pervasive nation-state.¹⁸ As “alternate public spheres” which enhance forms of solidarity and consciousness that maintain identifications outside the national time and space in order to live inside, with a difference,¹⁹ diasporas challenge the nation-states and their notions of sovereignty.

In the post-modern accounts, diaspora is not a stable entity or identity that refers to a particular moment of dispersal from a particular territory. It denotes the processes of

¹⁵ J. Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3)(1994): 302-338, 306.

¹⁶ P. Gilroy, “Diaspora,” *Paragraph (Modern Critical Theory Group)* 17(3)(1994): 207-212, 207.

¹⁷ J. Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3)(1994): 302-338, 319.

¹⁸ B. Avtar, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 1996), 183.

¹⁹ P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

unsettling, continuous dislocation and hybridization. Diasporas refer to constantly shifting categories of identification that are “contested, complex and embedded in multiple narratives of struggle”.²⁰ Rather than being organic and unproblematic entities, diaspora communities and their cultures are the instances and products of the processes of diasporization, transplantation and syncretization.²¹ In these accounts, diaspora challenges our notions of place, disrupts those normative spatial-temporal units of analysis like nation and culture, and denotes one type of displacement.²²

Denoting displacement and deterritorialization, the notion of diaspora is considered beyond ethnicity and nationalism. Such a perspective regards diaspora communities as the antithesis of the old understandings of ethnicity and nationalism. The notion of diaspora no longer refers to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland which is the old, the imperializing, the homogenizing form of “ethnicity” but it is defined by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and hybridity that refer to identities which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference.²³

These post-modern accounts of diaspora claim that by challenging the conceptual limits imposed by national and ethnic/racial boundaries²⁴ and delineating how the local and global have become intertwined in the processes of globalization,²⁵ the notion of diaspora opens up new spaces and debates that enable us to understand the dynamics of transnational politics, cultural and economic processes that are shaped through the interplay of globalization, diversity and hybridization.

²⁰ S. Houston and R. Wright, “Making and Remaking Tibetan Diasporic Identities,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 4(2)(2003): 217-232, 217.

²¹ S. Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad,” *Small Axe* (1996): 1- 18, 10.

²² S. Lavie and T. Swedenburg., eds., *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity* (USA: Duke University Press, 1996), 14.

²³ Hall quoted in R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Pres Limited, 1997), 138.

²⁴ S. Lavie and T. Swedenburg., eds., *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity* (USA: Duke University Press, 1996).

²⁵B. Axel, “Context of Diaspora,” *Cultural Anthropology* 19(1)(2004): 26-60, 47.

There are several interrelated critiques of the post-modernist approach. First, the automatic identification of the diasporic and the hybrid with a politically progressive and democratic agenda are criticized as a fetishization which ignores the importance of contemporary economic processes and various kinds of diasporic subject positions that have been used strategically for economic gain.²⁶ Diasporas and their projects are not necessarily more democratic or egalitarian than the nation-states. Furthermore, diasporas just like any other national or ethnic group enhance multiple hierarchies. Diasporic identity is foremost a collective identity that provides us with scripts on the proper ways of having that particular collective identity, and hence, expectations to be met.²⁷ Therefore the question here is whether the collective identity at hand is part of an emancipating project or whether it is another form of oppression or tyranny.

Secondly, though deterritorialization takes place on a global scale, some lands are still considered sacred by the diasporas, and the claims to imagined or mythical homelands still persist among some communities. 'The call of the homeland' still continues to resonate as one of the most effective instruments of nationalists to mobilize their members.²⁸ These attachments and claims to territories are the very part of the hybridity that the post-modernist studies celebrate.

Thirdly, the assumption that diaspora is beyond the notion of ethnicity is problematic. Given that *ethniés* are defined by a common proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, a link with a homeland which may not be physically occupied but symbolically attached, and finally, a sense of solidarity on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnié*'s population,²⁹ the notions of *ethnié* and diaspora have so much in common. The legitimation and strength of the diasporic groups may be gained through global connections and sought in global contexts, yet diasporas may be reconstituting new

²⁶ K. Mitchell, "Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity," *Environment and Change* 15(1997): 533-553.

²⁷ A. K. Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. A. Gutman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Un. Press, 1994), 149- 165.

²⁸R. Kaiser, "Homeland Making and the Territorialization of National Identity" in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World*, ed. Daniele Conversi (London and NY: Routledge, 2002).

²⁹A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

and deterritorialized forms of ethnic and particularist ethnic absolutism.³⁰ On such a ground, diaspora is not beyond ethnicity but “a particular type of ethnic category, one that exists across the boundaries of nation states rather than within them”.³¹ Hence, the practices and discourses that pertain to diaspora communities should also be read through the notion of ethnicity.

Fourthly, despite the consensus in the literature on the fact that globalization provides diasporas with new opportunities beyond the nation-state, there is no consensus on the characteristics of the diaspora communities that is supported by the processes and technologies of globalization. Given that globalization refers to multiple processes which are complex, often resisted and unevenly developed over space and time,³² the relationships between these multiple processes and diaspora communities is multi-layered, complex and still open to debate. The processes of globalization and diasporas that it supports do not necessarily transform into a democratic political sphere. Global political sphere can as well be filled with nationalisms of various kinds.³³ This dissertation argues that diaspora nationalism is one of those nationalisms that are channeled through the processes of globalization.

Diasporas embrace a form of politics which is enmeshed in a nationalism that often has a life of its own, semi-independent from developments in the homeland, but frequently making reference to it.³⁴ Diaspora nationalism is nationalism of ethnic groups living voluntarily or involuntarily in host communities, maintaining attitudes of loyalty and patriotism towards their home countries and sometimes organizing themselves to this effect.³⁵ Through diaspora nationalism, a displaced community may keep the nationalist

³⁰F. Anthias, “Evaluating ‘Diaspora’: Beyond Ethnicity?” *Sociology* 32(3)(1998): 557-580, 567.

³¹*Ibid.*, 571.

³²C. Hay and D. Marsh, eds., *Demystifying Globalization* (New York: University of Birmingham, 2000).

³³F. Keyman, *Türkiye ve Radikal Demokrasi* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1999), 27.

³⁴Z. Skrbis, *Long-distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities* (Brookfield: Ashgate Publications, 1999).

³⁵J. Landau, “Diaspora and Language,” in *Modern Diaspora in International Politics*, eds. G. Sheffer (London: Croom Helm, 1986); J. Landau, “Diaspora Nationalism,” in *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, A. Motyl (San Diego, CA: Academia Press, 2001).

agenda alive in isolation.³⁶ The members of diasporic community may not politically orient themselves to the state in which they are located, but to the country of origin; and hence, employ long-distance nationalism³⁷ that is based on a claim to membership in a political community that stretches beyond the territorial borders of a homeland.³⁸ However, such 'distance' is only a partial truth; and to understand the immediacy of this participation the implications of the modern information and communication revolutions should be considered.³⁹

Despite all hybrid identities and discourses within which it is located, diasporas enhance a kind of nationalism which is embedded in the reproduction and maintenance of multiple hierarchies. It is ironic that diasporas, carriers of transnationalization may become the self-proclaimed guardians of rigorous nationalist and religious projects⁴⁰ through their absolutist orientations to minorities and majorities both within the diaspora and in the so-called homeland.⁴¹

Yet, such a nationalism is a weapon of the relatively weak, and in order to understand diaspora nationalism, nationalist longing and nostalgic visions should be distinguished from actual processes of nation building that take place within and through nation-states.⁴² Hence, it would be a mistake to consider long-distance nationalism necessarily extremist. However, as Anderson states, long-distance nationalism may be seen as a “probably menacing portent for the future” for three reasons: first, it is the product of

³⁶See for instance A. Misra, “A Nation in Exile: Tibetan Diaspora and the Dynamics of Long-Distance Nationalism,” *Asian Ethnicity* 4(2)(2003): 189-206; A. Wise, “Embodying Exile: Trauma and Collective Identities among East Timorese Refugees in Australia,” *Social Analysis* 48(3)(2004): 24-39.

³⁷S. Pryke, “British Serbs and Long Distance Nationalism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26(1)(2003): 152-172.

³⁸G. Schiller and Furon quoted in D. A. Thomas “Politics Beyond Boundaries: A Review Essay of Current Works on Nationalism, Migration, and Cultural Production within the Black Atlantic World,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11 (2004): 265-283.

³⁹S. J. Tambiah, “Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Identities,” *Daedalus: Journal of Arts and Sciences* 129 (1)(2000): 163- 194, 171.

⁴⁰T. Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Sphere* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 313.

⁴¹C. Bhatt and P. Mukta, “Hindutva in the West: Mapping the Antinomies of Diaspora Nationalism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23(3)(2000): 407-441.

⁴²J. Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3)(1994): 302-338, 307.

capitalism's remorseless and accelerating transformation of all human societies; second, it is based on a politics that is radically unaccountable; third, such politics, unlike those activists for global human rights or environmentalist causes, are neither intermittent nor serendipitous.⁴³ This dissertation argues that analyses of the ways in which diasporas are imagined through nationalist frameworks is crucial for social science to understand the notion of diaspora and diaspora politics in particular and nationalism in general.

Given such a theoretical framework, this study employs the notion of diaspora first, as a choice which is manifested as a voice at the political level and which even though ambivalent and fragmented may serve to deconstruct hegemonic nationalism.⁴⁴ Secondly, diasporas are regarded as composed of multiple actors who participate in several networks of relationships with the homeland, host community, international community.⁴⁵ Such an approach aims to move away from the idea of 'victim diaspora' and to locate diaspora in a more complicated web of relationships, bargains and strategies. Thirdly, this study considers diaspora the crossroads where nationalism, ethnicity and globalization meet and cross each other. From such a perspective, diaspora is a heuristic device through which the dynamic terrains of nationalism, ethnicity and globalization can be explored.

3.2. Mapping Diaspora Nationalism of the Circassians in Turkey

This dissertation regards Circassians as a diaspora community. Given that there are other ways to study Circassians that may lead this study to different theoretical orientations; this is a particular choice that should be explained.

⁴³B. Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London, New York: Verso, 1998), 74.

⁴⁴E. Balkan and M. Shelton, "Introduction," in *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas*, eds. E. Balkan and M. Shelton (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1-11, 5.

⁴⁵ S. J. Tambiah, "Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Identities," *Daedalus: Journal of Arts and Sciences* 129 (1)(2000): 163- 194.

When the self-definition of the group is taken into account, it is seen that the Circassian community in Turkey has defined itself in various ways and used the terms immigrant, minority, diaspora and nation interchangeably and, most of the time, strategically. While all of these identifications may be useful for social science to understand Circassians in Turkey; the existence of multiple, conflicting and strategically shaky grounds on which Circassians define themselves signals that Circassians in Turkey continuously define themselves through multiple solidarities, identities, narratives and relations. Studying Circassians in Turkey as an *ethnié*, minority group or immigrants freezes such a diversity and reduces it to one dimension which is only one among many. Such a unidimensional approach ignores the web of relations between the homeland, the host country and the diasporic community; the continuous references of Circassians in Turkey to the homeland, to diaspora and to Circassians in other countries; and the return movement of the 1990s which cannot be regarded just as an instance of immigration or ethnicity but as a conscious move that Circassian community has claimed to be looking forward to since the nineteenth century. Therefore the concepts of *ethnié*, immigrant community and minority will be useful to the extent that they are studied as parts of diasporic discourses which are embedded in politics of Turkey and homeland, international politics, and globalization.

Hence, in terms of highlighting and capturing the dynamism of the community, the notion of diaspora proves to be useful for the Circassians in Turkey. Although there are significant differences between the definitions of diaspora,⁴⁶ one can still track the common features among those definitions that most diaspora scholars seem to agree upon; and one can analyze Circassians in Turkey and in other countries through these features.

First, rather than a transfer from the homeland to a single destination, the term diaspora implies a scattering and the existence of the internal networks linking the various segments of a diaspora.⁴⁷ Throughout the nineteenth century, Circassians had immigrated to Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Palestine/Israel. Furthermore, there are Circassians and

⁴⁶ For such conceptualizations of diaspora, see for example, W. Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1(1)(1991): 83- 99; R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Pres Limited, 1997).

⁴⁷ K. D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10(2)(2001): 189- 219, 192.

Circassian Associations in Europe (Holland and Germany) and America. Despite differences and historical variations in terms of the extent and scope of relationships among various diaspora communities and with the homeland, Circassian community in Turkey has always been linked to other diasporic communities and homeland. Yet the ways Circassian diaspora in Turkey is linked to the homeland and other diaspora communities have changed and intensified after 1990.

Secondly, the notion of diaspora refers to a relationship to an actual or imagined homeland and such a bond is the foundation from which diaspora identity may develop.⁴⁸ Circassian community in Turkey has always referred to a homeland that is considered sacred. Even when discourse on homeland was not accompanied by narratives of exile before the 1990s, the Caucasus was regarded as the site where Circassians were once 'rooted';⁴⁹ and it was considered the land to be remembered by the Circassians in Turkey. It was through the laments (*ğibzes*) that they remembered the Caucasus; it was the Nart Sagas; it was the mountains of the Caucasus, Elbruz that they remembered; it was the memories on the places of birth, deportation and resettlement. In the periods when diaspora nationalisms were on the rise, it was the poems, stories, articles published on magazines which were sometimes transformed into physical encounters and relations with other Circassians and the Caucasus. Thus, this dissertation claims that, within the Circassian community in Turkey, there has always been a group that has embraced diaspora nationalism though the collapse of the Soviet Union proved to be a golden opportunity for the rise of diaspora nationalism.

Moreover, one should also note the heterogeneity within this group of Circassian nationalists. Circassian diaspora nationalism is not a homogenous block but it is composed of multiple lines of thought. As far as Circassians are concerned, there are different forms of diaspora nationalism. Rather than being solid political movements, these forms of diaspora nationalism are interrelated and to some extent opposed to each other; and each pertain to some Circassian groups and organizations. These forms and groups are those

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹ For the naturalization of links between people and place through botanical metaphors see L. Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, (Duke University Press, 2001), 52-74.

who favour the creation of an independent and united Caucasia; who support ‘return’ and repatriation in the Caucasus as the only option of Circassian diaspora in Turkey; who regard a socialist revolution as the only way for Circassians; and finally, who regard Turkish nationalism and Turanist ideas as feasible for Circassians. However, each line of thought is among the sources of Circassian diaspora nationalism; and taken together, all of them are the formations of diaspora nationalism despite their oppositions to each other.

As these forms of diaspora nationalism sometimes pertain to historical epochs, the actual questions that are being debated pertain to the questions on the homeland, diaspora politics and Circassian identity. Though post-Soviet conjuncture has altered some basic elements of these thoughts, these lines of thought still act as formations and discourses of diaspora nationalism through which diasporic groups debate on homeland, identity and politics. Furthermore, these formations of diaspora nationalism are far from being homogenous within themselves: each embodies several different positions which may only be explored by a particular focus on particular groups which is beyond the scope of this study. I will now explore four interrelated forms of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey.

3.2.1. “Independent and United Caucasia”

As the slogan of “Independent and United Caucasia” can be thought as a general diasporic discourse, it is a shortcut for a diasporic line of thought as far as Circassians in Turkey are concerned. Starting from the mid 1950s, Circassian nationalist groups had been organized in line with this thought. The idea of “United Caucasia” and its vision of homeland was highly inspired by the people from Caucasia who came to Turkey during the Bolshevik Revolution and Second World War, and their understandings of Caucasia. The basic historical reference is the Republic of the Northern Caucasus which was established in 1918 with the help of the Ottoman Empire and as a consequence of the political alliances that were based on vague Turanist aims. As this line of thought is prone to be anti-

Bolshevik in the Cold War Era, and, to some extent, anti-Russian in the post-Soviet context, it is discursively open to multiple alliances with the Turkish rightist groups such as Islamists and Turkish nationalists. The basic vision towards the homeland is not returning to the homeland but rather changing its political conditions. Thus, anti-Russianism, anti-Bolshevism, anti-leftism and Islamism act as the basic principles of the thought of United Caucasia.

In the post-Soviet order, given the multiple debates over the future of the Caucasus, the arguments of “Independent and United Caucasia” are still being voiced though one of the most crucial elements of the thought which is anti-communism is lost. İzzet, aged 62, a former president of the Caucasus Federation underlines the criticism of the “United Caucasia” group *vis-à-vis* the Caucasus Federation in terms of their visions of and actions in the Caucasus:

“When we try to defend return, when we say that we are against Chechnian War and war [in general], that we have tolerance for the death of even one of our people, that we need to increase our people, they oppose us by reacting us for being the servants of Russia, allies of Russia and use slogans such as independent great free Caucasia from Black Sea to Caspian which will be sympathized by the young people. Both independent and great united Caucasia. God makes those who do not want that blind. I also want that but they have never told whether or not that is real or whether that is going to be real.”⁵⁰

3.2.2. Returnists (*Dönüşçü / Göççü*)

The idea of return and repatriation among Circassians emerged in the mid 1960s; groups of young people –mostly university students who came from villages to urban centers of Turkey for education in the 1960s formed the base of the movement. Even though İzzet Aydemir, the president of Ankara Association and the publisher of *Kafkasya* magazine has often been referred as the first sparkle of the movement, it was especially

⁵⁰ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

with the later magazines of *Kamçı* and *Yamçı* published in the 1970s that the movement relatively became –relatively- solid and public.

It was in these years that the ideas of return, exile, assimilation and repatriation were first announced. Furthermore, the Caucasus was explicitly imagined for the first time as a geography to be explored and visited. Anti-assimilationism, return and the national right to self-determination were among the themes used by the returnists.

On these years, Metin, aged 62 and one of the leading figures of the group explains the returnists and their thoughts:

“Then we analyzed that geography had a great effect. And then we had so many question marks such as we were Circassians, we were not Turks, we had a homeland, then we had to do whatever we could to unite and meet at our homeland, was it possible, how was it possible, how did we come from there, why did we come; we started to explore these. Finally, we decided that we could return to the Caucasus. We could if we wanted to and we should want that. If we explained that to our people, they would want it. Because each society, each creation struggles for survival.There might be obstacles, Russia, Soviet Union back then might not accept it; if it did not accept it, there were other things to be done, the support of United Nations and the world might be provided. After all, there is the right of a people to live in their territory; this should be accepted, the right of the nations to determine their own destiny.... We really received so many positive reactions from all over Turkey, and there were so many people who got furious at us and told that we would be a trouble for them.”⁵¹

As the first –though vaguely- organized Circassian group in Turkey that used a nationalist language for national matters and explicitly talked about return and repatriation, the movement was inspired and triggered by the politics of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly ‘68 movement and the rise of Turkish nationalism; and the terminology was to some extent borrowed from the leftist movement in Turkey. Hasan, aged 48 who was a university student in Ankara in those years explains the relationship of the returnists with the anti-communism of United Caucasia and the general attitudes of the groups in the associations and the leftists whose ideas would be voiced in the 1970s:

⁵¹ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

“...and when you talked about Circassianhood, when you said the Caucasus etc., you were automatically regarded as a leftist. In years ‘73 or ‘74, when someone in the association of Ankara communicated with his relatives in the Caucasus, there had been attempts to nullify his membership. There was such an environment; I am telling this for you to see it. There was an extreme anti-communism. [The claim of the anticommunists was that] The Circassians who remained [in the Caucasus] were the collaborators of Russians; there was no spoken language there, Circassian stuff [books, magazines etc.] were being sent here but these were all propaganda by the Russians to deceive the Circassians in Turkey. For instance, Circassian broadcasts were being listened in Turkey and these were all showcases, Circassian was not being spoken, they were regarded as tricks and those who went to the Caucasus were totally seen as spies. After 1976, when the socialist movement in Turkey developed, a further affiliation took place but we, I mean the movement in the background, never used a totally socialist discourse. Of course, we used international concepts such as assimilation, chauvinism, being anticapitalist and anti-imperialist etc. ...It was more of an independent line.”⁵²

Borrowing terminology from the politics of the late 1960s and 70s, returnists emphasized assimilation in diaspora, and hence, the necessity of return as the only way to live as Circassians. As there had always been some sort of contacts of the Circassians in Turkey with the Caucasus, the returnists were the first in the diaspora to find their “lost” relatives in the Caucasus, visit the Caucasus and contact with the organizations in the Caucasus. Furthermore, their actions were oriented to forming an explicitly political movement with a solid political program.

3.2.3. Leftists

In the 1970s, another group emerged among the Circassians in Turkey. It was inspired by the socialist movements in Turkey and it was composed of several political fractions just like the socialist movement in Turkey. Meral, aged 51, a leftist Circassian at

⁵² Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

the time explains how she experienced two identities of being a leftist and Circassian in the 1970s:

“Indeed it was a leftist group within which we entered with our Circassian friends. They overlapped. We had a young group in the association. As that group was going to the cinema together, playing our dances, that group was organized by a movement that came from outside, let me put it that way. One of the organizers was Circassian and we all joined the movement. ...we continued in the association; that is, we used to go out of the association and go to the meetings, protests; that group in the association did not break up. ...Our motivations were still about Circassians. That is, if the revolution was made, all peoples would be equal, all of us would get equal rights, then on that basis we would have developed relations with the Caucasus. ...So again our leftism was not independent of Circassians, we were leftists since leftism would be good for Circassians, let me put it that way. Its sincerity can also be debated, it seems.”⁵³

Thus, the basic argument of the Circassian leftists was that revolution would benefit Circassians in Turkey. As for some groups the Bolshevism of Russia, and hence, the Caucasus was an inspiration, some leftists groups rejected Bolshevism. The Circassian revolutionists in Turkey were a mirror of the general socialist movement in Turkey, yet they tried to conciliate two different political affiliations: ethnic activism and leftism that were conflictual -at least- in theory.

Remembering the late 1970s, Nezhir, who is originally a returnist himself despite his opposition to some of the returnist groups, explains his interaction with the young Circassian leftists of the time:

“The agenda was not return any more. Our debate in Istanbul occurred because of the leftists. ...These kids were leftists but they were a group that read more, studied Circassianhood more, organized conferences. They were constantly alert. But according to them there was going to be a social revolution in Turkey and Circassians were going to get their rights. They were going to get their identity, with that aim they were working as fractions. But these children had Circassian identities. ...I told them “Friends, you have 15 days, we are elected by the Circassians, this place is a Circassian association. Okey, I accept leftism, I also accept your fractionalism but we have a measure. Let us support the fraction that supports the Circassians most since we are elected by the Circassians.” ...For three nights we debated till morning. They

⁵³ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

used to read continuously, they read Stalin, they read Lenin, they read and read. ...Then we met again, I said “here you are, which one of you now brings fractions?” No one. No word. There is no mentioning of the Circassian. It is all Kurds. ...There we had a decision on principles that we were Circassians and our fraction was Circassianhood, without that we could not operate.”⁵⁴

However, what terminated the existence of the leftist movement in the Circassian associations was not the lack of the notion of ethnicity other than Kurds in socialist movements in Turkey but rather the political developments in Turkey such as the *coup d'état* of 1980 and later, the end of Cold War.

Looking back from year 2008, the revolutionists of the time state that the political movements that they joined in those years were not in conflict with their ethnic identities and that they could easily exist as Circassians in those movements. Nevertheless, some of the revolutionists of the time today have some self-reflections regarding their political activism. Kenan, who, because of his political activism, spent some of his years hiding not to be arrested after the *coup d'état* of 1980 states:

“But I should mention that there was a very different thing back then, there was an aim in Turkey, there was something to do, socialism was going to be achieved. There was an ideal like that, when struggling for that why should I deal with the particularity of Circassians? If I put that system into practice, I was already solving the problem. Furthermore, it was not the problem of socialism, it was our problem.A movement that aimed to save Turkey should know about all the details of Turkey, working groups should have been organized on that basis. If I am a Circassian, my special interest should be Circassians and their particular problems. A movement that should have been like that became something else later on. ...One of the defects of the socialist Circassians of the 1968-78 generation, apart from the inability to politicize the people in Turkey, was that we should have had that struggle particularly for Circassians, we did not struggle at all, all work was done for the people of Turkey.”⁵⁵

Such a self-reflection by the Circassian leftist activists is a result of the post-Soviet order and the dissolution of the Soviet Union since leftist activists of the Circassian community in Turkey vanished starting from the 1990s.

⁵⁴ Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁵⁵ Kenan, interview by author, 20 August 2007, İstanbul.

3.2.4. Turkish Nationalism

As Turkish nationalism, in most of the instances, is thought as an opponent of other nationalisms in Turkey, this study argues that Turkish nationalism is one of the forms of Circassian diaspora nationalism. The relationships between Turkish nationalism and Circassians in Turkey are more complex than total opposition. For instance Gürsoy, aged 47 and politically active in the Turkish nationalist groups in late 1970s explores the role of his ethnic identity in the political movement:

“Well, years 76, 78 were exactly a period when such a civil war took place, you had to locate yourself somewhere, and my place was indeed obvious. Well, who was the protector and enforcer of a political movement in this country? Russia. I had to be automatically located against that. ...The Party did not discuss that [ethnic identity], it was secondary. When there were issues about us, we were already a very enhanced identity. That is, being Caucasian in origins was a source of pride in those organizations.”⁵⁶

As anti-Russian and anti-Soviet tendencies acted as the uniting factors between the Circassian and other minor identifications and Turkish nationalism throughout Cold War years, ‘being a nationalist in general’ also acts as a bridge. Hicran, aged 43 narrates her observations on the relationship between members of ethnic communities and Turkish nationalism: “You always find them in a group of people from the Nationalist Action Party. There are people who think that being from the Nationalist Action Party, since it is nationalist, is like being an Abkhazian nationalist.”⁵⁷

Hence, despite the relationship between Turkish nationalism and Circassian activists have most often been far from being harmonious, there are some channels between the two. From such a perspective, Turkish nationalist movement not only acts as the significant other but also as one of the forms and sources of diaspora nationalism though it is the most subtle and conflictual one.

⁵⁶ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

⁵⁷ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

3.3. Discourses of Circassian Diaspora Nationalists on Turkish Nationalism

As Turkish nationalism is not a timeless monolithic block but composed of several branches, in general it has a dual attitude towards Circassians in Turkey: as one discourse underlines the commonalities between Circassians and Turks and invents the notion of “Caucasian Turks” just like the notion of “Mountain Turks” which is used for Kurds, the other major nationalist discourse highlights Circassians as one of the many different ethnic groups that threatens Turkish nation as “the enemies inside”. Most of the Circassians interviewed for this study have highlighted the multiplicity of the discourses of Turkish nationalism on Circassians. Hasan, for instance, highlights heterogeneity of Turkish nationalist discourses in terms of Circassians:

“Then I had a lot of time, I read most of those Turkist magazines. ...In those magazines, it is apparently seen that Circassians are not Turkish; there are the enemies inside and outside; there is the idea that these are people who will always betray. If we move from the most racist group... to the less racist group, there is a movement that defines Circassians as Caucasian Turks. ...It is like: these [Circassians] are very heroic people, they struggled a lot with Russians, they are already Turks. If we move further, there is a group that accepts that Circassians are not Turks but they should be Turkified. ...If we move further, there is a group that thinks that they can protect their cultural presence to some extent but this should happen under the Turkish identity, that there should be a higher identity and that should be Turkish identity.”⁵⁸

As the multiplicity of discourses of Turkish nationalism on Circassians is highlighted, conditions of inclusion in the nation are also among the themes of the members of diaspora. From such a point of view, Turkish nationalism has never been the exact opposite of Circassian identity and activism but rather Turkish nationalism has its own conditions of inclusion for Circassians. Hence, the acceptance of Circassians into Turkish

⁵⁸ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

nationalist groups as exemplified by many members of diaspora is seen as conditional. Most of the Circassians during the interviews have narrated on the conditional nature of the relationship between Turkish nationalism and Circassians. The first condition of inclusion is accepting Turkishness as Kaya, aged 49 explains: “Turkish nationalism considers us the enemy. When we say we are Turks, there is no problem for them. Till now, the concept of Caucasian Turk has been a dual hypocrisy. But the moment we say we are not Turks we have a serious problem.”⁵⁹

As announcement of Circassian identity is problematic to the extent that it is defined as separate from Turkish identity, Mert further underlines that the relationship between Turkish nationalism and Circassians is a one-way relationship:

“Turkish nationalism regards Circassians as good on the basis that they do not declare their Circassian identity. The moment they announce their Circassian identity, it just becomes opposed. But still there are exceptions like my friends who are Turkish nationalists but who still appreciate me. ...Well, Circassians enhance Turkish nationalism but a Turk does not enhance Circassian nationalism. ...This is a significant point. That should be understood.”⁶⁰

As there are many Circassians that join Turkish nationalist groups, their existence in these groups has a twofold effect. First, the existence of Circassians in Turkish nationalist movement creates a bufferzone between Circassians and Turkish nationalists as Esat, aged 37 explains the relationship between Circassians and Turkish nationalists:

“It seems that Turkish nationalism’s relationship [with Circassians] is not similar to *quote en quote* its relationship with Kurds that considers them lower. But I feel that there is a conceptualization that considers them [Circassians] an element of betrayal, an element that lives within itself but which is going to bite one day when the times are hard. But I cannot know all the dimensions. Maybe this is not very visible because in rural areas there are unfortunately so many Abkhazians and Circassians in the Turkish nationalist movement.”

Secondly, the existence of Circassians among nationalist groups is defined as conditional. Such an existence in those political parties and groups is based on defining Circassians as a

⁵⁹ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

⁶⁰ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

branch of Turks rather than a separate ethnic group. Meral, for instance, narrates on one of her friends' experience in Turkish nationalist groups:

“If you define yourself as Circassians who are a noble branch of the Turks as they try to deceive, then there is no problem. For instance one of our friends, let's not give his/her name, got involved with people from MHP [Nationalist Action Party] when s/he was in teacher's school. S/he had relationships with them, s/he became one of them. But meanwhile s/he was very proud of his Circassian identity, s/he always talked about it etc. and nobody was bothered about that. Then s/he went to his/her village. When s/he talked more about being a Circassian after return, they just pull him/her to a corner and told him “We know that you are a Circassian but do not tell that openly everywhere.” ...Then s/he said “I am a Circassian, how can I not tell that?” and s/he questioned it.Well it is not a problem when you put your identity as part of Turks. But the moment you put it as Circassians, of course they are going to consider it an enemy.”

As public announcements of Circassian identity are narrated as troublesome as far as Turkish nationalism is concerned, there are other conditions of inclusion and acceptance. Şener, one of the activists in Circassian associations further elaborates on these conditions and expectations of Turkish nationalism from Circassians:

“Turkish nationalism first of all regards Circassians as victims of Russia. That is the point that overlaps. And it connects Circassians to the Turkish peoples in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkish nationalism expects from Circassians to forget Caucasia because it is afraid that Caucasia may feed Circassian identity. The support that it gives to Circassians is conditional; Circassians are supported to the extent that they forget Caucasia and become the enemies of Russians. Turkish nationalists expect thankfulness from the Circassians, it expects that Circassians should be thankful to them by saying that “you embraced us, without you we would not exist”. And it regards any demand in the name of Circassian identity as ingratitude.this is based on four conditions: forgetting Caucasia, being thankful, hating Russians, demanding nothing. When they do not fulfill these four conditions, Circassians become the Slavic germs in Russia in the eyes of the Turkish nationalist. Unfortunately the given support is conditional.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

Hence, despite the existence of a group among the Turkish nationalist movement, the positions between friend and foe, support and opposition are easy to travel for Circassians in the discourse of Turkish nationalism. In such instances of travel, Turkish nationalism regards Circassians as a potential threat which should be observed and kept under constant surveillance. Some Circassian activists criticize Turkish nationalism on the basis that it is oppressive, assimilating and unrespectful to differences as Nezh, a Circassian lawyer narrates on Turkish nationalism and his encounters with some Turkish nationalist reactions as a Circassian:

“Former is refusal and latter is the assimilation policy. Well, it says that Circassians are Turks, this is one approach. Second, it does not accept anything Circassian, it rejects it. This is the most usual form of assimilation that is used by the state mechanism. It tells you that “Setenay, you are a Turk” but it knows that you are a Circassian, it knows, it knows that you are ethnically Circassian. But because naming you as Turks fits into its nationalism and thought, it calls you Circassian. But when you want to do something, tell something as Circassians, it just says no, it rejects.The notion of human rights in Turkish identity is self-centered human rights. It is Turks-centered. It is human rights that do not recognize any identity, any culture. Now they come and tell us that “Can’t you be lawyers, doctors or members of the parliament? What else do you want?” Well, none of these is human rights.”⁶²

However these encounters of Circassians with Turkish nationalist groups and reactions take place not only on the individual level but also on the organizational level. The choice of the date of the commemoration of May 21, the commemoration day of exile may be an instance of encountering Turkish nationalism without any intention of Circassian activists. In the discourse of Turkish nationalism, the lines between friend and foe, us and them, loyal elements and traitors are easy to surpass for Circassians as Meral tells the unexpected consequences of a May 21st commemoration:

“For instance there is an event that I remember. We arrange the commemoration of May 21 according to the weekend so that everybody can participate. So one year we commemorate May 21 on May 19. For instance, about that event there is a very long article of a retired soldier: why did they [Circassians] make it coincide with May 19? There is an article that says that

⁶² Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

May 19 is the day for Youth and Sports, this [coincidence] had a special meaning and asks what Circassians were trying to say. I read it and I cannot believe it. That much of conspiracy theory is unbelievable.”⁶³

Similar to the example quoted above, most of the encounters of Circassians with Turkish nationalism are haphazard and random. In these instances, Circassians are regarded as the “next ethnic group” that may tend to betray Turkish nation. Here it should be emphasized that the explanations for these kinds of nationalist sensitivities are historical as the historical examples of the so-called traitors are commonly referred in these reactions. Thus, the reactions are far from being particular to Circassians but rather about the way Turkish nationalism thinks about the ethnic groups other than Turks: with suspicion, paranoia, the emphasis on the need for surveillance, and the possibility of being stabbed in the back again etc.

Yet the relationship between Circassians and Turkish nationalism is not only based on rejection or the existence of mutual groups but also Turkish nationalism has a constitutive role as far as other nationalisms are concerned to the extent that it is “the other” of these nationalisms. For instance, redefining and politicizing itself throughout the 1970s, Turkish nationalism inspired Circassian activists of the same period. Most people I interviewed have highlighted the significance of Turkish nationalism in their becoming “Circassian and gaining diasporic consciousness”:

“Okay, we were going to be idealist teachers, enlighten people etc. but what manipulated me most was that within that political context of 1970s people from the Nationalist Action Party had very harsh attitudes towards Circassians. They were so humiliating... “Either love or leave” had started even in those times. To be frank, that disturbed us. We needed to explore a new identity that we were unaware till that time. I remember very well that they had a declaration; in that we were all traitors, dreadful calamities. In those days, we did not even have our associations. But as far as I am concerned what triggered Circassians’ consciousness was people from the Nationalist Action Party. ...Then we were shocked. After that shock we wondered whether that was us. Then I started studying our history, I started going to our associations.”⁶⁴

⁶³ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul. May 19 that Meral refers is The Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day. It is an annual Turkish national holiday celebrated on May 19 to commemorate the start of the Turkish War of Independence.

⁶⁴ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

As homeland dimension is crucial for diaspora which is beyond the scope of this chapter, encounters between hegemonic nationalism and diaspora shape the way diaspora narrates about itself, locates and transforms its identity. Through state policies in education, armed service, justice etc. and a rising Turkish nationalism which is based on multiple and simultaneous tides of assimilation and exclusion, Circassian diasporic identity is constantly constructed and positioned *vis-a-vis*/through Turkish nationalism. Relationships with the state institutions especially in terms of education, soldiering and security set the context which shapes diasporic experience and identity.

Furthermore, comparisons with Turkish nationalism give Circassians an explanation for their failure: why Circassians have failed as a nation in terms of nation-state building. In these comparisons Turkish nationalism is the successful project as the Circassian case is the failure in an order within which nations and nation-states are the norm. Hence, the relationship with Turkish nationalism is not just based on rejection or criticism but also acknowledgement of the successful implementation of the Turkish nationalist project:

“Turks are different from Circassians. They are committed to land, that [commitment] starts with the soil and goes to the homeland. This is reverse for Circassians. They are not psychologically attached to land. They tend to leave it easily. ...culturally they have not been able to reach to the concept of homeland. ...In Turkey, they have a full consensus in terms of homeland. As far as I am concerned this is good. ...Circassians in Turkey are ideologically nothing. When Turks are struggling, they have no debate on the homeland, there is no debate on that.”⁶⁵

For the Circassian activists in Turkey, Turkish nationalism and Turkish state formation process is “the paradigm”, “the model” and “the pattern” through which nationalism is learned, acknowledged, criticized or imitated. Meanwhile, several Circassians in Turkey have been in very good terms with Turkish nationalism and state, and still retained their cultural identity as Circassians.

⁶⁵ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

3.4. Diasporic Maneuvers

Circassians in Turkey not only produce discourses on Turkish nationalism but also relates to and acts on Turkish nationalism in several ways. Through these discourses diaspora nationalism simultaneously rejects, imitates, flirts, cooperates and challenges hegemonic nationalism. Hence, the relationship between diaspora nationalism and hegemonic nationalism is far from being an exact opposition but rather includes strategies and maneuvers that are open to rapid change and transformation. From such a perspective, the ways Circassian nationalists define themselves, their identity, history and aims are not regardless of their relationship with other nationalisms but deeply embedded in them as maneuverized acts to resist, cope and deal with the hegemonic nationalism. This part of the chapter aims to explore the ways through which Circassian diaspora nationalists in Turkey cope with Turkish nationalism in particular and nationalism in general.

3.4.1. Reclaiming the Public

As Circassian nationalists over and over emphasize that they have no problems with the territorial indivisibility of the country, they demand, claim and indeed reclaim the public sphere. The overemphasis on indivisibility is mostly due to their fears of “resembling to Kurdish nationalism.” The claim and the demand to publicity, gaining and regaining the public is one of the recent areas of struggle for Circassian nationalists in Turkey. As the significance of regaining the public is highlighted as a political project, reclaiming the public is also reclaiming the diasporic identity, past and memories. For instance Nesibe, aged 58 who is among the professional workers of one of the Circassian

associations associates her first experience of hearing Circassian songs in public with her father's experience:

“My father did not hear Circassian songs in public. Of course he listened on radio and cassettes. We used to listen Jordanian radio those days, on Saturday evening at four o'clock. ... But apart from that he could not listen in public. When Doğan's cassette [the first Circassian music artifact that has been produced for the national market] had been first on the market, I heard it on the street playing from a music store. There was no such thing. I felt... I could not just stand there, I could not leave. It is not proper to cry in the middle of the street. It was just playing there as loud as it could be... It was dreadfully beautiful. He [my father] could not see these. I feel sorry for that.”⁶⁶

The policies of the nation-state provide Circassians and other ethnic groups in Turkey a monolithic public sphere. In such a context, the non-Turkic languages –for instance Adyghe language- becomes a private practice, a language that is spoken at home, between spouses, between grandson and grandparents etc. Thus, one of the recent debates of the Circassians in Turkey considers how to exist in the public sphere; the recent celebrations, announcements and commemorations that are open to Turkish public originate from this idea.

However to the extent that the attempt to reclaim the public is fulfilled, encounters with Turkish nationalism in particular and nationalism in general become unavoidable:

“Our image in Turkey was like that, when you say Circassian, people would think about beauty, aesthetics, respect, love and culture. But nowadays especially within the last 5 years, because of our people, people start to think that Circassians will be the next calamity after Kurds. ..There are already so many racists in Turkey. Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms are struggling with each other but even non-racist people are now regarding us in negative terms. This is very bad. ...How are we going to make it right? ...For instance, I am a graduate of a technical university, and I have an image there. But recently due to those newly formed negative connotations, my friends are immediately blaming me with Circassian nationalism whenever I send a mail to our e-mail group. There is a reaction that is being formed. I have always been known as a Circassian in my class. But I used to be known as a Circassian but a good guy...”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

⁶⁷ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

Any participation, claim or demand that is voiced in Turkish public is received and reacted in nationalist terms. As Meral highlights, any diasporic claim or demand by Circassians tend to be understood in nationalist terms, such as the indivisibility of the country: “We do not have any claim towards the indivisibility of the country. All we think about is the Caucasus and having some cultural rights here. That is, will Turkey be divided if I speak Circassian? It is such an absurd thing.”⁶⁸

Diaspora which is theoretically a global and transnational player that presumably creates a third space beyond national systems is unable to avoid or overcome nationalism in a context within which different nationalisms are struggling for public sphere. The dilemma of diaspora activists is that they will either give up the claim to public sphere and enhance the usual silence of Circassians in Turkey that is referred in the interviews or they will be a part of the nationalist struggles and discourses in which, given their diasporic condition, they claim to have no place. Moreover, since Turkish nationalism is constructed in the lines argued in Chapter 4, any recognition of diversities or any such demand is seen as a challenge as far as Turkish nationalism is concerned.

3.4.2. Reversing the Official Historiography

One of the instances that shape Circassian diasporic experience and identity in Turkey is related to official historiography which had associated the name Circassian with a so-called traitor figure of Turkish national history, Cerkes Ethem for decades.

Since the 1990s, Circassian researchers have tried to overcome that stigmatizing identification. Although Circassians have joined other wars before and after the War of Independence, one of the contemporary research areas in Circassian diaspora in Turkey is the role of Circassians in the War of Independence which is historically considered to be

⁶⁸ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

the constitutive war of the Turkish Republic.⁶⁹ Similarly most of the Circassian people today refer to their “grandfathers who has shed blood for this country” to claim equal rights of citizenship *vis-à-vis* any possibility of ethnic discrimination. The claims of participation into the Turkish War of Independence links diaspora nationalism to the Turkish Republic and Turkish official historiography. Hence, the military experience that is shared with the people of Turkey, an exclusively masculine affair as far as Circassians in Turkey are concerned becomes the source of claims over equal citizenship and equality. The links with the Republic of Turkey are discursively formed through shared experiences of militarism which are exclusively masculine.

These claims find their opposites in Turkish national historiography which is not only silent on the 'claimed' participation of Circassians into the War of Independence but also regards the Çerkes Ethem affair as a turning point in which the “traitors” are eliminated from the national cause. As Circassians nationalists, since the 1990s, have challenged and reversed the national historiography by claims of participation into the War of Independence, they have also rejected the title “traitor” concerning Cerkes Ethem affair not as historically invalid but politically incorrect. As an example, one reader letter in a newspaper in 1990 complains about and rejects such a use of the name Circassian:

“It has been stated that Çerkes Ethem is a traitor, that he escaped, that he stabbed the country in the back (“*vatanı arkadan bıçakladı*”)... When they say as strong as a Turk (“*Türk gibi kuvvetli*”), they give Yaşar Doğu as an example. However, Yaşar Doğu is a Circassian. So why is it Çerkes Ethem and not Çerkes Yaşar Doğu? These are issues that make many people like me heartsick.”⁷⁰

Claims of participation into the nation-building processes also allow Circassians to define themselves as the constitutive elements of the Turkish Republic and legitimize their diasporic claims. For instance Taner, aged 52, a journalist narrates on this constitutive role while explaining his relationship with Turkey as a Circassian:

⁶⁹See for instance, U. Tavkul, “Milli Mücadele Dönemine Ait Önemli Bir Belge: Çerkes Milletinin Düvel-i Muazzama ve Alem-i İnsaniyet ve Medeniyete Umumi Beyannamesi,” accessed August 2005, accessible at http://www.bkd.org.tr/tarih/umumi_beyanname.asp; M. Ünal, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Çerkeslerin Rolü* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1996).

⁷⁰M. K. Öke, “Çerkesler,” *Türkiye*, 1 November 1990.

“Are we the enemies of this country as Circassians? We are not. We live in this country, this country hosted us, these lands host us. We love this country; we are the constitutive members of Turkish Republic. So? Are we betraying our country? No, sorry but I am a Circassian. Well, I would like to be born as a Turk but I am born as a Circassian, there is nothing I can do about it. I really would [like to be born as a Turk]; then I would not think and get concerned about these. Really I would not think, I would love to be born as a Turk and live without trouble. I would not have additional concerns.”⁷¹

Thus, through the discourse of the constitutive element, Circassians today challenge the official historiography of Turkish nationalism and claim multiple roles in Ottoman history and in the history of Turkish Republic.

3.4.3. Myth of Circassian Nationalism: “We have been used.”

As official Turkish historiography both names the traitors as Circassians and ignores the Circassian origins of the Republican heroic figures, Circassians further reverse that historiography by talking about the way “they have been used.” Hence, another subtle struggle is for the victim position.

“But we were used. Not because they loved us. This is how states make policies.”⁷²

“In this phase of adaptation our people had done several mistakes to survive. Their identities were distorted, their personalities had been distorted. You can see in history that they sacrificed a lot but they were not paid back in return. They were flattered, they were used. I consider the history of Circassians as the history of being used since mid 19th century. That is, some people had constantly used us.”⁷³

⁷¹ Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁷² Nurhan, interview by author, 23 March 2007, İstanbul.

⁷³ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

Such a newly emerging victim position is empowering as far as Circassians are concerned. First, it explains the complaints of the activists on current situation i.e. assimilation, loss, disintegration of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. Secondly, the idea of “still being alive despite such political experiences” makes the activists proud. Thirdly, the claim that Circassians served this country in several wars or political affairs with their lives, properties etc. implies that in Turkey they are not “guests” any more. When asked about what they heard from their grandparents or grand relatives, most of my interviewees highlighted their silence and refusal to talk about migration, processes of remigration, relationships with the host community and their experiences in the particular instances of nation-building process such as “Citizen Speak Turkish” campaigns etc. Circassian activists mostly explain this refusal and silence as a consequence of the “guest position”, as a fear of losing the only land they have and becoming the migrant, the refugee again. Hence, the claim that Circassians are part of the Anatolian history, Turkish national history is indeed the attempt to overcome this “silence of the guest.” From such a perspective, Turkish national history becomes not only a ground to be rejected or challenged but also participated by the Circassians in Turkey. Thus, diaspora nationalism may strategically search for paths of inclusion not only in the history of the homeland but also in the history of host states.

3.4.4. Claims of ‘Rootedness’ in Anatolia

In addition to claims of participation into the wars of the Republic, Circassians also connect to Turkish history through their discourses on Anatolia. As most of the Circassians that I interviewed narrated on their rootlessness, inbetweenness, inability to belong, diasporic loneliness etc., some Circassians narrated on their existence in Anatolia not in terms of diaspora or “guest” but rather as parts of Anatolia. On such a level, the relationships of Circassians with the peoples of Anatolia are older than the Turkish nation-

state. Yasemin, aged 59, an independent researcher of Circassian history and language for instance defines herself not as diaspora but a more rooted group of Anatolia:

“We are not here today. Even in years 1600s you say Circassian, Abkhazian, you say Abkhazian Ahmet Pasha etc. They lived on these lands with their own identities. These were the people who built the Circassian Mamluk state. Well we... To be frank, I do not consider myself diaspora. We did not come here yesterday and I do not explain the relationships here only with reference to the immigration of 1864.”⁷⁴

These claimed connections with Anatolia and Turkish history also explains the fact that how, among the Circassians, there are significant groups that regard themselves as the constitutive elements in Turkey, in its history and state, rather than a separate diasporic community.

Okan, aged 64, an author and an artist reiterates the thesis that Hattis were Circassians and employs the claim to associate history of Circassians with Turkish official history. In his narrative, criticism towards Turkish official history which he insinuates with his words about Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader cult of the official history is coupled with the attempt to associate Circassian history with the official history of the host nation. Therefore criticism is ironically intertwined with a discourse on commonality:

“I believe that Hattian language is Caucasoid, and I continue believing in that till the reverse is proved. Well, they built two monuments in Central Asia which are called Orhun monuments. One monument is Adyghe saga, they are Adyghe sagas, you know that Circassians call themselves not Circassian but Adyghe. Then Turks and Circassians lived together in Central Asia in one epoch of history. ...But I also know that Mustafa Kemal desired Turks to be Hattians by origin, I am saying that he desired, I am saying this particularly. ...But afterwards people stated a big similarity between Circassians and Turks. ...The love for the horse, warriorship, warriorship is not a virtue but unfortunately they had to learn it well and they became good fighters to survive.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁷⁵ Okan, interview by author, 9 February 2008, İstanbul.

Hence, Circassian activists claim a historical role not only in Turkish historiography but also in Anatolia. Both of these claims empower Circassian activists *vis-à-vis* Turkish nationalism which often regards Circassians as late immigrants or guests.

3.4.5. Military Nation

Among the diasporic maneuvers of Circassian activists in Turkey, there is also the discourse of military nation which is quite similar to its Turkish version. In most of the interviews, Circassian activists defined Circassian history with reference to wars. Circassian history just like Turkish official history is narrated as the history of wars and military losses. Furthermore, the wars that Circassian activists referred are quite the same wars that are the basic elements of official Turkish history such as the War of Independence, the War of Gallipoli and the operation in Cyprus. Thus, diasporic history is constructed and remembered as a mirror of the history of the Turkish Republic and diaspora is defined as a military nation:

“We feel guilty for coming here. We left. We migrated. We were exiled. We escaped. We left. And we feel the anxiety of that each moment. We are afraid that somebody will say you took refuge here. Yes, we took refuge here, but we paid its price. ...No they did not embrace us. ...they accepted us because we were useful. They needed soldiers. They needed a soldier nation. And these people had died there. They died in exiles. Out of diseases. Because of the bad conditions of settlement. In wars.”⁷⁶

“What was the ideal? To go back to the Caucasus, to return to homeland but meanwhile, defending the country which had been a second homeland to them, they had to keep their faces open, this was what their culture demanded. This is why in Gallipoli...”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

⁷⁷ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

“My uncle was a person who got medals from Atatürk, the uncle of my mother was imprisoned and sent to Athens, his surname was put as patriot, just think about it. That is, our people has always been sincere warriors in Turkey, we do not study that much. ...My uncle for instance used to make me read the poem of Yahya Kemal “We, the thousand men with horses were happy like children that day, we, the thousand men with horses defeated a huge army that day” million times. Because they really had enormous struggles. ...I am saying that because in our house there was sympathy for both Turkish people and Caucasian people.”⁷⁸

Cezmi, aged 65, a retired state official quotes his and an older Circassian’s dialogue with one of the leading politicians of Turkey in an official ceremony. He stresses and explains the participation of Circassians into the wars of Turkish Republic:

“He [the older Circassian state official] told him [the politician] that since we knew the pains of losing a homeland, we embraced Turkey which we called our second homeland. When he told that we were the group that had the most martyrs in the War of Independence, I told that we also had martyrs in the peace operation of Cyprus, that I just went to the military branch in Pınarbaşı and when I was passing the stairs, there were 28 photographs of martyrs, 26 of them were Circassians and 2 were Avshars.”⁷⁹

It is striking that Circassians are defined as “military nation” in Circassian narratives just like Turkish nationalism which employs the concept of military nation as a foundational myth, an essential discursive component.⁸⁰ By way of employing/ borrowing the concept of military nation and constructing the diasporic history on wars, martyrs and “blood shed for the country”; Circassian nationalists not only appropriate and reiterate the Turkish nationalist discourse but also challenge it by underlining the multiethnic character of the establishment of the nation-state. Therefore we can argue that there is a similarity between the construction of Turkish national identity and Circassian national identity in terms of the myth of military nation. Turkish nationalism is not

⁷⁸ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁷⁹ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

⁸⁰ A. G. Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004),

3.4.6. Claiming the National

As the necessity of claiming the public is narrated by most of the Circassians that I interviewed, one of the themes that they highlight is the necessity to create a national discourse and employ the nationalist symbols and rituals. From such a perspective diaspora is not the hybrid actor of a globalized world but rather defined in terms of its lack of national symbols and rituals. In a world that is based on a national order, diaspora becomes the failure and the lack of the national. Mert for instance narrates on such a lack of the national:

“Well, let me tell you a very simple thing. Very very simple. There are times that I get sad by the question of why the word Circassian is not written in our passports. Or there are times when I got surprised when our people got medals when they competed under different flags. It happened to me so many times. Well, now why does this guy, for instance a Chechen, an Ossetian who became a champion, participate not under his own flag but compete for the Russian flag?”⁸¹

Hence, one of the basic themes of diaspora activists is to claim the national. Mirroring the nation-states and nationalisms that they observe; flags, ceremonies, national anthems, national championships are crucial for them. For instance, recalling his activism at the end of the 1960s, Timuçin, aged 63, who was a returnist in the 1970s and still calls himself a returnist, narrates on the Circassian activists’ search for the national:

“We even tried to write a national anthem. Our national anthem. It was about return. We even wrote it, to do that we had meetings for nights. ...[he] wrote the first verse, I wrote the second one, let me tell you in Khabartay language.It means “Young people waiting for the homeland! What are you waiting for? The homeland is waiting for you. What are you still doing?”. ...[He] wrote this and I wrote the second.[It means] “if you forget me, get ashamed. I do not think the blood of your grandfathers will be rightful. [helal]

⁸¹ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

I am waiting for you by heart, when is your return?” ...There was a guy from Jordan who was playing accordion, maybe he made its music, he was working on that. ...We were going to keep it alive among ourselves. We still read those when we get together. It is a longing, it is a desire, we still read it among ourselves.”

To the extent that national symbols and rituals are crucial for diaspora activists, they strategize inbetween the national borders to create and claim the national. Cezmi, aged 65, tells about the trip of an amateur Circassian dance troupe from Turkey to Jordan in 1970s:

“Jordanian national anthem.... Well I told them I did not come as a representative of the Republic of Turkey, they did a lot not to let us come here, I told them not to play it [the Turkish national anthem]. ...All the saloon stood up. The Jordanian national anthem was played and afterwards we were waiting for the Turkish national anthem. Then the voice of microphone was just cut off. We waited and waited; when it did not continue, the king just told us to sit down by his gestures and he looked at the [Turkish] ambassador. ...Everybody sat down. Our night started with the chorus, there was Mecit in the chorus, he wore his Circassian clothes, and the chorus was standing there. ...the piano was there, Adghey national anthem started with it. It could not be done if you were to arrange it. There were girls from Syria who were students in a boarding school and who hired a bus to come there and watch the show. And they particularly bought the tickets of the first row. They were conscious girls. ...When the curtain was opened and Mecit sat in front of the piano and started playing, the first row automatically stood up. When they stood up, all the saloon stood up. When they stood up, the king and the queen stood up. The ambassadors stood up. Well, in a place where Turkish national anthem was not played, they watched the Adighey national anthem standing.”⁸²

This instance narrated by Cezmi, followed by his joyful laughters and the story of his further –and mostly unpleasant- encounters with the Turkish ambassador after this event is an instance of the ways diaspora resists the national order and strategizes to claim the national. In this particular narrative, it was the Circassians of Turkey, Jordan and Syria that challenged the diplomatic practices and claimed the national. From such a perspective, the national anthem which did not pertain to any particular nation-state but rather to an autonomous district of the Soviet Union that was hard to reach and communicate for

⁸² Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

diaspora communities was employed to symbolize the resistance of diaspora and its claim to being a nation.

Recently younger diaspora activists rethink about these strategies to claim the national. For instance, they dream of football tournaments as a means of reclaiming the national as Şener states:

“For instance, for the future I think about an Adyghe-Abkhaz world football tournament. It is not my project; well, I am the father of the idea but this should be a project of World Circassian Union, it should be handled on that level. And my dream is that each city in Turkey within which there is an association forms a team. ...The games are played, there are the champions of the groups. ...And then there are the champions of the countries. ...The games are played in Israel, America, Holland. ...It is not played in Caucasia. Because it is the place that is going to save us. We will play those football matches there.”⁸³

Therefore diaspora activists think about alternative ways to create a national space for themselves. The very theme of creating/playing the national anthem turns into more subtle ways to create and claim the national such as global football tournaments that will glorify the homeland. Having observed the relationship between football and nationalism in Turkey, football is seen as a mechanism for diaspora to connect to other diasporic communities and the homeland, and hence, to revive or construct the nation.

3.4.7. Dilemma of Diaspora Nationalism: “My Nationalism is not Like That!”

One of the basic problems about the fieldwork conducted for this dissertation concerned the reactions of Circassian activists *vis-à-vis* nationalism. Most of the interviewees stated that they regarded themselves not as nationalists but as “patriots”, people who love their culture, or just people who would like their culture and identity to survive. For the diaspora activists, these definitions were not parts of nationalism. Thus, during the interviews, they rejected to call themselves as nationalist, some even discussed

⁸³ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

the issue with me further: they simply did not like to be called nationalist. Even the general title of my dissertation made them restless. We talked about whether or not there has ever been Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey. For some of them Circassians were not able to have a movement like that and they considered that a failure. For some interviewees, Circassians and nationalism were two ideas that did not go together well. According to them, nationalism was something different, something evil, something assimilating and oppressive. In that sense, Turkish nationalism was a typical nationalism. Given their rejections, calling them nationalist was part of my analysis which most of them did not agree. Yet this disagreement in terms of terminology needs to be explored in terms of Turkish politics and the meanings of being a Circassian nationalist in Turkey as far as Circassians are concerned.

Concerned about resembling to the other nationalisms in Turkey, i.e Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms; Circassian activists who call themselves nationalist and still feel restless about the term revise it with some reservations and they narrate on difference of diaspora nationalism from other nationalisms:

“What do we mean by nationalism? I am not chauvenistic nationalist but I am a nationalist. I want to protect and be conscious about my identity. If that is fascist nationalism... I do not know. I do not think so.... I am not that. I do not want to kill anybody. I am not saying that the ones who are not from us should not live.”⁸⁴

Aged 85, with close links to Turkish nationalism Zekeriya who is among the people that established the Circassian associations and whose narratives may be considered the official history of Circassians does not consider himself nationalist:

“No, I am not a Circassian nationalist. I am not saying that people who are not Circassian are not worthy. But, coincidentally, Circassians are created as a very graceful, honest, ethical people. We are coincidentally born as Circassians. This is why I am thankful. Just coincidentally.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

⁸⁵ Zekeriya, interview by author, 28 February 2007, İstanbul.

“I do not like nationalism. But I struggle for Circassians’ rights which have been taken away just like other people and nations. I have friends from each nationality. I do not think I am superior to them. ...But I love being Circassian, I love it. I love feeling like a Circassian.”⁸⁶

“But my nationalism is not based on assimilation and destruction of other cultures. It depends on coexistence. ...I try to struggle with people trying to assimilate me not by fighting but with dialogue and I want my culture to survive.”⁸⁷

Vis-à-vis dominant nationalism, that is Turkish nationalism, Circassian activists in Turkey within all their nationalist demands and discourses reject “that sort” of assimilating nationalism. They mostly consider their nationalism a non-nationalism, “a natural nationalism” or “humanistic nationalism” at best. Faced with assimilating nationalisms, they regard nationalism as a totally pejorative ideology in which they, as the members of the diaspora, claim to have no place.

What most highlights the dilemma of Circassian nationalism is that: “Yes, we should somehow remove the veil, the impact of Turkish nationalism but when you do that with the same mechanisms that Turkish nationalism used in the formation process, tomorrow you will get stuck.”⁸⁸

Given the inability to be part of the national order of things in a nation-state which is based on a different dominant ethnic identity which is either assimilating or excluding, nationalism is an ideology that constantly slips from the hands of Circassian diaspora activists. Yet, given the rise of Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms in Turkey since the last 15 years, there is no ground in Turkish politics and society beyond nationalism for the Circassians to locate itself. It is either Turkish nationalism or Kurdish nationalism:

“I am telling this as an example. Human Rights Association organized a panel and we were four people who participated. A Laz, ...a Kurd, me, a Circassian and an Assyrian. These were the presenters. We started to talk. Then a friend stood up and told that he was in the board of the association. He just started like “We, the Kurds” and went on like “we are the smartest, heroic

⁸⁶ Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁸⁷ Nurhan, interview by author, 23 March 2007, İstanbul.

⁸⁸ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

people”. ...I told him that then I should be saying that Circassians were the best horse riders, the most heroic people etc. ...Where are we going to reach with the best ones? ...I told him that we could not have an evaluation like that. Then he apologized and told that this was not what he intended. Indeed that was exactly what he meant. Kurds, Turks and the others. This is the point that they would like to bring us. This cannot happen. This can happen nowhere.”⁸⁹

There seems to be no ground for Circassians inbetween Turkish nationalism which denies the existence of non-Turkic ethnic groups or sees them as potential threats and Kurdish nationalism which has territorial claims over Turkey. As nationalism seems to be the most powerful political discourse that gives a group its *raison d'être* in the country that they have settled, Circassians as a diasporic group is neither in a position to embrace it nor able to employ a non-nationalist language to claim their identity and voice publicly.

3.5. Conclusion

To conclude, I argue that diaspora politics is based not only on resistance or oppression but also on an array of narratives and strategies of struggle. Within all its nationalist demands and agenda, diasporic groups may reject nationalism not to fall into the trap of resembling the hegemonic nationalism that they are trying to decompose. Still they may appreciate the dominant, hegemonic nationalism as a successful example that should be modelled. The way diaspora struggles with hegemonic nationalism is shaped not only by resistance or rejection but also by flirts, cooperations and bargains.

As instances and products of the processes of diasporization, transplantation and syncretization rather than organic and unproblematic entities, as Stuart Hall reminds, the way diasporas narrate and politicize their diasporic condition, demands, identity and history is as chaotic as it can be. Within and through all that diasporic chaos, diaspora strategizes,

⁸⁹ Kenan, interview by author, 20 August 2007, İstanbul.

narrates and reconstructs itself and appropriates multiple narratives of struggle. Yet these struggles of existence pose a very basic dilemma for diaspora activists: how to voice nationalist demands without resembling the oppressing and assimilating other; how to struggle without being nationalist, how to resist nationalism while embracing it? Faced with these dilemmas, Circassian activists in Turkey is a showcase for the dilemma of diaspora nationalism in general: challenging and criticizing the national order of things that is the naturalized and normalized understanding of the world of nations as a discrete partitioning of territory⁹⁰ on one level and reclaiming their diasporic and still national identity on the other.

⁹⁰L. Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, (Duke University Press, 2001), 52-74, 55.

CHAPTER 4

HOST COMMUNITY AND HOST STATE

In 1918, at the end of World War I, an anonymous British consular report defined Circassians in Anatolia in the following way:

“Constantinople and the other towns have developed another class of Circassians. Their loyalty and influence of lady relations [such as consorts or wives] in the Imperial Harem raised many of them to high places in the army and Palace. Among the leading families of Constantinople and Cairo, a considerable number are, at any rate, by origin, Circassian. In sentiment they are Turkish –often more Turkish than the average Turk- and they do not think of themselves as a separate people.”¹

88 years after this report which also defined Circassians as a group from whose less reputable classes many of the assassins, secret agents and other “*fedais*” [militiamen/paramilitaries] of Turkish politicians had been recruited,² on June 10, 2006, a column titled “The Circassian Reality of Turkey” in a Turkish daily newspaper discussed the transformation of Circassian identity in Turkey and quoted one of the Circassian activists in Turkey. The quotation stated:

“Circassian diaspora wants to return to the homeland. Young generations are not able to speak our languages. We want Circassian language schools for that

¹ PRO/FO 371/3418/199234, 3 December 1918 quoted in R. Gingeras, “Notorious Subjects, Invisible Citizens: North Caucasian Resistance to the Turkish National Movement in Northwestern Anatolia, 1919-1923,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 40 (2008): 89-108, 92.

² Ibid.

situation to change. It is not enough to permit private language courses. We would like to utilize positive discrimination because Circassians consider Turkey their homeland and they are among the founding elements of modern Turkey.”³

These two incidents are among the many instances of the ways Circassian diaspora in Turkey relates to the host community and host state. Exploration of these relationships is significant to understand not only Circassian diaspora in particular and diasporic communities in general but also the ways Turkish state relates to ethnic groups in Turkey and *vice versa*.

However, as Circassians is a quite underresearched ethnic group in Turkey, studies with a focus on Circassian relationships with the Turkish state and peoples of Turkey are further limited in number. Yet, there are some works that have some arguments on the nature and dynamics of this relationship. Kemal Karpat, for instance, states that after the immigration of Circassians to the Ottoman lands, a dialectical and peaceful integration took place at the local level while at the upper level Circassian elites became identified with the state as part of the emerging modern-Turkish speaking Ottoman elite.⁴ Ayhan Kaya starts his analysis of the political participation strategies of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey by stating a common belief that Circassians are more privileged than other ethnic groups in Turkey.⁵ Tanıl Bora, however, states that Circassians were regarded as a group which had to be put under some degree of surveillance during the early Republican years.⁶ For Sevan Nişanyan, Circassians who were already in a process of losing their mother tongue even in the very early years of the Turkish Republic were one of the rare ethnic groups in Turkey who “changed their language” in line with state policies.⁷ Such a perspective considers Circassians an ethnic group that did not resist like Kurds in Turkey. Similarly, Baskın Oran

³ See Ş. Alpay, “Türkiye’nin Çerkes Realitesi,” *Sabah*, 10 June 2006, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazar.do?yazino=292479&keyfield=74C3BC726B697965276E696E20C3A765726B657320207265616C6974657369> (17 December 2008).

⁴ K. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 344.

⁵ A. Kaya, “Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey,” *Mediterranean Politics* 9(2) (2004): 221-239, 221.

⁶ T. Bora, “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar,” *Birikim* (71-72) (1995): 34-49, 37.

⁷ S. Nişanyan, “Kemalist Düşüncede “Türk Milleti” Kavramı,” *Türkiye Günlüğü* 33 (1995): 127-141, 138.

defines Circassians as a group that is far from questioning the Turkish identity. According to Oran, Circassians can be defined as a group that aims for the continuation of their cultural identity and prevention of dissolving in the larger society at best. He claims that the fact that they are not autochthons but immigrants has prevented the formation of a full minority group consciousness among them and contributed to their integration and natural assimilation.⁸ Likewise, Kirişçi states that starting from the foundation of the Republic till today Circassians have been considered among the ethnic groups that would easily melt into a Turkish identity and be successfully assimilated.⁹ In a similar vein, Çelikpala defines Circassians as a group some portion of which lives in harmony with other groups in Turkey and therefore has changed their identities despite the transformation of Circassians from immigrants to diaspora that has been taking place since the 1990s.¹⁰ In most of these academic accounts most of which do not particularly focus on Circassians *per se* but rather give some arguments on Circassians, Circassians are regarded as an assimilated group in harmonious and privileged relationships with the Ottoman and Turkish state, respectively.

This chapter aims to examine the relationship of Circassians with the host community and host state. Yet, to do that, this chapter aims to deconstruct the unidimensional approaches on Circassian relations with the host. It argues that these relations of the diaspora with the host are complex and they are constantly shaped on interrelated but also different levels. These different levels that this chapter explores is first Turkish nationalism as hegemonic nationalism that has multiple and dynamic discourses on Circassians. The second part explores the community level: how Circassian diaspora nationalists define Circassian diaspora in Turkey and narrate their experiences as an ethnic group in Turkey; and how they regard their image and their relationships with the non-Circassian people in Turkey. The third part aims to analyze Circassian relationships with

⁸ B. Oran, *Türkiye’de Azınlıklar: Kavramlar, Teori, Lozan İç Mevzuat, İhtihat, Uygulama* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2004), 58.

⁹ K. Kirişçi, “Turkey: A Country of Transition from Emigration to Immigration,” *Mediterranean Politics* 12(1) (2007): 91-97, 93.

¹⁰ M. Çelikpala, “From Immigrants to Diaspora: Influence of the North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42(3)(2006): 423-446, 426.

the state apparatus which is claimed to be in close relationships with the Circassians since the Ottoman Empire.

4.1. Circassians in Turkish Nationalist Discourse

There is a tendency in the studies on Turkish nationalism to underline the centrality of Muslimhood for the definition of Turkishness.¹¹ From such a perspective, as non-Muslims are excluded as “the Others”, Muslim groups are regarded as part of the alliance and they are well accepted despite their non-Turkish origins. It is stated that governments in Turkey defined the term “Turkish descent and culture” to include “not only Turkish speaking groups but also Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks and Tatars, particularly from the Balkans.”¹² However, as the legal minorities are regarded as “marginalized, limited and citizens who are not “not considered from us” except some of the cases who were integrated with the state, party, and the capital,”¹³ the way non-Turkish Muslim groups are defined has been far from total inclusion.

This study argues that the inclusion of non-Turkish Muslims in the nation building project is highly conditional and ambiguous. As an almost total rejection of non-Muslims can be observed, non-Turkish groups have not been exempt from the means of othering and exclusion but indeed very close to be called as “the Others”. Indeed, what differentiates “the others” from “us” is not religion per se but rather loyalty attributed to the particular group: Yeğen states that openness of the definition of Turkishness to Muslimhood was “mostly due to their actual or assumed loyalty to the Ottoman-Turkish state” as exemplified

¹¹ M. Yeğen, “Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(6)(2004): 51-66, 58.

¹² K. Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 36(3)(2000), 1-22, 7.

¹³ T. Parla and B. Oran quoted in R. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni, 1923-1945* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 554.

by the doubts of Turkish officials as to the Turkishness of Kurds after their revolt.¹⁴ Hence, inclusion had been ambiguous, conditional and fragile. This study argues that any analysis of Turkish nationalism requires exploring not only the shadows of Turkish nationalism on legal and religious minorities¹⁵ but also on non-Turkish Muslim groups. Only such an exploration may help us to understand the conditions of inclusion and forms of exclusion which non-Turkish groups were subjected.

Thus, this part of the chapter aims to explore Turkish nationalism and its relationship with minorities, not only legal minorities, non-Muslims as recognized by the Treaty of Lausanne but especially cultural minorities, Muslim non-Turkish groups. Since Circassians have always been understood by the Turkish nationalists and Turkish state as a part of the list of ethnic groups in Turkey,¹⁶ this part of the chapter will explore the relationship of Turkish nationalism with non-Turkish Muslims with a special focus on Circassians. This dissertation takes Circassian diaspora nationalism not as a phenomenon that takes place in isolation but through profound and continuous interactions with Turkish nationalism. Literature on Circassians lacks how Turkish nationalism deals with Circassians, how Circassians are located by the hegemonic nationalist discourse in Turkey. However, understanding Circassian community in Turkey requires an analysis of the discursive constructions of Circassians in Turkish nationalist discourse.

To explore how Circassians are located, identified and categorized in Turkish national discourse, this part of the chapter will analyze the nationalist texts that may be considered the constitutive elements of Turkish nationalism such as the texts produced by Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Mustafa Kemal, Recep Peker, Afet-İnan, etc.; the political party programs and the nation-state policies to the extent that they pertain to Circassians in Turkey. Such an analysis of Circassians in Turkish nationalist discourse

¹⁴ M. Yeğen, "Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(6)(2004): 51-66, 66.

¹⁵ A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2006), 134.

¹⁶ The list is usually the Turks, the Kurds, The Circassians, Lazs etc. Any ethnic debate in Turkey uses this list usually and surprisingly with the same order. For instance an inquiry into the proceedings of Turkish Grand National Assembly shows that between 1996 and 2008 the word Circassian has been used 59 times, and in 54 proceedings Circassians was mentioned as a part of the list. However starting from 1980s as Kurdish nationalism and armed resistance gained strength, the second group in the list, the Kurds seem to have a separate discursive space as "the Kurds".

will enable us to understand the context and limitations within which Circassians are located and how Circassians react to and negotiate with Turkish nationalism.

As Turkish nationalism should be analyzed as Turkish nationalisms in plural,¹⁷ the following part explores three historical forms of Turkish nationalism among many others: Turkish nationalism that emerged in the late years of the Ottoman Empire; Kemalist nationalism as an ideology that was intertwined with state apparatus; and extreme nationalism that was crystallized as the ethnic Turkist movement during the 1940s and politicized in the 1960s with a political party, Nationalist Action Party (MHP).

4.1.1. Turkish Nationalism in the Ottoman Era

As Turkish nationalism emerged as a linguistic movement in the late nineteenth century, it later developed into “a form of politics” as Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935) stated in his prominent article, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Forms of Government/Politics) (1904)¹⁸ which is called “the first systematic embodiment of Panturkism,”¹⁹ “a manifesto of Turkish nationalism”²⁰ and “a concise presentation of the essence of Pan-Turkism, with the emphasis transferred from the cultural level, so ably fostered by Gasprinsky and his collaborators, to the political one.”²¹ This transformation from a cultural movement to a political ideology with –relatively- definite projects, aims, strategies and concepts took place in the beginning of twentieth century as a response to the multiple crises of the

¹⁷ T. Bora, “Sunuş,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 15-22, 18.

¹⁸ Y. Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976).

¹⁹ F. Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), 48.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

²¹ J. M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 14.

empire, rising nationalisms of various groups within the empire and the failure of other political projects such as Islamism and Ottomanism that were interchangeably used by the center to overcome the disintegration throughout the nineteenth century. With these concerns, Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Era consisted of two different movements: Panturkism which was brought to the Ottoman Empire by Russian *émigrés* after 1908 and emphasized the common historical roots of the Turkic peoples and the necessity of cultural and political unification of these people; and the Turkish nationalist movement that romantically idealized the Anatolian Peasant as the real Turk.²²

Before the twentieth century, any political idea with nationalist connotations could be understood not as the mechanisms for attaining Turkish dominance but as the reaction and the panic *vis-à-vis* the inability to practice Ottomanism in a continuously disintegrating empire.²³ Only with the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 which further underlined the disintegration and constructed “the Others” who were once the elements of the political system, Ottoman patriotism was transformed into a revengist nationalism²⁴ shaped with trauma.

What was new and crucial was that the Turkish nationalist discourse –though vaguely- suggested totally new concepts that would replace the older ones: a new “people”, one that is based not on a community of believers or subjects but people –discursively- from the same nationality: Turks; a new identity: not Muslim, not Ottoman but Turk as the basis of loyalties and membership; a new polity, not the Empire that had subjects from multiple *millet*s, not the Caliphate that ruled the Muslims, but a new model of government that rules a nation.

However Turkish nationalism even in its birth, even in the writings of two thinkers, Ziya Gökalp and Namık Kemal who are considered “the direct parents of Turkish nationalism”²⁵ was established in an utilitarian ambiguity. As Turkish nationalism became

²² E. Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” in *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, ed. K. Karpat (Boston: Brill, 2000), 150-179, 154.

²³ Ş. Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri, 1895-1908* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 151.

²⁴ F. Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş*” in *Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 105.

²⁵ S. Deringil, “The Ottoman Origins of Kemalist Nationalism: Namık Kemal to Mustafa Kemal,” *European History Quarterly* 23(1993): 165-191, 170.

the basic idea, Turkish identity was not imagined as an ethnic identity but rather a cultural one. For instance Gökalp stated:

“How can we regard the ones who did not leave us not only in our good days but also in bad ones as outside of our nation? Especially if among them there are the ones that made great sacrifices and served Turkishness, how can we tell them that they are not Turks? Since race has no effect on social qualities as far as humans are concerned, it is not right to look for race. If another path is taken, then most of the intellectuals and thinkers will have to be sacrificed.”²⁶

As Gökalp underlined the cultural definition of nation rather than an ethnic one, Turkish nationalism that emerged in the Ottoman Empire was also positive about policies of Turkification, assimilation. As early as 1878, Namık Kemal, who first used the word “*vatan*” extensively in the sense of fatherland,²⁷ stated the necessity and feasibility of Turkification policies in some groups of the Ottoman Empire which would contribute to the emergence of a cultural union:

“Though destruction of languages other than Turkish that exist in our country is necessary if we were able to do it, shall we now give the Albanians, Lazs, Kurds a moral weapon for conflict by designating a script for them?For a tribe to be transformed to another one, language is a stronger barrier than even religion. ...It is hard to generalize our language among the Greeks, Bulgarians but it is feasible among Albanians, Lazs, that is among the Muslims. If some schools are managed in accordance with that and if our regulations on education are executed; then, in 20 years from now, the Laz and Albanian languages will be totally forgotten.”²⁸

Hence, cultural union was to be achieved among the Muslims of the empire. What Namık Kemal proposed in the 1870s was to be transformed into policies with the Turkification of the curricula and government communication starting from Abdulhamid II. However, the aim was not exactly increasing the use of Turkish language but rather increasing

²⁶ Z. Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (İstanbul: Akvaryum Yayınevi, 2005), 31.

²⁷ Ş. Mardin, “ The Influence of the French Revolution on the Ottoman Empire,” *International Social Sciences Journal* 41(1989): 17-31, 29.

²⁸ N. Kemal quoted in M. Arai, *Jön Türk Dönemi Türk Milliyetçiliği* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 18.

administrative efficiency through the use of single language as a means of modernizing, institutionalizing and centralizing the state.²⁹

Parallel to other means of Turkification, the economic policies of the Committee of the Union and Progress also aimed Turkification of the economy.³⁰ The boycotting of non-Muslim shops and the establishment of the society for national production during the Balkan wars were attempts to promote a national economy.³¹ Yet what Turkish nationalism pointed towards the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century was a cultural union, not an ethnic or racial one. It was a formula to include all the communities which “do not leave us”. Hence, nationalism of the early twentieth century was bound with Ottoman boundaries and identities. As Muslim groups such as the Albanians and Lazs were regarded as groups to be Turkified, it was admitted that they were not Turks, and the reasons of Turkification was not racial or ethnic dominance or belonging but a means of survival in a disintegrating Empire. Related to that the problem was not Turkification *per se* but rather a problem of centralization as a means of saving the state.³² That ideal of the preservation of the state that led to the Young Turk revolution and the Turkish revolution was later transformed into nascent nationalisms.³³

Hence, Turkish identity was considered as a cultural identity based on commonalities in language, religion, sacrifices and services to Turkishness. The alliance upon which Turkish nationalism was based included Muslim non-Turkish groups; for instance, the first strong organization of Turkish nationalism, that is Union and Progress

²⁹ K. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 337.

³⁰ Ç. Keyder, “İktisadi Gelişmenin Evreleri,” in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Tarihi Ansiklopedisi* v. 1, ed. M. Belge (İstanbul: İletişim, 1983), 1065-1073.

³¹ C. Yılmaz and M. Şahin, “Modernity and Economic Nationalism in the Formation of Turkish Nationalism,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 17(2)(2006): 53-71, 66.

³² E. Ülker, “Contextualising ‘Turkification’: Nation-Building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908-18,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11(4)(2005): 613-636, 621.

³³ Ş. Mardin, “Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2(1971): 197-211, 202.

was established by five people, only one being an ethnic Turk,³⁴ the others being Albanian, Circassian, Kurdish and Arab.

As late as 1912, the nations of the empire were still considered within the alliance in textbooks on citizenship as Turkishness was regarded as the founding element:

“Small nations because of their needs and relationships unite and form bigger nations. And Ottoman nation is founded upon the alliances of Turks, Arabs, Albanians, Kurds, Rums, Armenians, Jews, Bulgarians, Lazs, Circassians etc.It is a big nation, it is Ottomanism.”³⁵

Therefore despite the emergence of some particular themes of Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman era, Turkish nationalism till the foundation of the Republic was bound with its Ottoman past and ethnic composure. From such a perspective, first generation of Turkish nationalists despite their ideas on the necessity of Turkification and hegemony of Turks were short of a formulation of an ethnic or racial nation; among them “people like Mustafa Celaledin Paşa and Tekinalp whose ethnic origins were well known and like Ömer Seyfettin and Suphi Tanrıöver whose ethnic origins were a matter of doubt were well accepted.”³⁶ Thus, Turkish nationalism despite its Turanist theories was based on an alliance of Ottoman identities. Despite the discourse on the necessity and possibility of Turkifying them, these identities were never rendered invisible, to the extent that they were at the service of Turkish nationalism, the fact that they were pronounced was not considered a problem by the Turkish nationalists. Born in a multiethnic empire, being a Circassian, Kurd, Albanian or Arab was not imagined as an obstacle to being an Ottoman and Turk by the Turkish nationalists of the Ottoman Era. As the movement was political,

³⁴ M. Belge, “Türkiye’de Zenofobi ve Milliyetçilik,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 179-192, 185.

³⁵ Hazık quoted in F. Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş*”ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 108.

³⁶ O. Ertekin, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkçülüğün Çatallanan Yolları,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 345-387, 349.

the nationalist program was based on ethnicity whose membership was determined largely by religious affiliation.³⁷

As the nationalist movement of the Ottoman era laid the foundations of many of the core ideas of Turkish nationalism,³⁸ it was with the Republican Era that these ideas were put into systematical state practice. As the very formations of Turkish national identity, such as the themes of treason, dislike of Christian population, military defeat and political humiliation, the loss of the homeland, the struggle of self-preservation, loneliness *vis-à-vis* the enemies surrounding the nation³⁹ were historically and politically rooted in the Ottoman Era, it was the Republic that transformed all these themes into policies, laws and a relatively consistent official national ideology. During this transformation, the alliances and the conditions of the alliance upon which Turkish nationalism of the first generation based their formulation would be reformulated. In short, as Circassians, along with other non-Turkish Muslim groups, played a role as Muslims of different ethnic groups in the Ottoman era, in the early nationalism of the end of nineteenth century, such an inclusion would be questioned after the formation of the new nation-state.

4.1.2. Kemalist Nationalism

Starting from the Turkish War of Independence till the mid 1920s, Ottoman legacy of a nationalist alliance based on pronounced identities and national identifications was inherited and employed by the founding fathers of the Republic. Throughout the War of Independence, the symbols and references employed were religiously determined⁴⁰ such as

³⁷ E. Zürcher, "Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938," in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed. K. Karpat (Boston: Brill, 2000), 150-179, 173.

³⁸ N. Canefe, "Turkish Nationalism and Ethno-Symbiotic Analysis: The Rules of Exception," *Nations and Nationalism* 8(2) (2002): 133-155, 138.

³⁹ T. Akçam, "Ulusal Kimliğimizin Oluşumu Üzerine Bazı Tezler," *Birikim* 33 (1992): 20-23.

⁴⁰ K. Kirişçi and G. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 1997), 91.

the report at the Erzurum Congress referring to “the Muslim majority consisting of Turks and Kurds who for centuries have mixed their blood in an intimate relationship and who form the community (*ümmet*) of one prophet.”⁴¹ In line with that, the initial aftermath of the war proved to be a period within which same alliances were kept for some time and the character of the National Pact which speaks of “Ottoman Muslims” and not of Turks remained intact.⁴² As early as 1920, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk highlighted the importance of the multi-ethnic alliance in terms of creating the “national borders”:

“Gentlemen... What we mean here, and the people whom this Assembly represents, are not only Turks, are not only Çerkes, are not only Kurds, are not only Laz. But it is an intimate collective of all these Muslim elements.... The nation that we are here to preserve and defend is, of course, not comprised of one element. It is composed of various Muslim elements... We have repeated and confirmed, and altogether accepted with sincerity, that [each and every element that has created this collective] are citizens who respect each other and each other’s racial, social, geographic rights. Therefore, we share the same interests. The unity that we seek to achieve is not only of Turks or of Çerkes, but Muslim elements that include all of these.”⁴³

However, the discourse on the alliance of “sibling nations that live in a mixed way and that have totally unified their goals”⁴⁴ was going to change as the new regime consolidated a mononational identity. Starting from the mid 1920s, the cultural nationalism of Ziya Gökalp and the first generation of nationalists was considerably revised in favor of a dominant ethnic identity.⁴⁵ Thus, during the mid 1920s, there emerged a crossroads for the inclusion of Circassians and other groups into the nation. As Turkish nationalism moved from a civic definition of nation to an ethnic one, the position of non-Turkish

⁴¹ E. Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” in *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, ed. K. Karpaz (Boston: Brill, 2000), 150-179, 164.

⁴² B. Lewis quoted in K. Kirişçi and G. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 1997), 92..

⁴³ A. G. Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2006), 63.

Muslim groups became more questioned and insecure as far these groups were concerned. Among the members of the alliance upon which the Republic was established, one group among the others became redefined and dominant: as early as 1923 Turkishness became the norm to be defined. For instance, Hamdullah Suphi president of Turkish Hearths defined Turk as “speaking Turkish, a Muslim and the one who has the love for Turkishness” and the prerequisites that he stated were “commonality in terms of language, religion and will”.⁴⁶

The 1924 constitution was an important step in defining Turkishness. After long debates on the meaning of Turkishness, article 88 of the constitution stated that “the people of Turkey regardless of their religion and race would, in terms of their citizenship, called Turkish”. As the draft of the article did not include the term “in terms of their citizenship”, the term itself was put into article after long debates about a choice over a civic or ethnic definition of the nation. The article today is stated to be a signifier of the existence of a “more authentic Turkishness other than Turkishness in terms of citizenship”⁴⁷ and as a signifier that “the minorities were considered to be citizens but they would not be socially accepted as Turks unless they were Turkified in terms of language, ideals and culture.”⁴⁸ As the debates for the article pertained to minorities, non-Turkish Muslim groups were considered Turks.

However, starting from the mid 1920s as the emphasis on the “vulnerability of the new community, on its precarious viability in the face of hostile external forces” was highlighted,⁴⁹ the meaning of Turkishness and citizenship was being transformed. As the prime minister İsmet İnönü’s statement in 1925 in Turkish Hearths that “we will crush the ones that do not respect the Turks and Turkishness. ...what we demand from those who serve the country is being a Turk and Turkist first and foremost.”⁵⁰ signified, Turkishness

⁴⁶ H. S. Tanrıöver quoted in R. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni, 1923-1945* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 102.

⁴⁷ M. Yeğen, “Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(6)(2004): 51-66, 59.

⁴⁸ R. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni, 1923-1945* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 103.

⁴⁹ Ç. Keyder, “Whither the Project of Modernity?,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, eds. S. Bozdoğan and R. Kasaba (Seattle: Washington University Press, 1997) 37-51, 45-46.

(not only “respecting” but also “being” Turkish) became a “first and foremost” means of survival in the new Republic though the definition of the “Turk” remained unclear. Same year, Ministry of Education announced in a proclamation on “Currents trying to undermine Turkish unity” that use of the terms Kurd, Laz, Circassian, Kurdistan and Lazistan would be banned.⁵¹ Throughout the 1920s, several laws (such as Law on Government Employees, Law on Association, Press Law) substituted the term Turk for Turkish citizen. In 1927 the General Assembly passed the Law Nr. 1041 stating that “those Ottoman subjects, who stayed outside Turkey during the Independence War” and had not returned since then would lose their citizenship.⁵² In accordance with this law, for instance an Arab Mehmet Nasır, an Arab Nusayri Salih, a Nusayri Halil Fatum, Norisan of the Armenian community, Aram Kazaryan of Van, Circassian İzzettin of Düzce, son of Hapaç” were denaturalized.⁵³ In 1928 Law of Turkish Citizenship asserted that the Cabinet of Ministers could denaturalize people who took “the citizenship of other countries without special permission from the government” or joined the armies of other countries.⁵⁴ Among the denaturalized were for instance Protestant Toma, Viktorya, daughter of İzak Arditi, a Maronite Catholic, Maron Eyub, Maryos Dallalyan, an Armenian Catholic, Halil, the son of Kurdish Ali, Circassian Mehmet Arif and Circassian İsmail.⁵⁵ As the denaturalization decrees all mentioned the ethnicity of people who lost their citizenship, the lists were composed of non-Muslims and non-Turkish Muslims.

After the 1927 census, the first census of the newly formed nation-state, the Ministry of Internal Affairs published a booklet about the census and stated that

“The population of Turkey is ethnically homogenous. Out of the general population of 13.500.000, 11.777.810 which is 86 % is Turk and speaks

⁵⁰ İnönü quoted in S. Nişanyan, “Kemalist Düşüncede Millet Kavramı,” *Türkiye Günlüğü* 33(1995): 127-141, 134.

⁵¹ E. Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed. K. Karpat (Boston: Brill, 2000), 150-179, 176.

⁵² S. Çağatay, “Citizenship Policies in Interwar Turkey,” *Nations and Nationalism* 9(4) (2003): 601-619, 605.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 606.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 607.

Turkish. If the number of people who despite their Turkishness speak Kurdish and Arabic with the influence of the Kurds and Arabs are added to that, it is seen that the ratio of total Turkish population is 95 % percent of the whole.”⁵⁶

Thus, the desire that was apparent even in the interpretation of the results of the first census of the nation-state was formulating an ethnically homogenous society, a 95 % Turkish society and speaking Turkish became one of the basic criteria for Turkishness that was defined in the text.

As exemplified by the “citizen speak Turkish” campaigns that started in 1927 and continued in 1930s, language has been a significant factor in terms of Turkification and homogenization of the non-Turkish elements in society.⁵⁷ Parallel to that for instance Republican People Party’s program of 1927 underlined the importance of “common language and commonality in thoughts as the strongest bond among citizens” and “complete development of Turkish culture and language” was stated as one of the basic aims of the party.⁵⁸ Similarly, in the Turkish Hearths meeting in 1927 one of the basic aims of the organization was stated as “making Turkish a spoken language” and “realization of linguistic unity”.⁵⁹ Apart from the difference between two discourses, that 95 % of Turkey speak Turkish and that there is a need to make Turkish “a spoken language”, it should be stated that any policy and discourse regarding Turkish language concern not only minorities but also non-Turkish Muslim groups who were not native speakers of Turkish. For instance in 1934 British correspondence noted that Arabs, Circassians, Cretan Muslims, and Kurds in the country were being targeted for not speaking Turkish and other correspondences mentioned instances of harassment and arrest in various parts of Turkey.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ According to the census, it is stated that the number of Rums in Turkey is 119822, Armenians is 64745, Arabs 134000, Jews is 68900, Circassians 95901, Albanians 21000, and Bulgarians 20544. See R. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni, 1923-1945* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 544.

⁵⁷ F. Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş*”ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 166.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ S. Çağatay, “Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(3) (2004): 86-101, 95.

As non-Turkish groups were considered to be insignificant in terms of numbers, their very identities were also regarded as out of modernity, they were also defined as old-fashioned and meaningless claims of identity enhanced by an unintelligent few by Afet İnan in a textbook on citizenship:

“In the contemporary political and social body of Turkish nation, there are some of our citizens and nationals who are subject to propaganda by ideas of Kurdishness, Circassianhood or even being Laz or Bosnian. But these identifications which are the products of past eras of despotism influenced no individual of the nation except some desirous brainless people and a few instruments of the enemy. Because this national body like the general Turkish community have the same common past, history, morals, law.”⁶¹

Hence, as Afet İnan associated any ethnic claim about Kurds, Circassians, Laz and Bosnians with incompetence, ancient regime and collaboration with “the enemy” all at the same time, recognition of differences was regarded as detrimental to the nation-state formation process. Starting from the mid 1920s and intensifying in the 1930s, the identities that were announced as the founding groups of Turkish Republic in 1920 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself were now associated with “the enemy”. As these identities were regarded as prone to be used by the enemy and hence, risky as far as the well being of the Turkish nation was concerned, the Ottoman Empire was constructed as the antithesis of the new republic. Therefore the alliance upon which the Republic was built was now being nullified. Given the way ethnic claims were made insignificant and marginal by the emphasis on “a few” and “no individual;” threatening and risky as far as they help “the enemy”; old-fashioned and anti-modern; the union of the nations of Islam was transformed into the domination of the Turkish identity and invisibility of other ethnic identities as insignificant, unnecessary and ancient.

This position is also clear in the declarations of the politicians of the early Republican years. For instance, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt who was a deputy in the assembly from 1920 till his death in 1943, minister of justice, close friend of Atatürk and one of the designers of the 1924 constitution and other laws of the new Republic stated in 1930:

⁶¹ A. İnan quoted in F. Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş*”ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 227.

“We are living in the world’s most free country which is called Turkey.I will not hide my feelings. The Turk is the only master, owner of this country. The ones who are not of pure Turkish descent have only one right in this country, the right to be a servant, the right to be a slave. Friend and foe, and even the mountains should know that.”⁶²

His attempt to clarify his statement afterwards by declaring that he did not mean the minorities but “rather the ones who were Turkish by constitution but still had claims of other nationalities”⁶³ becomes more meaningful with one of his other statements on non-Turkish Muslims:

“One of the points on which revolutionaries should be awake and careful is slipperiness toward their creation. In our contemporary history the sources of this slipperiness are all foreigners and non-Turkish Muslims. Like Circassians, Albanians, Arabs, Ilahs. These should be given attention.”⁶⁴

In his book, *Ataturk Revolution* which is considered “the first attempt to systematize Kemalism”⁶⁵ and written with “the directives of Ataturk”, he further exemplified the slippery actions of these groups. For instance:

“I never forget that I was among the committee that was sent to the London Conference by the Ankara government as the deputy of İzmir. Our leader, Bekir Sami’s foremost task had been establishing a Circassian state in the Caucasus. However our duty was to establish Turkish independence. We shall never give the tasks of Turkish state to people other than Turks. Nobody other than the Turks should manage the tasks of the Turkish state.”⁶⁶

Therefore coming to the 1930s, in 10 years later from 1920 non-Muslims were regarded as unreliable, slippery elements whose actions might endanger the Turkish nation and state.

⁶² M. E. Bozkurt quoted in A. Yıldız, “*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene*”: *Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938)*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), 210.

⁶³ M. E. Bozkurt quoted in M. Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması, 1923-1931* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2005), 312.

⁶⁴ M. E. Bozkurt quoted in S. Nişanyan, “Kemalist Düşüncede Millet Kavramı,” *Türkiye Günlüğü* 33(1995): 127-141, 136.

⁶⁵ C. Tanyol, “Önsöz” in M. E. Bozkurt, *Atatürk İhtilali* (Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi: İstanbul, 1967), 4.

⁶⁶ M. E. Bozkurt, *Atatürk İhtilali* (Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi: İstanbul, 1967), 353.

In ten years time the so-called founders of the republic were transformed into threats whose surveillance was required due to their slippery behaviors. From such a perspective, non-Muslim Turks were much more of a danger to Turkish nation since their actions, beliefs, and plans were slippery. As non-Muslim minorities were already considered non-Turks and excluded from Turkishness, non-Turkish Muslims were harder to detect, analyze and categorize. With their embeddedness in the Turkish nation, they were much more dangerous as their actions were hard to guess and observe. Only the educated eye of a Turkish nationalist could understand the threat they posed: unexpectedly they might be slippery at any moment. This theme of “enemies inside” who seemed to be from the Turkish nation but who were not, who proved their tendencies and intentions contextually would be legacy of Kemalist nationalism to the nationalist movement that emerged in the early 1940s. What is significant here is that “the hidden enemy” was considered worse than the obvious one because of its inclusion in the nation and its invisibility that required special surveillance by an educated nationalist eye.

This understanding of non-Turkish Muslims as “unreliable” was totally in harmony with Turkish official historiography which called Çerkes Ethem the traitor throughout the 1930s. As the Çerkes Ethem affair is the elimination of the irregular troops and their leaders Ethem from the Turkish War of Independence in 1921, its effects in the newly established nation-state had continued during the following decades. As far media was concerned, even in 1930 Çerkes Ethem was still in the newspapers as “cooperating with the sons of Şeyh Said in a meeting of the Kurds.”⁶⁷ In 1931, the very figure of Çerkes Ethem was continuously revived in debates on newspapers: Arif Oruç, a leftist journalist who with the financial help of Çerkes Ethem claimed to have published a newspaper in Eskisehir was called in 1931 by Falih Rıfki Atay in his article titled “Lowness” as “the servant of Çerkes Ethem [who] dares to write that Mustafa Kemal holds the political power due to the right of conquest.”⁶⁸ As the general debate took place between Yunus Nadi and Arif Oruç, Yunus Nadi, one of the leading journalists of the early Republican Era and a lifelong deputy of the assembly used the title “The Documents of Treason” regarding his

⁶⁷ M. Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması, 1923-1931* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2005), 243.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 290.

claims directly for Arif Oruç and indirectly for Çerkes Ethem. Therefore the ghost of Çerkes Ethem and “his treason” were still alive and associated with other claims of treason. In these claims what was highlighted was the tendency of these non-Turkish Muslims to be the traitors, that they could be enemies when the time and conditions were available.

These themes of “the potential traitor”, the unreliability and “the sneaky enemy masking his/her intentions” were coupled with the transformation from a civic understanding of Turkish nation to an ethnic understanding. The rise of ethnic nationalism led not to an exclusivist nationalism but rather a multilayered definition of the nation.⁶⁹ Ironically increasing emphasis of these themes implied also the increasing emphasis on the nonexistence of any ethnic difference. For instance, in 1932, a high school geography textbook stated:

“In Eastern Anatolia in the area that starts from the Caucasus and Iranian border and ends in Uzunyayla and Sivas there are many tribes. In some provinces the people of the tribe forms the 85 percent of the whole population. Most of these tribes speak Turkish. Though they are originally Turkish, they have lost their languages and tradition as they have been influenced by Arabic and Iranian civilizations for a long time.”⁷⁰

As no ethnic name is mentioned in the text, the anonymous groups are tribalized and considered “under the influence of other civilizations despite their Turkish origins.” Hence, the presumed task becomes transforming them into their origins which is just a matter of time.

Similarly, Recep Peker for instance declared that “in our country there is no particular nation except the Turks”⁷¹ and the few differences that exist among the members of the Turkish nation were regarded as false consciousness:

“We consider our citizens in the contemporary political and social body of Turkish nation who have been infused with Kurdishness, Circassianness, or even Laz and Pomak from us. It is a duty to correct these misunderstandings in a sincere and friendly way which are products of long historical oppressions and legacies of the dark oppressive eras of the past. The contemporary realities

⁶⁹ S. Çağatay, “Citizenship Policies in Interwar Turkey,” *Nations and Nationalism* 9(4) (2003): 601-619, 614.

⁷⁰ Duran quoted in H. Nalçaoğlu, “Vatan: Toprakların Altı, Üstü ve Ötesi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 293-308, 302.)

⁷¹ R. Peker quoted in A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 64.

leave no possibility to imagine a particular nation out of a body of five or ten thousand people, or a few hundred thousand people and even a million people.”⁷²

Therefore the ethnic identities were considered as mistakes to be corrected, as remainders of the past and unfeasible elements as far as reel politics was concerned. As there is an emphasis on sincerity and friendship, the friendship is a friendship that corrects the so-called friend, associates its origins with the “dark periods” and delegitimizes its very existence as unfeasible and unrealistic. Furthermore, these people with these mistaken understandings on their ethnic identity are not regarded as agents capable of defining or naming themselves but rather the “infused” ones. As the objects of infusion are quite clear, the subjects of infusion remain unclear as far this speech is concerned.

Regarding the ways the non-Turkish Muslim groups were infused, the nationalist analyses go beyond description but to the means of solution. Remembering the debates in Lausanne in 1923, Rıza Nur,⁷³ the minister of education, the minister of health and the representative of the new Turkish Republic in Lausanne stated in his memoirs written between 1929-1935 in Paris:

“Europeans know three type of minorities for us: racial minorities, linguistic minorities, religious minorities.This is a very fatal thing, an enormous danger for us.With the concept of race they are going to put Circassians, Abkhazians, Bosnian, Kurds together with Rums and Armenians. With the concept of language they are going to put Muslim groups with other languages minorities. With the concept of religion they are going to make 2 million Alevites who are pure Turks minorities. That is they are going to break us apart. When I heard about this division, I got the shivers.I tried a lot. With a lot of difficulties I abolished them. The lesson here is: leaving no person of any race, language, religion is the most essential, just and crucial task.This

⁷² R. Peker quoted in T. Parla, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları: Kemalist Tek-Parti İdeolojisi ve CHP’nin Altı Ok’u* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995), 110.

⁷³ Rıza Nur (1878-1942) with his ideas on Turkishness and Turkish nation was quite anachronic: as his ideas were in line with the Turanists, he was the contemporary of Kemalist nationalists, not the Turanists. His alliance with Turanists of the Republican Era was limited to a short encounter due to his life story and Rıza Nur’s ideas had just been a reference point for the Turanists. (F. Alpkaya, “Rıza Nur,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 374-377, 376) Though his ideas were totally harmonious with the Turanists and despite his later opposition to Mustafa Kemal, within the confines of this study he was categorized chronologically as a nationalist of the Kemalist era and ideologically as a Turanist.

is why dismantling the Circassian and Albanian villages and resettling them as mixed with the Turks is the foremost task. ...If they try harder, they are going to make minorities out of the ants in Turkey.This foreign element is a calamity and a germ. With a permanent plan of assimilation [*temsil*] these groups and similarly Kurds should be isolated from having a separate language and being a separate race.”⁷⁴

This idea of resettlement of ethnic groups in Turkey so as to accelerate their Turkification processes would be the basic aim of the Law on Settlement in 1934. The law was put into effect after debates on the problems related to ethnic groups in Turkey. In these debates as Ruşeni bey, one deputy complained about the failure to assimilate Jews without referring to them by name and the existence of “large number of immigrants from the Balkans and Caucasus” who were settled in Turkey, unable to talk Turkish and hence, maintaining their ethnic identities, the prime minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu stated that “the assimilation of these immigrants was one of the goals of this law.”⁷⁵ Parallel to these statements themes of “loyalty to the Turkish nation” and “speaking Turkish as mother tongue” became central in the Law on Settlement and the law differentiated between the immigrants that are of Turkish descent and that are devoted to Turkish culture.⁷⁶ Therefore devotion to Turkish culture became an insufficient criterion to be considered a Turk. As the law is regarded as aiming the settlement of Caucasian and Balkan immigrants in the Kurdish areas,⁷⁷ it was based on a categorization of three zones and three groups of people. The first group was considered ethnically Turk and the zone that pertains to this group could receive immigrants. The second group was regarded as not speaking Turkish but belonging to Turkish culture (immigrants from the Caucasus and the Balkans) who was considered Turkish but “whose Turkishness in terms of language and culture needs to be enhanced by resettlement policies.”⁷⁸ The third group was non-Muslim minorities and the third zone

⁷⁴ R. Nur, *Lozan Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1992), 103-104.

⁷⁵ K. Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 36(3)(2000), 1-22, 5.

⁷⁶ A. Yıldız, “*Ne Mutlu Türkiim Diyebilene*”: *Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938)*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), 249.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁷⁸ K. Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 36(3)(2000), 1-22, 5.

that the law designated was parts of Eastern Turkey which were closed for settlement.⁷⁹

Regarding the second and third zones the law dictated:

“The Ministry of the Interior is entitled to take the necessary cultural, military, political, social and security measures against those who share the Turkish culture but speak a language other than Turkish, or against those who do not share the Turkish culture. These measures, not to be applied collectively, are resettlement and denaturalization.”⁸⁰

Çağatay claims that the settlement law of 1934 with other executive acts created five hierarchical categories among the aspiring citizens: the first was ethnic Turks, the second was Crimean Tatars and Karapapaks, speakers of an eastern dialect. The third was Balkan Muslims. The fourth was Caucasus Muslims: Georgians, Lezgis, Chechens, Circassians and Abkhazs. The last category was composed of Armenians, Christians, Jews, Kurds and other Muslims (such as Albanians and Arabs who had independent states and strong nationalist movements.)⁸¹

As the policies of immigration and citizenship were designed with an emphasis on Turkishness; on the cultural level, starting from the early 1930s, Turkish History Thesis narrated a national history with an overemphasis on the Turks and Turkish Republic. As the Turkish history thesis is today defined as “an investment which aimed to construct an identity for a nation that was politically and militarily defeated”⁸² and as the instance within which history and historians were allied with an official nationalism;⁸³ state and historiography became intertwined. Writing of history became a pragmatic task which was among the interests of the single party as the program of 1935 stated:

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰ For the whole text of the law, see M. Ç. Okutan, *Tek Parti Döneminde Azınlık Politikaları*, (İstanbul, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 316-330.

⁸¹ S. Çağatay, “Reconfiguring the Turkish Nation in the 1930s,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8(2) (2002): 67-82, 74-75.

⁸² B. Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye’de “Resmi Tarih” Tezinin Oluşumu (1929-1937)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 246.

⁸³ H. Berktaş, “Dört Tarihinin Sosyal Portresi,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 54 (1991): 19-45, 38.

“Our party considers the learning of the Turks their profound history extremely important. This information is a sacred essence that nurtures the capacity and the energy of the Turk, his/her self-confidence and his/her unbreakable resistance against all movements that will harm the national existence.”⁸⁴

Hence, history was understood as a national project, to construct the ideal Turk (that is capable, energetic, self-confident, resistant against harmful movements) and official historiography became the means to create the ideal Turk and nation. As the history of the Turk was regarded as profound, extremely important and useful, histories of other ethnic groups were out of question, the only way they could be historically analyzed was to speculate about the historical reasons of their false-consciousness, infusion with tribal, insignificant and marginal identities etc.

In 1937, Ahmet Emin Yalman in his article “Turkish in Public Spaces” stated:

“A problem that leads to general dissent all over the country is the fact that the citizens who came from other countries as immigrants speak languages such as Rum, Bosnian, Albanian and Circassian because of their habits in their old countries. It is necessary to struggle with these habits acutely in the name of the political and social unity and harmony of the country. In most parts of the country an ugly mosaic situation is encountered. In the villages of these immigrants who came to this country half a century ago it is seen that a language other than Turkish is being preserved. This situation indicates the neglect and difference of old government rather than the lack of national feelings for the one concerned. This mosaic situation should be liquidated immediately in revolutionary Turkey that has followed a conscious policy in each task.”⁸⁵

Therefore the public visibility of any ethnic group or language was regarded as a part of an “ugly mosaic.” These complaints regarding the use of languages other than Turkish in public space corresponded with similar debates in the assembly that further targeted the groups concerned. Rasih Kaplan, the deputy of Antalya in 1942 stated that

“Behaving shamelessly some elements are disrespectful against the language of the Turkish nation. They speak the language they would like at home. But in public places... the language that some Turkish citizen speak is not Turkish.

⁸⁴ For the whole party program, see T. Parla, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları: Kemalist Tek-Parti İdeolojisi ve CHP’nin Altı Ok’u* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995), 74.

⁸⁵ A. E. Yalman quoted in A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 122.

Citizen! If you are a Turkish citizen, respect Turkish language. Do not offend the Turks in front of you.”⁸⁶

Associated with shamelessness and disrespect, the speaking of any language other than Turkish was regarded as a direct offense to the Turks and Turkish nation. Parallel to these arguments, there were some instance of legal charges against those speaking languages other than Turkish under article 159 of the Penal Code, the “Insulting Turkishness” clause.⁸⁷ From such a perspective public was perceived as the place where Turkishness was the common element as the ethnic differences might be prevalent at home, an invisible space. Hence, the demand from the non-Turkish or non-Muslim groups was a hypocrisy; be the Turk at the public sphere and be whatever they were in the private sphere. Languages other than Turkish were restricted to private sphere. Hence, any other multilingual citizen of Turkey had to be extremely cautious about the use of language not to be disrespectful and not to offend the Turks. There was nothing that they would transform from the private sphere to the public sphere. The appropriation of these policies and discourses implies that the aim was to create a homogenous public sphere out of a heterogeneous multi-ethnic body.

As İsmet İnönü stated “We try to give the Turkish children the ideals of the homeland with the equal feelings of justice and tenderness. We try to boil them in the great Turkish pot and create Turkish patriots.”⁸⁸ the tenderness of the state towards the ethnic groups in Turkey was boiling them in order to create Turkish patriots. However this concept of assimilating pot that underlines the fact that there were different groups among the social body that needed to be assimilated was embedded in a discourse of commonality. Starting from the mid 1930s, in conjuncture with a rising fascism and anti-semitism in Europe the commonality in language, culture and ideals was transformed into an argument on common race. In 1947, for instance, Afet İnan in her study, “The Anthropological Qualities of the Turks” highlights the racial unity in Turkey:

⁸⁶ R. Akar, *Aşkale Yolcuları: Varlık Vergisi ve Çalışma Kampları* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2000), 185.

⁸⁷ Ş. Toktaş, “Citizenship and Minorities: A Historical Overview of Turkey’s Jewish Minority,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 18(4) (2005): 394-429, 401.

⁸⁸ İ. İnönü quoted in G. G. Özdoğan, “*Turan*”dan “*Bozkurt*”a: *Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 107.

“When mentioning other tribal names, we would like to state the Turkish racial unity though it exists under different names. In the studies before this survey numbers especially in Anatolia were given according to some tribal names (for instance Kurd, Laz etc.). We put these since they denote geographical regions. In these comparisons it is seen that there is a racial unity in Turkey.”⁸⁹

As these identifications were understood as tribes, they were also understood as “geographical regions”. In case of the inability to assimilate and Turkify these groups, the discourse of the Kemalists was transformed into a new framework that associated these differences with geography, rather than politics or ethnicity. The Turkish racial unity could be put forth only if these differences were to be ignored, minimized, tribalized or understood in geographical terms.

As the incidences of Wealth Tax of 1942, the settlements in 1934, September 6-7 1955 events became the breaking points for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey which demonstrated the lack of state tolerance to ethnic diversity and the implementation of policies to eliminate minorities, the status of non-Turkish Muslims was more difficult and complicated in the Republican era.⁹⁰ There was no such breaking point for the non-Turkish Muslims but relationships with the official nationalism were highly fragile. Unable to convince itself and probably the non-Turkish ethnic groups, Turkish nationalism in the Kemalist era constantly highlighted the conditions of inclusion. What took place was not indifference toward ethnic differences but rather an excessive interest in matters of ethnicity, a continuous monologue with ethnic groups. From such a perspective, Turkish nationalism intertwined with the state apparatus constantly talked to the non-Turkish groups, especially the Muslim ones since they were seen as easier and closer to Turkify. As one discourse insistently emphasized the already existing homogeneity of Turkish nation and ignored or at best minimized the existence of any ethnic group, language and culture, there were other discourses on the necessity to Turkify these groups, the potential risks that these groups posed, the conditions of exclusion and inclusion. As non-Turkish

⁸⁹ A. İnan quoted in H. Nalçaoğlu, “Vatan: Toprakların Altı, Üstü ve Ötesi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 293-308, 293.

⁹⁰ T. Bora, “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar,” *Birikim* 71-72 (1995): 34-49, 36.

Muslim ethnic groups in Turkey were regarded as the ones from us, they were at the same time regarded as the elements to be kept under surveillance, an unknown and a potential traitor. Furthermore, the means of inclusion into Turkish nation were far from being clear: was it speaking Turkish, was it ethnic belonging, was it common history, was it a spotless shared past with the Turkish nation, was it total assimilation, was it participation into the wars of Republic, was it taking place in the state apparatus, was it loyalty and how was loyalty defined? Which criteria was sufficient to be accepted as a legal and social part of the new Republic and not to be continuously disturbed, warned and threatened? When was loyalty to the nation affirmed and accepted or was it possible and permanently achievable at all?

Given the ambiguity that these questions were answered and the very practices and discourses of the state, non-Turkish citizens of Turkey continuously oscillated between inclusion and exclusion, insider and outsider positions. They were continuously expected to prove their loyalty and any misbehavior, any wrong doing of them was understood in ethnic terms, as an extension and signifier of their non-Turkish identity, as a proof that they were not loyal. To the extent that they were not trouble makers, they were considered Turkish. However, given the nationalist surveillance over these groups, it was quite easy to be the trouble maker for the non-Turkish groups in Turkey. As the line between the insiders and “the others” might have been crossed by the very acts of these group members such as speaking languages other than Turkish, announcing their identity, talking about ethnicity, most of the time the line was crossed with no particular act on the side of these groups. Therefore inclusion became a contextual matter; in any moment non-Turkish groups might be considered out of the body of Turkish nation. Marginalized, minimized, simplified, delegitimized and stupefied, an unknown amalgam was created out of them. The continuous attempts to render these groups invisible and simultaneously to discipline them created a ghost-like amalgam.

This undecidability of Turkish nationalism which is undecidable in the sense that it has been simultaneously open and close to non-Turks as Mesut Yeğen refers in terms of the Kurdish problem⁹¹ is what shaped the relationships between the ethnic groups and Turkish

⁹¹ M. Yeğen, “Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (1) (2007): 119-151, 138.

nationalist discourse in the nation-building years. Such a discursive pendulum that oscillated between exclusion and inclusion, between being one of “us” and dangerous elements, between being accepted and being excluded, marginalized and offended would shape the way these identities were going to be claimed, positioned, constructed and transformed in the following years.

4.1.3. Extreme Nationalism

This study defines the concept extreme nationalism as an historical branch of Turkish nationalism that started with the Turkist groups in late 1930s and politicized in 1960s as the Nationalist Action Party. Despite having common discourses and intertwined histories the two groups mentioned were eventually separated from each other and they – especially the former one were originally related to Kemalist nationalism till its removal in 1940s.

The first group includes Turanist nationalists such as Nihal Atsız, Rıza Oğuz Türkkan, Zeki Velidi Toğan etc. who explored the concept of the Turk from a racial framework. As the idea of Turan was originally related the Turkists of the Ottoman Era, the Turanist movement of the Republican era gained strength between 1939 and 1944 with associations⁹² and hence, they can be categorized as second-generation of Turanists. As the second generation, the Turanists of the Republican era did not define Turkish nation as composed of Muslim groups but rather in terms of race and ethnicity. For them Turkish nation was Turkish race as Atsız stated in his much quoted article “Turkish Race=Turkish Nation” in 1931:

“Then what is a nation? We should first accept this: According to us there is only Turkish nation. ...For Turks nationalism is foremost a blood issue. The person who would say I am Turk should be from the Turkish descent.But a

⁹² G. G. Özdoğan, “Turan” dan “Bozkurt” a: *Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 229.

person with foreign blood even if s/he does know any language other than Turkish, s/he is not a Turk.The person whose form looks Turkish is not also Turkish.It is necessary to avoid those who resemble to the Turks in form more. As it is known, the most dangerous of the snakes is the one that has the same color with its setting.

Those who are the enemies of Turks and who openly declare it are not that much dangerous for the Turks. The real danger is the foreigners resembling to the Turks. Since these are good speakers of Turkish and since they generally do not know any other language, they are not easily distinguished. But they either know or sense that their blood is different. This is why I call them *Türkümsü*.⁹³ They are liars, flatterers. They smile in your face. The ideas harmful to Turkishness are popular among them. Since they are not Turks, they do not hesitate to commit themselves to ideas and organizations that sneakily injure the Turk. We can state hundred of examples on how *Türkümsü*'s harm the Turk. It is easy to prove this historically:why did Abdullah Cevdet try to destroy the notions of nation and religion? Because he was a Kurdish nationalist.Why did Rıza Tevfik betray the county? Because he was a hybrid with an Albanian father and Circassian mother. Why did Ali Kemal work for the enemy? Because his grandfather was a converted Armenian. Why did ganster Etem unite with the Greeks? Because he was a Circassian.As it happens, everywhere these *Türkümsü* shout for Turkishness with exaggeration. But this is because of the strength of Turkishness. Tomorrow in our first hard day they will betray us again. The defect in their blood makes them do that. Therefore their treasons should be considered natural.”⁹⁴

Hence, Greeks, Lazs, Circassians, Jews, Kurds, Albanians, Armenians, Creatans, Georgians were regarded as those groups that looked like Turks but that were ethnically different. Their ethnicity had further connotations about their character and what should be expected from them. It was regarded as an automatic indicator of their future treasons just like the historical proofs of treason. Hence, the Turanists of the Republican Era totally abolished the Muslim alliance which was essential for Gökalp and other Turanists of the Ottoman Era; and they separated themselves from the Kemalist nationalism by defining the nation in terms of race though there appeared to be no full consensus on the definition of a Turkish race. From such a point of view, -whether Muslim or not- any community other than Turks was defective and prone to harming the nation. Furthermore, the more these groups resembled the Turks, the more they became dangerous. Thus, one can imagine that non-

⁹³ The word means the one that looks like the Turk but that is not a Turk. The suffix used may be translated to English as the suffix of -ish (such as the one used in the word “reddish”.)

⁹⁴ N. Atsız, “Türk Irkı=Türk Milleti” on website http://www.nihalsiz.org/turk_irki_turk_milleti.htm.

Turkish Muslims were the most dangerous elements as they fit into the setting more. Even if they promoted Turkishness, this was something contextual. Sneaky, harmful and unreliable, it was the blood that speaks. The first prerequisite was defined as blood as the Turkish language and unity in will was the second and the third. This was the first time that Turkish nation was defined in terms of absolute exclusion of non-Turkish Muslims from the nation. Any event, any instance, any statement against this form of extreme nationalism was associated with the existence of these subversive elements as Rıza Nur states in 1942:

“They say that they are nationalists but they cannot somehow say that they are Turks. These people who tend to define nation culturally are those who are not racially, ethnically Turks. They and the world should know that the fundamental principle of Turkish nationalism is nationality=Turkism.”⁹⁵

Given their treasons which could be explained easily with ethnicity, non-Turkish groups were considered responsible for the failure of the Ottoman state and hence, state mechanism should be devoid of these people who by their very nature were dangerous, unreliable and treacherous. As Türkkan stated in “The Credo of the Gray Wolf”, “The Gray Wolfs know that only Turks can help Turks. Those who are not Turkish and each type of converts how ever they grew up in Turkish manners will never resemble a pure Turk and they will never be able to serve the Turkish nation like a pure Turk.”⁹⁶

Furthermore, they were considered among the enemies which were categorized as internal and external in Atsız’s will in 1941:

“Yağmur my son!
...Keep my advice, be a good Turk.
Communism is an occupation that is an enemy for us. Learn that well.
Jews are the secret enemies of all nations. Russians, Chinese, Iranians, Greeks are our historical enemies.
Bulgarians, Germans, Italians, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Arabs, Serbs, Croats, Spaniards, Portuguese, Romans are our new enemies.
Japanese, Afghans and Americans are our future enemies.

⁹⁵ R. Nur quoted in M. Ç. Okutan, *Tek Parti Döneminde Azınlık Politikaları*, (İstanbul, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 82.

⁹⁶ Türkkan quoted in G. G. Özdoğan, “*Turan*”dan “*Bozkurt*”a: *Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 234.

Armenians, Kurds, Circassians, Abkhazs, Bosnians, Albanians, Pomaks, Lazs, Lezgins, Georgians, Chechens are our enemies inside.
To collide with so many enemies one should be well prepared.
May God help you!”⁹⁷

As the enemies were categorized, these categories were not mutually exclusive but rather permeable. Even communism was an ideology adopted by non-Turks. Though the threat of communism in the coming years would ally Turkish nationalism with non-Turkish Muslim groups, especially Caucasians with the themes of anti-communism and anti-Russian feelings which were discursively related, the Turanists of the time was beyond these alliances and they were in line with the rising anti-semitism of the 1940s. As Türkkan stated, “when the communists in our country are investigated extensively, it turns out that nine out of ten is Jewish converts from Thessaloniki, Albanians, Circassians, Arabs.”⁹⁸

Defining the Turkish nation in absolute ethnic terms, with reference to blood, pure blood, mixed blood, etc. race, that is the attainment of pure blood became one of the causes of the movement which was ideologically based on the notion of inequality, militarism, irredentism, xenophobia and racism.⁹⁹ Abolishing the undecidability of Turkish nationalism regarding the non-Turkish Muslims, Turanists ideologically separated themselves from the Kemalist nationalists. However, the real separation came in 1944 when they were arrested and trialed in the Racism-Turanism case. Rather than being opposites, till 1944 Kemalist nationalism and Turanist nationalism of the Republican Era was interrelated in terms having their origins in the Turkism of the Ottoman Era.¹⁰⁰ The Turanist ideas were in harmony with the ethnic dimension that Kemalist nationalism employed, both of which were also related to the rise of fascism and withdrawal of democracies in Europe since thr 1930s. With the trials of 1944, the Turkist movement was

⁹⁷ The will of Nihal Atsız quoted in G. Bakırezer, “Nihal Atsız’ın Düşüncesi,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 29 (1996): 25-31, 26.

⁹⁸ Türkkan quoted in O. Ertekin, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkçülüğün Çatallanan Yolları,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 345-387, 366.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ G. G. Özdoğan, “Turan”dan “Bozkurt”a: *Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 16.

transformed from a political doctrine to political opposition and located *vis-à-vis* Kemalist nationalism.

In his defense in 1945, Nihal Atsız underlined the historical treasons of non-turkish elements, their future tendencies and the embeddedness of their ideas with state policies:

“The Ottoman Sultan Selim II banned Albanians’ entry into Anatolia saying that since they imitated the females in sexual life they were destructive for the morality of Turkish people. Mahmut II signed an imperial order that abolished the promotion of Circassian soldiers because of their lack of intelligence.¹⁰¹ The establishment of Janissaries was also not against racism but it was a complementary of it. In the heydays of the Ottoman army when the number of soldiers was 400.000, devshirmes would amount to no more than 20.000. ...They were the slaves of the Sultan. Because in Turkish state Turks would not be a slave.Turkish history is a history that exemplifies thousands of treasons by the foreigners as opposed to their few of their services. It is a history of treason with thousands of incidents that ranges from the Chinese princess who poisoned the Turkish leader to Şerif Hüseyin, Çerkes Ethem and Kurdish Şeyh Sait. The genuine children of the country did not wait for high positions to serve the country. They always served everywhere in every condition without showing off, they paid blood and life taxes.”¹⁰²

As history of the Turks in Central Asia, Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic was read from an ethnic perspective by Atsız, Turkish history became a linear story of treason of the non-Turks against the Turks. Associated with immorality, unintelligence but also the very ability to betray, non-Turkish groups were the “adopted” children of the country and with their ethnic characteristics they could only be the slaves. Furthermore, to prove that non-Turks were dangerous, separate and ‘racist’, in his defense he also submitted two obituaries of 1944 that mentions the death of a Circassian and a Bosnian:

¹⁰¹ Ironically a similar argument on Circassians’ lack of intelligence was voiced by Hasan Cemal, a Circassian journalist in December 2005. In an interview, he quoted İlhan Selçuk, the well-known leftist columnist who was claimed to say “Circassians are stupid.” (<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/12/04/pazar/apaz.html>) Circassians in Turkey reacted vehemently. (See for instance Çetin Öner’s answer <http://www.nartajans.net/nuke/News-file-print-sid-1950.htm>.) In 2008 when Selçuk was arrested in the Ergenekon case with the charge of "assembling an armed terrorist organization and attempting to stage a coup" and forming an ultra-nationalist gang (for Ergenekon see for instance <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=108786>) , he was recalled by the Circassians as İlhan Selçuk “who told that Circassians are stupid.”

¹⁰² For the defense of Nihal Atsız in 1944 trials, see http://www.nihalatsiz.org/1944_savunmasi.htm.

“...by obituaries other races point out that they consider themselves separate from Turks in every instance. The obituary notices that I submitted to the court are proof to my arguments. One of them mentions the death of İsmet, wife of Murat Bey from the beys of Circassians and the other one mentions the death of Sabri Süleymanoviç. Those who consider racism national publication ...should have seen these obituaries and prosecuted those who published those obituaries that are the flashy versions of the claims of being Circassian and Bosnian.”¹⁰³

As the adaptation of non-Turks into the Turkish nationalist movement was regarded by Atsız as an exaggeration that only masks their non-Turkish blood and hence, their tendencies to betray, he claimed that the racist ideal and his sincerity was irrespective of his own ethnicity when his own ethnic origins were interrogated by the prosecutor: “For instance, even if all my descent is non-Turkish, the ideal of racism cannot be nullified by that. ...If I am not a pure Turk, my espousal of the ideal of racism indicates both that I am sincere and that this ideal is right and strong.”¹⁰⁴

Ironically the members of the court in 1944 trials were ethnically non-Turkish. As Alparslan Türkeş, the leader of MHP stated years later:

“The files of Turkism, Turanism was now delivered to a Circassian and an Albanian. Leading them is a son of an Arab.İsmail Berkok was a Circassian and he was not a random one. He wrote books on this nation and studied a lot. What would become the result? ...were we now in the hands of Albanians, Circassians, Arabs?the incident showed that neither Alkan is Albanian, nor Berkok is Circassian and Erden is Arab. All three of them is the Turkish children of Turkey and they are Turkish generals.”¹⁰⁵

As the last sentence is removed from the later editions of the book of Türkeş, Reha Oğuz Türkkan also mentioned his appreciation of the members of the court in *Tercüman* in 1955.¹⁰⁶ Hence, the trial of 1944 was a turning point in another sense; the Turanists tested their arguments on non-Turkish Muslims. The existence of İsmail Berkok, a Circassian nationalist, an Albanian and an Arab in the court and Turanists’ later appreciation of these

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ A. Türkeş quoted in T. Bora, “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar,” *Birikim* 71-72 (1995): 34-49, 41.

¹⁰⁶ Türkkan quoted in M. Ferüdun, *İsmail Berkok (General)* on website [http://www.uzunyayla.com/icerik/81/ismail-berkok-\(general-\).html](http://www.uzunyayla.com/icerik/81/ismail-berkok-(general-).html)

people insinuated that being a Circassian, Albanian, Arab etc. and Turkish nationalist might not be mutually exclusive categories as the experiences of nationalist groups in the 1970s also affirmed.

As the year 1944 became a turning point for the Turanists, the movement was marginalized despite the existence of organizations and groups after that year. In the 1960s, Nationalist Action Party was established and though accepted by Atsız and other Turanists at first, it later differentiated itself from the Turanism as a political movement with a political party that searched for the support of the masses. Unlike the Turanists, the Idealist –extreme nationalist movement of the 1960s and 1970s was characterized by first, anticommunism and anti-leftism which provided the movement with new alliances based on anti-communism; second, a more religious perspective rather than the pagan-like ideas of the Turanists;¹⁰⁷ third, the search for the support of the masses; and fourth, the use of paramilitary organization and systematic violence.¹⁰⁸

In addition and related to these differences, the movement's attitude toward non-Turkish Muslims was also different from the Turanists. The two factors, the status of religion in their theories of nationalism and anti-communism became influential in their relationship with non-Turkish Muslims.

The early statements of Türkeş, the leader of the MHP, who was the leader cult for Gray Wolves highlighted the influence of Turanism in his thought. For instance, in his defense in the Turanism case in 1944, the dialogue between Türkeş and the judge can be taken as an indicator of not only the ideological roots of his thought but also a confusion regarding the definition of the Turk:

“Judge: First of all, let us ask you this question: We would like to learn your thought on the claim that people who are not from a pure descent and who are from a mixed race should not be present in Turkey today.

Türkeş: The principle that our state accepts and is based on is the most correct and reasonable principle in my opinion too. That is assimilating the non-Turkish elements immediately by the means of culture and inoculation while considering Turkishness above all. I, too, consider this correct. Regarding the

¹⁰⁷ K. Can, “Ülkücü Hareketin İdeolojisi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 663-685.

¹⁰⁸ T. Bora, “Alparslan Türkeş,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 686- 695, 690.

administration task, my opinion too is in favor of the administration of our important tasks by either complete Turks, that is, assimilated and regarding himself/herself nothing but a Turk or people from the Turkish race.

Judge: What about the mixed races?

Türkeş: I told it sir. As s/he is Turkified, I would not consider interrogating his/her grandmother or grandfather correct.

Judge: So you accept those who declare that they are Turks!

Türkeş: The ones that are totally assimilated into Turkishness... Sir, declaration is not sufficient. Today a Jew comes and says that he is a Turk. But his/her language is not Turkish, his/her mother is not Turkish. Everything related to him/her is different. What I am saying is being a Turk with his/her mother, language and everything.”¹⁰⁹

Hence, in the 1944 trial, which was the beginning of a debate among the Turkish nationalists, the Turkish nationalists once again oscillated between descent and culture. Though Türkeş’s statements on non-Turkish groups would be revised in the coming years, the Turanism-Nationalism case of 1944 became a legend among the Turkish nationalists, a signifier of the hardships that a Turkish nationalist may encounter. As the statements of Turkish nationalists throughout the trial and the memory of the trial itself had been very influential on the nationalist movement, in the coming years Türkeş used other definitions of the nation and embraced Islam as an element of nationalist thought. He defined the membership of the nation in terms of the feelings of belonging, loyalty and sacrifice in 1967:

“Being a member of the Turkish nation is loving the Turkish nation and having the love for serving the nation with loyalty, the feeling and the state of mind of being loyal to the nation and making all sacrifices and working for the elevation of Turkish nation. Everybody who has this feeling and state of mind is a Turk. This is the basic idea of Turkish nationalism. Everyone who does not have the aspiration or pretension for any other nation in his heart, who feels that s/he is a Turk, who embraces Turkish nation and who has the love to serve the Turkish nation and state is a Turk.”¹¹⁰

This is why his definition on nation is not an ethnic definition. Yet his emphasis on not having “the aspiration or pretension for any other nation in his heart” automatically

¹⁰⁹ A. Türkeş, *1944 Milliyetçilik Olayı* (Kamer Yayınları: İstanbul, 1992), 74-75.

¹¹⁰ A. Türkeş, *9 Işık ve Türkiye* (Hamle Yayınevi: İstanbul, 1994), 64.

excludes any diasporic formation, any long distance politics. Membership to the nation was based on the assumption of single loyalty, single national identification. From such a perspective, as the non-Turkish immigrants may be regarded as Turks, the same groups are not regarded as Turkish when they have some diasporic consciousness; that is, any form of long-distance politics or let alone politics, identification with any other nation or national discourse. This is the exact line that connected some non-Turkish Muslims to MHP. As long as they identify themselves as immigrants or use some hyphenated identities such as Caucasian Turks etc., ethnicity –the very descent is not interrogated. As long as those identities are considered as a branch, form and appendix of Turkishness rather than separate non-Turkish identities, they are not problematic for MHP and the leader. As long as they do not challenge the Turkish nation with their claims on separateness and non-Turkishness but rather elevate the Turkish nation with their services, these groups are accepted and normalized.

The second factor that connected non-Turkish Muslims to MHP as a political movement is anti-communism. As anti-communism can be regarded as a basic theme in Turkish politics throughout Cold War, it was particularly embraced by MHP. Throughout the 1960s, the signifier of anti-communism served to provide coherence among the categories of Turkishness, Muslimhood and Sunnithood.¹¹¹ In addition, the theme of anti-communism connected MHP to the masses who were not turned on by Turkish nationalism *per se* but rather with the thematization of a common enemy: that is Russia. As far as Circassians were concerned, this theme of anti-communism overlapped with the anti-Russian feelings.

The third but not the least factor that connected MHP in particular and Turkish nationalism in general to Circassians in Turkey (or *vice versa*) is a legend of Turanism that was inherited from the Turkish nationalism of the Ottoman era. As Turanism and Pan-Turkism was used interchangeably in the twentieth century, Turanism was originally a term that referred to a larger geography rather than just the Turkic communities. Despite the interchangeable use of the two terms in the twentieth century, the Pan-Turkism/Turanism remained as political ideals whose boundaries were extended from time to time. The

¹¹¹ M. Yeğen, “Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (1) (2007): 119-151, 133.

operations of Enver Paşa in the First World War in the North Caucasus and the support of the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Northern Caucasus can be regarded as the instances of the overlap of Turanism and Circassian nationalism in terms of interests and political projects. Though Turanism has been a utopian theme of Turkish nationalism which was not embraced by all of its currents since the Ottoman Empire, the extreme nationalists of 1930s and to some extent MHP inherited the theme. Turanism became the framework that enabled the creation of the hyphenated term, Caucasian Turk. On the basis of Turanism, Circassians from time to time were regarded as an extension of Turkic communities in Russia, as part of “oppressed peoples”.

Fourth factor is the ideological legacy of the Ottoman Empire to Turkish nationalism which underlines the priority of the state and creates a state myth that enables the nationalists to identify themselves with.¹¹² Similarly Circassians since 19th century have been associated with the Ottoman/Turkish state as soldiers, as bureaucrats and many Circassians today are defining “their loyalty” in terms of their services to the state. As state becomes a contested field, Turkish nationalists sometimes explain the –sometimes overrated- Circassian presence in the state mechanism as a plot to undermine the strength of Turkish state by the non-Turks. However “service to the state” still becomes a common narrative between the two groups and leads to the formation of -seemingly- unexpected alliances between the Turkish nationalists and Circassians to “save/strengthen/protect the state” since the Ottoman Era.¹¹³

Hence, despite the continuously oscillating discourse of Turkish nationalism on non-Turkish Muslims in Turkey, historical and ideological matrix of Turkish nationalism enabled multiple points of entry for Circassians. This is how several Circassians, despite

¹¹² K. Can, “Ülkücü Hareketin İdeolojisi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003),663-685, 682-683.

¹¹³ The claimed embeddedness of the Circassians with the Turkish state has an historical background but the reality itself is open to debate given the political atmosphere of late 1990s and 2000s when the conspiracy theories on the relationship between the state and the Jews, converted Jews, the immigrants from the Balkans, Kurds and to some extent Circassians have abounded. The new claims by some journalists that Ergenekon is an organization that is dominantly Circassian and Abkhazian (see for instance <http://www.ensonhaber.com/Gundem/120563/Ergenekon-Cerkez-ve-Abhaz-agirlikli-bir-orgut.html>) is another version of the general arguments on the embeddness of Circassians with the Turkish state.

their non-Turkish origins were and still are able to connect with Turkish nationalism and define themselves as Turkish nationalists.¹¹⁴

However, despite these connections the relationship of Turkish nationalist to non-Turkish groups in general and Circassians in particular was far from being harmonious. As anti-communism was the general theme of the Turkish nationalist movement of the 1960s and 70s, non-Turkish groups were still regarded as targets of political propaganda. For instance, before the national elections of 1977 in Turkey, a public notice distributed in Germany and signed by the “Gray Wolves” stated that:

¹¹⁴ One of the leading figures of such a connection is the novelist Ömer Seyfettin (1884-1920) who is considered one of the leading figures of Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Era and still an inspiring figure for Turkish nationalists. Contemporary biographies of Ömer Seyfettin define him in three ways: first, as a Circassian, second as a Caucasian Turk and third as a Turk. One of his friends Süreyya Saltuk from high school years stated: “Ömer Seyfettin was very concerned about these kinds remarks and he would come to me and say “tell him that my father is a Caucasian Turk” and while saying that he would have tears in his eyes.” (Alangu quoted in http://www.ufukotesi.com/yazigoster.asp?yazi_no=20070315) Alangu also defines him as a Circassian, as opposed to his close friend Ali Canip who used the term “Caucasian Turk”. Ömer Seyfettin’s stories are also based on a constant use of the term Circassian. In “Secret Temple” (Gizli Mabet) published in 1919, the nursing mother of the antagonist (whose story is told in the I language) was defined as a Circassian and the antagonist translated from French to Circassian language. In “The Bastard” Ahmet who was ashamed of his Turkish identity learned that he was the son of a French doctor and Circassian mother, hence “a bastard” as far as Seyfettin was concerned. In the story interestingly Circassian mother and French father, that is the non-Turkish and the European gave birth to the bastard. Ömer Seyfettin concludes the story by saying that “...and then I thought about those snobs in their trendy clothes with their long nails and monocles who deny their Turkishness, who hate Turkishness and who look down on Turkishness and try to Europeanize by all means. I was thinking “I wonder if all these are bastards too. Did all of their mothers get pregnant in Beyoglu?” and in horrible nightmares I saw huge black, red and bloody crosses rising among the torn red and devastated crescents.” The love affair between the Circassian and French creates the bastard that looks like a Turk but feels like a foreigner. “The Influence of a Belt” (Bir Kayışın Tesiri”) is the story of a man who pretends that he is a Circassian: “Let me tell you why. The name of this fake Circassian is Mahmut Bey. Till the second year in high school (idadi) he had no claim of nationality. That year in Ramadan holiday, one his friends brought him a very graceful Circassian belt. We all saw that belt. It was really marvellous. ...Mahmut bey put on the belt. Since that day he stopped talking to the Turks and he started being with the Circassians all the time.When we were in military school, Mahmut bey lost his Turkish accent.When we became military officers, he forgot Turkish. But he could not learn Circassian too. What he learned was a perfect Circassian accent. We called him “Circassian Mahmut” to mock him. He would not get angry but he was being proud. When he was an officer, he was assigned to a famous Circassian pasha. With him he was exiled to Istanbul. He escaped to Caucasus. He traveled places that had no connection to his nation as if they were his homeland. He married a Circassian girl. He came to Istanbul after freedom. Then all his job was to work for Circassianhood. Everywhere he started to make “Adyge” propoganda with the bizarre accent that you are hearing.I thought that Turks did not even have such insignificant belts to win one voluntary conational from the external [groups, or peoples].” If some of the biographies of Seyfettin are true, then the story of the fake Circassian may be read as the story of Ömer Seyfettin himself. Under such circumstances, it can be stated that being a Turkish nationalist he could not write about Circassians pers e but ironically he also could not write without mentioning the Circassians. What is more ironic is that Circassians today remember him as the Circassian novelist and consider him one of the “famous Circassians in Turkey.” The more he embraced Turkish nationalism, the more he wrote about Circassians and the more he was embraced by Circassians either as a successful Circassian figure or as a disputable figure with unexpected alliances.

“Those who destroyed this state [Ottoman Empire] were the Rums, Armenians, Jewish converts, Kurds, Circassians, Bosnians and Albanians..... How long will you, as a Turk, endure these awful minorities? Throw away the Circassian, throw and kill the Kurd, destroy the enemy of the Turk.Vote for MHP.”¹¹⁵

Therefore neither some themes such as anti-communism which united different groups nor the existence of the non-Turkish groups in the movement created an equal respectable status for non-Turkish groups in the discourse of the Turkish nationalists. Even in the more popular Islamized versions of Turkish nationalism, the conditions of inclusion and participation to the movement and idea were delineated. As Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, a rightist poet and politician stated, “it was not the non-Turks who came from the other side of the sea that saved this nation.” Necip Fazil Kısakurek further clarified the conditions of the inclusion of Muslim groups in the Islamist-nationalist ideology:

“...as albanians, circassians, kurds are all equal as Muslims according to us, if they move towards isolation and separation from us on a level other than Islam, then the albanianness, circassianhood, kurdishness of each of them becomes a particular guilt. Then comes Turkishness.”¹¹⁶

Hence, even in the most inclusive and ideologically hybrid form of Turkish nationalism which bases itself on Muslim identity, the status of non-Turkish Muslim groups is highly fragile and volatile. Even in that form of alliance, the existence of Albanians, Circassians, Kurds is conditional. The conditions are predetermined and the ethnic identities are always a source of suspicion.

MHP, starting from the 1960s, was criticized from within on the grounds that they lost their nationalist and Turkist essence as the political party tried to locate itself on a synthesis of Turkish nationalism and Islamism. In the 1990s, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, rise of ethnonationalism in the world and the rising publicity of Kurdish question, Turkish nationalism in its radical forms was revived. Today MHP is still being

¹¹⁵ For the whole text of indictment in the MHP trial in 1980 see the website http://www.solgazete.net/images/MHP_iddianamesi.pdf.

¹¹⁶ N. F. Kısakürek quoted in T. Bora, “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar,” *Birikim* 71-72 (1995): 34-49, 44.

criticized for being insufficient in Turkish nationalism by the small groups that associate themselves with Turanism.

Since the 1990s, MHP have echoed official nationalism and as a political party it is closer to the political center.¹¹⁷ Given the rise of political Islam and its representation in another political party, MHP's position today is a more secularist one. In July 2007 national elections, among other songs the lyrics of election song was:

“If you say we have one prophet, one kible [direction of Mecca], one direction,
If you say Alevites and Sunnis are one, then it is MHP
If you say the Kurd, the Circassian, the Bosnian, Zaza and Azeri
Are all Turkish nation, then it is MHP
...If you say that our country should be alive, then it is MHP.”¹¹⁸

However the more radical nationalist groups in Turkey regard any demand of Circassians and even any mentioning of Circassians as a continuation of their treason. For instance, in a radical Turkish nationalist website, “Circassian Treason from the Past to the Present” is being explored after one of the newspapers in Turkey published some interviews and news about Circassians in Turkey for three days:

“Circassians, the group that used the only bad feature of the Turkish nation most, that is Turkifying those who are not from the Turkish nation is taking place in some publications in the recent days. After the monkeys, the horse thieves too demand education in their own language, radio-TV broadcasting and Circassian names. We pretty well know that these would happen but horse thieves have voiced themselves before we expected.”¹¹⁹

As the rest of the text is full of insulting expressions and historical distortions as far as Circassians are concerned, what is significant is the association of the Circassians with the Kurds labeling both groups pejoratively. That association is typical not only for radical Turkish nationalists but also some larger groups in Turkish politics since the 1990s. As the

¹¹⁷ T. Bora, “Nationalist Discourses in Turkey,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102(2/3) (2003): 433-451, 446.

¹¹⁸ For the lyrics and news about the use of the song see the website <http://www.habervitrini.com/haber.asp?id=286351>. For the song itself see www.youtube.com/watch?v=x51pG-5RIQ.

¹¹⁹ *Dünden Bugüne Çerkes İhaneti* on website <http://www.turkulkusu.com/htdocs/modules/news/article.php?storyid=23>.

rise of Kurdish nationalism has overlapped with the rise of Turkish nationalism, any debate, statement and demand related to ethnicity in Turkey have been understood in terms of the Kurdish question. The threat of non-Turkish ethnic identifications, the indivisibility of the state and nation, the fear that other groups will follow the Kurdish nationalism *vis-à-vis* the Turkish nation and state have become general themes in Turkish nationalism and its popularized versions. In such a context, Circassians are either regarded as the “loyal element” whose very existence is taken as an indicator of the fact that not all ethnic groups demand ethnic rights and there is not a problem of ethnicity but terror or as “the next” ethnic group that tends to follow the Kurds and hence, betray the Turkish nation and state.

4.2. Defining the Self and Being a Circassian in Turkey

This part of the chapter aims to explore how Circassian activists define Circassians in Turkey and how they narrate on their experiences of being a Circassian in Turkey.

Circassian activists define Circassian diaspora in Turkey mostly through a series of lacks. From such a perspective, diaspora is defined as a lower form in the national order of things in terms of political power, organization and consciousness. The lack of leadership has been one of the most frequently employed themes regarding the internal affairs of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey as Kaya stated:

“We have a problem of political leadership. Well, in Turkey we are a society without a leader, without elites. Even the most marginal identities have some kind of a leadership mechanism. Circassians in Turkey lack political leadership; the associations united and formed a federation. Despite that, such a need, the foundation of such an organ is essential.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

The lack of a diasporic consciousness and a firm diasporic identity is also highlighted. After 40 years of activism, Nezhir narrates on the complex nature of Circassian identity in Turkey to refute the existence of a diasporic identity as far as Circassians are concerned:

“Are you able to make your sense and principle of belonging an ideal which is integrated with culture, economics, homeland, visions, mechanisms and ideology of homeland? If you are not able to make it, I say that you are without an identity in that society. ...If you look with the perspective of sharia, if you look with a Turkist identity, if you look with a sympathy towards Russians, if you look with the class structure, if you look with pro-American tendencies, if you look with the terrorist mentality which is formed out of the union of Chechnian Wahabi brotherhood; what kind of a Caucasian identity can we talk about? Which one is the Caucasian identity? Well, I cannot see it.”¹²¹

From such a perspective, Circassians in Turkey is not able to be a diaspora or at best it is an unsuccessful diaspora when compared to Armanian and Jewish diasporas. The ideal diaspora that was referred several times in the interviews as a diaspora which Circassians in Turkey is not able to match is the Jewish diaspora as Gürsoy exemplifies with his reference to Jewish diaspora as the successful example:

“Here is the Jewish community who did that. That is a community that we have to take as an example in the world. Diaspora makes Israel survive artificially. Well, I wish we could have done one tenth of what they did. Well, now all the land is being sold [in the Caucasus]. Who is buying? No one is buying.”

Hence, the weakness of diaspora is narrated as the lack of political power not only in the host community but also in the diasporic homeland.

Circassian activists that were interviewed for this study employed the themes of inbetweenness, temporariness, rootlessness, disjuncture and guilt when their experiences of being a Circassian in Turkey were asked. The idea of the inability and also unwillingness to fit into the host community is also mentioned in historical narratives like Cezmi, aged 65 tells his dialogue with his father regarding the unwillingness to transform the lands that were immigrated:

¹²¹ Nezhir, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

“Of course when I returned from there [after his visit to the Caucasus in 1970s], my father told me that he knew that people were not free, that he knew how they lived and he would not ask me what I had seen and heard there. He used to read a lot. He asked me whether there were some dilemmas that I could not understand. I said, “Well, how could a people who was so close to forests, trees and that kind of a culture live in Uzunyayla’s arid hills? This is a dilemma.” OK, they had to; the state had settled them. But didn’t they plant a couple of trees to make the land they immigrated similar to their culture? When I told that, a tear from his eyes dropped without showing me. He said “Let alone the first generation who came from there, in my childhood, when a relatively big house was built in Circassian villages, older people would get furious, and tell “You idiot, build those houses so that you will leave Avshars better houses when we go back to our homeland tomorrow.”” Till my childhood, they could not embrace that place. Some of our elders, women died without opening their chests.”¹²²

From such a perspective, what differentiates Circassian diaspora from others is their inability to fit into the host community and their inbetweenness. Diaspora is defined as rootless, inbetween and restless. Diasporic nationalists frequently narrate on “here” and “there” without even explaining what these terms imply. Kaya explicitly uses the theme of roots in a botanical sense to explain the status of Circassians in Turkey:

“This is the reason of our weakness here. We have to problematize the fact that we do not have the political power of a small village in Anatolia although we have a large population that is expressed in millions in this geography. Why is this so? I think that the fact that our roots are not here is important at this point. It is like African violet. Societies may fade away when there are broken from their... We have lived with a psychology of returning back to the Caucasus for years. Psychologically, we have not settled; physically, we have not been rooted strong enough like the local people of this land. This land... For instance, Armenians are the people of this land, this geography. ...Kurds are the people of this land. We are the immigrants of this land, we have to accept that. Psychologically we have not still decided, not even now. Look, we are hesitating. Well, shall we return or shall we continue here? This is a hesitation that comes from the beginning.”¹²³

¹²² Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

¹²³ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

In such an account, diaspora becomes the very hesitation and rootlessness that follows it. In Nesibe's narrative, what explains Circassians in Turkey becomes the guilt factor. In this account, diaspora is regarded as the bearer of "a permanent guilt and shame:"

"Here is the first female painter, first female author, and first male author; Well, those names who formed Turkish literature were Circassians. Here are the warriors, generals, admirals etc. all of whom were Circassians. Well, though all of them turn out to be Circassians, why can't any of them do something for themselves, produce for themselves? Something came to my mind. ...I told this was the feeling of guiltiness. ...So why do we feel guilty? We left. We immigrated, we were exiled, we were fired, we escaped, and we left. And each moment everywhere we live its distress. We are afraid that someone will reproach [*kafamıza kakacak*] us with that and tell that we took refuge here."¹²⁴

Another aspect of Circassian diaspora is narrated as the "guest position" by Esat who remembers his father's self-identification: "And a continuous feeling of being the guest. Well, my father grew up in Turkey naturally, but till he died when people asked where he was from he said that he was a Caucasian immigrant." However, the inability to fit into the host community is not only internal but also further highlighted when Turkish nationalism uses slogans such as "Either Love or Leave." Nezhir reminds these instances of exclusion: "In terms of the Caucasus, they still tell Circassians to leave Turkey if they do not like it [Turkey]. [This implies that] You are not the man of this land. Well, Circassians still have not been the real people of here."¹²⁵

Being the guest, being the outsider, being the guilty one, diasporic experience is defined as restlessness by Özer, aged 34, a businessman and also a Phd student: "As an individual, I do not feel very rooted in this country; I live my life more on the fingertips. ...I would not like many people to have the same restlessness, diasporic restlessness."¹²⁶

However, that restlessness is not only about not being on the lands that is called homeland, or being in Turkey, diasporic restlessness that Gürtuğ explains is a more complicated solitude:

¹²⁴ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

¹²⁵ Nezhir, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹²⁶ Özer, interview by author, January 2008, İstanbul.

“I always remember that in our childhood there used to be books which ladies valued so much. Whether or not it was Kerime Nadir, I do not know but I remember a book named *Ruh Gurbetinde* (The Soul’s Absence from Home). I always feel that for myself. The absence from home, being the stranger; that is the life of me and those who are like me. We cannot coexist with people who do not have the Circassian qualities just because s/he speaks Circassian. We cannot take it. What else shall I say?”¹²⁷

That narrative of solitude is not exactly about being here or there but rather as a shortcut to share any kind of critique with respect to the contemporary status of their lives, cities that they lived in and relationships. In such a narrative any critique of urbanization, modernization and globalization is coupled with the theme of diasporic rootlessness as Nesibe exemplifies:

“One realizes that more especially when s/he gets older. I realize how I have led a Circassian life when walking in the street. People crash into you whereas, in my culture, there is nothing like people crashing into each other. I get on a vehicle, one almost sits onto me whereas, in our culture, people do not touch each other without a reason. They leave some distance. Of course, that distance is not to bother the other person and I realize that I have already done that for years without giving it a name. ...We do not see these [acts] around and we feel very lonely. But still, I would not want to be otherwise.” [She laughs.]¹²⁸

In addition to the themes of inbetweenness, solitude and restlessness, Circassian activists interviewed for this study defined Circassians in Turkey through the concepts of fear, gratitude and trust. Circassians are defined as a community with fear. Despite their narratives on embeddedness in Turkish politics and state-formation process which will be explored in the other parts of this chapter, Kaya claims that:

“As opposed to our awesome courage on individual level, we have an awesome communal fear. ...Our reflexes on the communal level are very timid. Circassians have given cadres at the radical margins in Turkish political life regardless of ideology. Well, they have given cadres as extreme as the

¹²⁷ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

¹²⁸ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

sniper/triggerman [*tetikçi*] but when something about them happens, they get appalled and frightened.”¹²⁹

That fear is narrated not as something new but rather old. Yet the narrative itself is quite new. Activists of 1990s speak about silence of the previous generations as a feature of Circassians in Turkey like Hasan who remembers and reconstructs his encounters with the older people in his youth:

“We went to the village and tried to collect information about Circassians, sometimes we talked to older people. Back then, what shocked me most was the unwillingness of the older people to talk about this, they were openly avoiding it. ...There is fear, there is still fear. It is like when you do not want to talk about a distasteful event. Especially when talking to the older people, they used to start by saying “Look, we are living in Turkey and we, too, are Turks.” They were the same people who told us that we were Circassians. When we came back from school saying that we were Turks, they used to say “No, son, we are Circassians.””¹³⁰

Nesibe further claimed that the fear of diaspora also shaped their willingness to take roots in the host community, such as investing in real estate or accumulating wealth:

“Well, it is not conscious, but I think that they had a hesitation like that and because of that they did not think. Because they always thought about “what if”, I think that they did not have an ambition in terms of wealth, property. Because they never knew what was going to happen to them. They were always afraid.”¹³¹

Taner further employs the concept of fear to understand the current actions of Circassian organizations in Turkey which are, he claims, imbued with a fear that is hard to understand when compared to Kurds in Turkey:

“Well, are associations NGO? I think not. It is not possible that an institution that has connections with the state can be an NGO. We said that we could remove that and we focused our works on that. Our courage frightened the people at the associations. They said “Alas!”, they said that after that they would attack us, they would destroy us just like Kurds. Circassians were not as

¹²⁹ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹³⁰ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

¹³¹ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

oppressed as Kurds. Well, not that much. They were oppressed once but it was not that much dense. They did not have a dense trauma. After Çerkes Ethem, there was no rebellion or something like that. How did they internalize that fear so much? How did they get so much frightened? I am not able to understand that. ...They were just frightened, they published declarations warning people [Circassians] not to participate in those events, that the police would raid. ...They were considering us crazy but we were cleaning the path, we were in a way saying that these could be done. We were not crazy and these could be done.”¹³²

However, the fear in terms of Circassian activism sometimes is narrated as intertwining with the production and reproduction of fear. Meral highlights fear as inseparable from its reproduction:

“I do think that they are a little bit cowardly. Because I saw that in [some events that Meral’s group organized]... Well, there were people who tried to pull our ears, told us to be careful and tried to scare us saying that something might happen to us. Actually, whether it was fear or making us fearful, that was blurred. I do not know whether it was really an attempt to protect us or it was an attempt to frighten us.”¹³³

The fear that is highlighted in the narratives of Circassians is not explored in terms of its reasons. Except some instances in terms of speaking Turkish in villages or the state policies in terms of Circassian language, no particular event is mentioned. However, Kurds as another ethnic group in Turkey is always a reference in these narratives of fear. The case of Kurds in Turkey is employed as a reference to understand the Turkish state’s relationship with ethnic groups and to that extent, it shapes Circassian narratives on diasporic identity. Circassian activists define themselves as “better from the Kurds”; yet, the very visibility of the case of Kurds in narratives on fear highlights that fear is related to the experience of not only Circassians but also Kurds as Neval’s account exemplifies:

“Well, [the idea of the non-Circassian public in Turkey is that] Circassians are beautiful people, they are obedient, they are respectable people, they all did what we told them, and they fulfilled the duties that we gave them. Furthermore, being a Circassian woman, girl is a significant thing. ...Maybe

¹³² Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹³³ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

we like to declare that we are Circassians, one of those people whom they admire and we instantly tell that. But we also instantly get frightened. We need to state that “Well, I am not like Çerkes Ethem, I do not want the land of this country, and we should not be taken as similar to the Kurds.” [*“Aman beni Kürtlerle aynı kefeye koymayın” deme gereği de duyuyoruz.*] But it is true; we do not have any territorial claim. We do not want to die away; we want to live with our own culture and language.”¹³⁴

In some of the interviews when asked about fear, the concept of fear was replaced by gratitude. Hicran, for instance, defined Circassians as feeling gratitude towards first, Ottoman state and then, Turkish state:

“Even though we sometimes say that Ottoman Empire would not take us if it was opposed to its interests and it used us, there is a feeling of gratitude like that: you are expelled from your own country and people accepts you. More than fear, among the Circassians there is the idea that one should not be disloyal to the bread that s/he eats. ...s/he feels as ungrateful. Indeed, there is no ungratefulness there. You put forward your identity not because you consider Turks bad or not because you insult Turkey.”¹³⁵

However, in some narratives, themes of fear and gratitude are accompanied by the theme of trust. Circassians are regarded as trustworthy and such a perception is employed to explain the embeddedness of Circassians not only in Turkish politics but also in Middle Eastern politics as Gürtuğ states:

“As long as Circassian characters are alive, Circassians are trustworthy people. Well, in Middle East qualities like being trustworthy, being loyal, being an honest person are not easily found. ...and we are a nation that is very cautious not to make people tell that we betrayed them. Wherever we are, we have not been a headache.”¹³⁶

The reason of trust is narrated as loyalty on behalf of Circassians. Given the accounts of official history which identifies any ethnic group with treason and “stabbing the Turkish nation in the back” starting from the history of the last decade of the Ottoman

¹³⁴ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

¹³⁵ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

¹³⁶ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

Empire till the contemporary history, Circassians consider themselves the loyal elements of Turkey. Though based on the assumptions of official history such as the very continuous existence of traitors, such a narrative reverses its conclusions. Treason is narrated as a misunderstood version of loyalty and official history is refuted without directly being challenged as Köksal states:

“Well, complete and pure obedience, not betraying, keeping the same position till the end. This loyalty is the most significant quality of the community. For instance, you see that there is the quality of being with the same persons with whom you started the road till the end. This is why Circassians were torn into two during the War of Independence. For instance, those to whom the Sultan made great favors were stigmatized as traitors by not leaving him till the end. ...But those people who were in the armed forces with Ataturk also went on with him till the end.”¹³⁷

Circassian activists defined Circassian diaspora in Turkey as politically and organizationally incompetent, restless, inbetween, fearful, grateful, trustworthy and loyal. The qualities that they have attributed to Circassian diaspora in Turkey are also reflections of their experiences in Turkey as a non-Turkish Muslim ethnic group. They feel incompetence in terms of politics and organizations, solitude and inbetweenness, fear and loyalty, simultaneously. As these feelings are all part of how they define their experiences as Circassians in Turkey, Circassians regard themselves impotent and inactive as a community as Neval puts “it is a weird thing to live as if no Circassians live in the Republic of Turkey.”¹³⁸ Yet their experiences as a Circassian in Turkey is not only related to how they perceive themselves but also how they think they are being perceived by the non-Circassian “others”, who are sometimes summoned as “the Turks” or “those outside”. .

In terms of their image in Turkey and “others” perceptions, the trilogy of Circassian Ethem, Circassian Girls/Beauty and Circassian chicken¹³⁹ is a usual reference point in the narratives of Circassian activists. In most of the interviews, Circassian activists stated that Circassians in Turkey are known by Çerkes Ethem, Circassian girls and

¹³⁷ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹³⁸ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

¹³⁹ Circassian chicken [*Çerkes Tavuğu*] is a popular and commonly known dish in Turkey.

Circassian chicken as Kenan states: “Circassian girl, Circassian chicken and Çerkes Ethem. This is a trilogy, you know that?”¹⁴⁰ As the trilogy is seen as primary in terms of the Circassian image in Turkey by all of the interviewees, beyond the trilogy there are different standpoints in terms of the image of Circassians in Turkey which are not mutually exclusive.

First, Circassian activists defined the image of Circassians in Turkey as positive. From such a perspective, being Circassian has some implications in terms of aesthetics and individual character. Circassian identity, in some contexts, works as an individual asset. Zekeriya, aged 88 states:

“Though the 1919 Çerkes Ethem affair produced some sourness, Circassians is a people that is shown great respect. [*el üstünde tutulan*] ...There is no group in Turkey that humiliates Circassians. ...Well, Circassians do not have a problem of humiliation.”¹⁴¹

That positive image is also narrated as including some implications on behalf of the individual. Hence, Circassian identity that is accompanied by such a positive image is claimed to be an identity that is easily announced to general public as Meral exemplifies with her reference to a sociologist:

“In a meeting of civil society organizations, we were chatting with ...[a sociologist in Turkey]. She told me that people do not avoid calling themselves Circassian because for a girl, saying that she is Circassian means that she is beautiful, she has a thin waist and what differentiates its meaning is the meaning embedded in it. She said that for a man, it means that he is brave and handsome so Circassians used to say it.”¹⁴²

Apart from personal and physical qualities attributed to the Circassian identity, Özer aged 34, born in Istanbul states that Circassians uses urban space differently and this different use of the public and private spheres has also been part of the Circassian image:

¹⁴⁰ Kenan, interview by author, 20 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴¹ Zekeriya, interview by author, 28 February 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴² Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

“Since we lived in city for 50 years, it was the thoughts of urban people. There used to live a Circassian person in every 3 or 5 apartments. The general perception was that they were respectful, they had a steady family life and their problems within the family were not carried into the public domain. Relationships with a distance. ...At least in our family, our use of the public domain was not like any other Turk or other people in the neighborhood; we used to use that domain differently. ...I think that for those over the age of 30 and 35, there exists a general perception and I think that this is mostly a positive image and I think that the keywords that may be used in that sense are respect, dignity, solidarity, pride and trustworthiness in his/her words.”¹⁴³

That positive image is a relative one which is formed in comparison with other non-Turkish ethnic groups in Turkey as Köksal narrates on the difference between Kurdish and Circassian images:

“Circassians in Turkey, today, is an elite and fully accepted group and with its contemporary meaning, it is seen as a source of pride not only by Circassians but also other communities. This is the interesting point, a person who attains a better status and who states that s/he is a Kurd is instantly... But when s/he says that s/he is a Circassian, in a way it becomes a source of pride, s/he can tell it easily and instantly.”

However, Kaya highlights that this positive image of Circassians is limited to the intrapersonal and intra-group relations:

“Circassians usually have a positive image like that: in the eyes of the people on the street, Circassian is a good image, it is a good thing. It is like being the white person. Well, something happens when you say Gypsy, when you say Armenians in Turkey or currently, Kurds. We have credit from the beginning, it is formed that way. When you say I am Circassian, this is a situation that is envied. This changes when it comes to those who think and work a little on Turkey’s social structure, political geography etc.”¹⁴⁴

The positive image of the Circassian that the activists narrated has its reservations as Taner explores these limitations:

“Let me tell you something unusual. We, as Circassians, are spoiled in terms of expressing ourselves. We can easily say that we are Circassians, we are splendid, that our music, traditions, our everything is good. The weird part is that Turks can not oppose that. Why can’t they? Because that is true. ...We,

¹⁴³ Özer, interview by author, January 2008, İstanbul.

¹⁴⁴ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

of course, have such an advantage: since Kurds are in a position to have territorial claims and other claims that they are a constitutive and older group on these lands and since the Turkish-Kurdish relationship is turned into a bloody conflict, they prefer to hide themselves. We, Circassians, are in no position like that. Let alone hiding, Circassians do want everything saucily and this is being tolerated by Turks. But under the condition that it is limited to a certain level. When it comes to the point of “demand”, they say to stop there and not to go any further. ...But apart from that, they tolerate and this is an advantage for us but we cannot fulfill that advantage till now.”¹⁴⁵

Hence, the positive image of Circassians is based on a positive understanding of Circassian culture, lifestyles and principles that are related to the culture. Such an understanding does not necessarily correspond to any political understanding of ethnicity.

Secondly, added to the positive image that activists claim to be identified with Circassians, Circassian activists highlighted the use of a second type of image regarding Circassians. The second group of perceptions on Circassians mostly considers Circassians as a statist group which is regarded as an extension of the state apparatus. Şener, for instance, explains the identification of Circassians with a certain image that revolves around the centrality of the state:

“There are even those who regard Circassians as settled and established; as a group that is in good status and has no problem with the state, or even a group which is the armband [*kolluk*]. Well, [for them] Circassian is not an ethnic identity, not a people; it is like an armband, they are a status group, a class; they are in good terms with the state, they have tasks in the crucial units of the state, they are especially preferred, they are loyal to the state, they have no demands. There is no ethnic group without demands, Kurds have those, Alevites have those. ...In the eyes of the leftists, Circassians have a particularly negative image. ...The [Turkish] left considers Circassians pro-Caliphate, religious, Islamist, Turkist and Turanist. Well, don't they have a point in that? They are not very wrong indeed. Despite the attempts of intellectuals with leftist tendencies to produce a different image, Circassian community occupies a fan that ranges from central right to the far right.”¹⁴⁶

Circassian activists, especially the ones embedded in leftist movements and some intellectual circles, claim that this kind of a perception is dominant as far as intellectuals

¹⁴⁵ Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴⁶ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

and leftists are concerned. Kaya explores such an understanding of Circassians as an extension of the state apparatus:

“We participated in a meeting with civil society organizations that focus on some themes. In fact, that surprised them [the people in the meeting] very much in the beginning. Then, they got used to that. They asked whether Circassians participate in these events. Because by the intellectuals of Turkey, regardless of whether they are rightist or leftist intellectuals, Circassians are perceived as statist, as soldiers, as the police, as part of *MIT* [National Security Organization]. [For them] It is a community that gives cadre to and embedded in these organizations. Indeed, it is a valid perception.”¹⁴⁷

Kenan, a politically active leftist in 1970s states that such close relationships with the state apparatus are not only part of the Circassian image in Turkey but also a historical fact:

“It is the closeness to the sovereign that their connections with the Palace brought to those people. It was the Sultan back then; it is the other units afterwards. There are people who serve with loyalty despite all their documents of treason. That has continued. ...For them to survive, for the next generation to survive there was the idea of staying close to the sovereign. A very ugly way of perception emerged: the man of the order, the man of the system, the protectors of the system, and the guards of the order. This is still so.”¹⁴⁸

Such an image of Circassians as an ethnic group that has organic connections with the state apparatus, such as army, MIT, police etc. may also be helpful in understanding why Circassians in Turkey is underresearched group when compared to Kurds or Alevites. Given such an image they are seen as a part of state apparatus and beyond ethnic politics as Circassians.

Thirdly, Circassian activists state that Circassians in Turkey is considered a tightly bound community, a network working like a brotherhood. Gürsoy narrates on such an image:

“It is being assumed from outside that there is an organized movement like that: these people are very connected to each other and they recruit each other by supporting and giving a hand to each other. Indeed, there is nothing like that, there is absolutely no such thing. They are all people who have proved

¹⁴⁷ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴⁸ Kenan, interview by author, 20 August 2007, İstanbul.

themselves individually and who have reached that position without the support of Circassians. People outside regard us as very organized, connected and bonded people but in reality there is no such thing. Well, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1980s, 1990s and with the increase in relationships [with the homeland], identities came into prominence. To be correct, they started to be declared. Afterwards, the wars in Abkhazia and Chechnia made a leap for these identities. People came to the point where declaration of the particular identity was a source of pride. Now they are again being closed. Because that particular identity is now being a disadvantage in Turkey. Now, we do not see it being declared so loudly.”¹⁴⁹

Regarding the “disadvantage” that Gürsoy refers, the implications of the notion of close and bounded community is varied in Turkey. It ranges from the conspiracy theories that have been part of the popular political research that has been done on for instance the Sabbateans to multiple mechanisms of gaining political power. 1990s and 2000s has been a period in which this kind of research has abounded in the popular press and public agenda. Hence, such an image of Circassians as a closed and bounded community working as a network is not a neutral analysis but rather a claim that is embedded in such conspiracy theories. Hasan further implies that such an image has some similarities with these popular conspiracy theories:

“They always think that we are a very closed group, like Sabbatean; that we have very strong relationships with each other and that we protect each other very much. ...I always say that this is invalid. It is just the opposite, Circassians are the strictest on that; we do not favor each other.”¹⁵⁰

Gürsoy further explains the implications of the image of “bounded community”:

“Therefore when somebody is in an important position and when you say “I know him, he is Circassian”, what I just mentioned happens. “Well, of course you know him/her because everywhere you have...” The outside perception is that there is no Circassian that does not know each other. A Circassian myth similar to the Sabbatean myth of Yalçın Küçük has emerged. [The idea is that] These people are significant in Turkey, they are an interest group, they are a lobby, their people are everywhere, i.e. bureaucracy, business, and politics...

¹⁴⁹ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁰ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

...There are people who think that this is a dividing group that will be a calamity tomorrow and they say “Shall we deal with them, too?”¹⁵¹

Such a perspective regards Circassians as a potentially dangerous group whose power is invisible and kept consciously hidden.

Fourth type of image that Circassian activists narrated on is related to the implications of “bounded community.” Such an image is based on a different understanding of ethnicity in Turkey. In such an understanding, non-Turkish ethnic groups are seen as real or potential trouble makers. The more their very existence is pronounced, the higher the possibility that there will be trouble as exemplified by Nesibe who tells about a meeting organized by Circassians:

“In the 75th year of the foundation of the Republic [in 1998]... We said that we built it [the Republic], the other groups were in minority when compared to us. ...So we said “let’s do something as Circassians, why do we stand aside?” ...We said that we had been talking among each other since years so we should do something outside, something that would be heard, and something to raise our voice. ...So we organized a panel on the role of Circassians in the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey. ...in a university [in Turkey]... Our panelist was X. [a Circassian researcher] ...The panel started. ...X was the last panelist, he started his talk. After his first or second use of the word Circassian, some people from the front rows did some gestures to the chair of the panel. We were seeing the chair, he just got bizarre. X continued his talk. ... Then a man from the front row stood up and made a gesture to stop. Then the chair tried to warn X that his time was up. When the chair finally said that they already loved Circassians, that the beauty of Circassian girls was famous and Circassian chicken was tasteful, X said “Sir, I did not come here today to say rhymes about April 23st. Furthermore, why don’t I have a nationality while the chicken has one.”¹⁵²

Such an image is based on the argument that Circassians as a non-Turkish ethnic group may be trouble makers and/or the announcing of the Circassian identity is problematic as far as the unity and indivisibility of Turkey is concerned. Metin states that such an image of Circassians is not valid as far as the peoples of Turkey are concerned but rather a reflection of official ideology:

¹⁵¹ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵² Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

“Turkish society does not have negative thoughts about Circassians. When you look at the people’s level, people accept us with our ethnic characteristics. Our neighboring village does not become restless that we speak Circassian. They say that “Of course, they are Circassians, we are Turks. Of course, everybody will speak his/her language.” But the problem is at those who have spent long time in the bench of official ideology. ...Really, there is no problem among the less educated people; the problem is among educated people. This is a very bizarre contradiction indeed.”¹⁵³

Neval further claims that such a contradiction of acceptance and uneasiness about Circassians which takes place simultaneously is not totally new but especially unease is on the rise given the political developments in Turkey:

“I know this fear from my childhood. They had an unease like that. Well, the source of that may be Çerkes Ethem for sure. [The idea was that] “They are unfaithful people, they can betray, they can be traitors.” On the other hand, they loved us, they used to wish to marry our girls, they loved our food but still that fear has always existed in the country that we have lived. Somehow they have always been afraid of the different. ...Those people outside us regard Circassians as very clean, respectful and chaste people. But they have an unease with Circassians. “Do they want to divide this country like Kurds?” When Circassians demand the right of the use of Circassian language, they always think that Circassians will divide this country like Kurds; that Circassians, too, are divisive people. I realize that.”¹⁵⁴

Therefore, Circassian image in Turkey, the ways they are perceived and the ways Circassians think they are being perceived is highly affected by the politics of Turkey and the roles ethnicity and ethnic groups play in politics. Such an image that questions the trustworthiness of Circassians as an ethnic group in Turkey is not related to the Circassian community in Turkey *per se* but rather to the changing meanings of ethnicity and ethnic groups and the rise of Turkish and other nationalisms due to the Kurdish question.

¹⁵³ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁵⁴ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

4.3. Relationships with the State Apparatus

This part of the chapter aims to explore how Circassian activists define state and their relationships with the state. Despite the popular belief that Circassians are different and advantaged, when compared to other ethnic groups in Turkey, especially Kurds in their relationships with the state; their relationships with the state are far from being homogenous. Circassian activists in Turkey employ several narratives to explain their relationships with the state and these narratives do not necessarily exclude one another.

In terms of its actions state is defined as ignoring Circassians as a community. Nesibe, with an example that concerns the relations of diaspora with the diasporic homeland, argues that the Turkish state ignores Circassians:

“In those days, I think, the prime minister was Bülent Ecevit. An ultimatum came from Russia stating that the [Circassian] associations were the schools of the terrorists and hence, they should be closed down. It was the time when the Chechnian refugees came into prominence. It was saying that the associations should be closed down. And the Republic of Turkey did not reply that except sending the police [to the associations]. ...And I felt so awful back then, you do not exist. You are nothing. ...You are not counted at all. If I had the power to do that, I would just announce to the media next day and say that we were leaving Turkey as a number of people and returning to the Caucasus. But unfortunately I do not have such a power, I do not have support to do that but I would have liked to do that. Well, would Turkey care about that? I do not know that either.”¹⁵⁵

Circassian activists argue that Turkish state regards Circassians with a question mark. From such a perspective, state is beyond being ethnically blind but it is particularly interested in ethnic groups, Circassians being one of them as exemplified with the words of Kaya and Turgay, respectively:

“Despite the cadres that we give to the state, I think that state has always regarded us as a question mark. Even if we are unaware of our identity, the

¹⁵⁵ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

state has always known that we are Circassians. Even if we presume ourselves to be Turks, the state knows that we are not.”¹⁵⁶

“How does it [the state] perceive? I think that it thinks of Circassians as a community which is not a trouble for Turkey but also upon which an eye should be kept.”¹⁵⁷

As these kind of arguments range between question mark, unease and fear, Esat employs the notion of threat and states that Circassian may have a particular position among other ethnic groups in Turkey in terms of the state’s perception of threat:

“I think that state has two perceptions; first, I regard Circassians as an element which may be historically beneficial in some events or turning points. ...There are lots of examples for that but we can see the second perception when the National Security Council did *fişleme*:¹⁵⁸ it was the claim of being

¹⁵⁶ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁷ Turgay, interview by author, 4 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁵⁸ *Fişleme* in Turkish means keeping a secret record of someone. Hence it is a surveillance mechanism by various institutions of the state which is claimed to be existent in Turkey as far as several events and debates are concerned. This particular instance of *fişleme* that Esat mentions was claimed to take place in March 2004 when the Land Forces [*Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı*] demanded from the *kaymakams* [head official of a district] information on “groups and institutions which have destructive and divisive actions.” In the 12 pages text that was sent to the districts, the groups about whom information was demanded included pro-American and pro-EU people and groups; high society groups; the groups whose members are artists; the groups composed of the children of affluent families; brotherhoods, Satanists, “Klu Klax”; Masons; internet groups; “groups of sexuality, meditation, conjuration etc.”; “authors and thinkers who work as opposed to Turkey”; “those philosophical, thought and action groups whose intentions cannot be exactly determined”; those who have missionary actions and finally “groups who are in a tendency to see themselves as minority such as Circassians, Albanians and Romans.” See “İlginç İstihbarat,” *Hürriyet*, 10 March 2004, <<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?viewid=381401>> (24 February 2009). The same day, Turkish Armed Forces verified the news. See “TSK Fişleme Haberini Doğruladı,” *NTV-Msnbc*, 10 March 2004, <<http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/260962.asp>> (23 February 2009).

Next day, *KAF-FED* (Caucasian Associations Federation of Turkey) issued a public notice stating that as the existence of Circassians and Abkhazians in such a list was sad, offending, prejudiced and unlucky, “the fact that Circassians and Abkhazians who, from the day they came from the Caucasus to the Ottoman lands till today, took their place in the frontlines for the unity, indivisibility and security of this country and who had no demand and request except serving with loyalty as a natural consequence of their traditional educational mentality were counted among the groups that should be monitored and the fact that such a demand comes from a branch of our Armed Forces is not possible to understand.” Public notice of *KAF-FED* further stated that Circassians “is a people with strong feelings of responsibility who are conscious of what they want and what they do not want as the most trustworthy and loyal citizens of this country” and “who, not less than any Turkish citizen, consider themselves responsible for the eternal survival of Turkish Republic as a secular, democratic and social state in whose foundation they [Circassians] had a great role.” For the public notice of *KAF-FED* on 12 March 2004, see the website of *KAF-FED*, “Fişleme Olayı İçin Kaf-fed’in Kamuoyu Açıklaması,” <http://www.kafkasfederasyonu.org/kaffed/d_kaffed_fisleme_olayi_kamuoyu_aciklamasi.htm> (22 February 2009). Next week, another group of Circassians who were related with the Circassian organizations collected money on an individual basis to publish a notice on a daily newspaper. The notice protested *fişleme*

Abkhazian and Circassian, not the claim of being Bosnian or Albanian. ...In state politics which is based on general perceptions of threat, we can think that Circassians are perceived as a small threat in the margins.”¹⁵⁹

Circassian activists also argue that the Turkish state does not consider Circassians a harmful group. Especially when compared to the Kurds in Turkey, Circassians are relatively in harmony with the state as Hakan argues:

“Circassians are generally regarded as loyal citizens who are in harmony with the state, dominant in its organization and who protect the state; they are not a problem in that sense. Furthermore, with this Kurdish problem, there has emerged a general discourse that takes Circassians as an example, as an ethnic group that do not demand those things.”¹⁶⁰

As far as the relationship with the state is concerned that difference from the Kurds in Turkey is also highlighted by Hicran. Such a perspective regards Circassians harmless for the state politics when compared to the Kurds:

“We generally gained the rights that the state of Turkey gave us because of Kurds. It is not like we struggled and they gave us the rights. They are the rights that we gained in the process of accession to European Union. But before, nobody in Turkey could establish associations called Kurdish Association but in Turkey an Abkhazian Association was founded. Because they were not seen as dangerous. Since Circassians are among the founders of this state, since they are everywhere, since they never give priority to their

and stated that “this practice which envisaged the starting of an imaginary enemy hunt in Turkey should be immediately stopped.” See, “Kampanya: Fişlemeye Karşı Sesimizi Yükseltelim,” <<http://www.nartajans.net/nuke//modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=226>> (24 February 2009). On 21 March 2004, Dilek Başer, in her article in a daily newspaper, stated that she was both Circassian and pro-EU, and the definition of Circassians whom “these lands liked” and “who were associated with the notions of gratitude, respect and aesthetics as “groups whose intentions are unknown”” was painful. D. Başer, “Çerkezim, AB Yanlısıyım,” *Radikal*, 21 March 2004, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=3227> (24 February 2009). Meanwhile, on March 17, Turkish General Staff declared that this was a personal mistake that was beyond its objectives, nobody was recorded and it was irrelevant to call it *fişleme*. “Genelkurmay: Biz Dahil Herkes Hatalı,” *Radikal*, 17 March 2004, <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=109881>> (24 February 2009). As this was the end of this *fişleme* incident in 2004, claims of *fişleme*, surveillance and information-gathering about various groups in Turkey have abounded in Turkish politics and media throughout the last decade.

¹⁵⁹ Esat, interview by author, 10 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶⁰ Hakan, interview by author, 3 July 2007, İstanbul.

ethnic identity and since they have no such demand, they are seen as harmless.”¹⁶¹

However, that harmonious relationship is not always explained by a total harmony but rather some activists regard that harmony as intertwined with fear and Circassians’ embeddedness in state mechanism. For instance, Kenan says:

“It is a fear that is formed out of a protective mentality and they are using that fear. And that is bad. Well, the call of our elders that we call *thamade* not to resist too much... For instance, after the elections X [a Circassian activist who may be considered a *thamade*] said that “they are a bunch of people, do not pay attention to them.” [*vis-à-vis* a group of Circassian activists who organized some public meetings with some independent candidates in the last national elections.] What did those people say so that he said not to pay attention to them? He openly gave a message to the Turkish state that these were a bunch of people, that Circassians were still on the state’s side and he warned them not to pay attention to those. ...the reasons for the development of that fear producing instinct then become different, that is getting engaged to the sovereign state structure. ...You have a standing and a status as a Circassian bourgeoisie. If you tell something that is in contradiction with the system, or if someone from your community voices those too much, and if you continuously have meetings in the state level, then somebody may pull your ear. Most probably that happens to some of them. Well, they do pull their ears.”¹⁶²

Hence, the narrative on the harmony of the state and Circassians may turn into an argument on Circassian embeddedness in the state mechanism, and the emphasis on harmony on the side of Circassians may be transformed into the notion of fear on the side of Circassians and surveillance by the state. Yasemin takes state surveillance for granted and claims that in her life story which is embedded in activism in Circassian organizations, surveillance by the state mechanism has been insignificant:

“I do not like being extreme. For sure, a country will have some precautions, some measures of security and controls, and I have never blamed Turkey in that sense. And I have always been grateful. Since the day I know myself, I have openly declared that I am a Circassian, I have told my objectives. ...I always had visitors and letters [from the Caucasus] and how I worked was being known. I was not disturbed for one day and I knew pretty well that there were certainly some files about me in *MİT* (National Intelligence Organization) and

¹⁶¹ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶² Kenan, interview by author, 20 August 2007, İstanbul.

they [these files] had to exist. ...Nobody prevented us. Here are our lives, here are our letters. What else could we do? We certainly were working for the peoples of the Caucasus and nobody disturbed us. This is another facet of truth.”¹⁶³

Finally, Circassian activists narrate on Circassian embeddedness in the state mechanism. As the real extent of embeddedness in the state apparatus is unknown and beyond the scope of this work, the mechanisms of such a relationship ranges from having a task in a state institution to being an informal part of the intelligence and security organizations as far as the claims of Circassian activists are concerned. Nesibe explains such a relationship with the state as a consequence of the insecurity of the migrant:

“We are a refugee community. This is different from the Kurds; they are the people of Anatolia. We came from outside. And therefore we would like to stay here, put our feet on the ground. This is why we always take refuge in secure settings. We take refuge. This is why we chose to be in the state tasks, in the army. We chose to be in those settings so that we would not be expelled again.”¹⁶⁴

In terms of whether such an embeddedness in the power structure works for the benefit of Circassians as an ethnic group in Turkey, activists argue that such a relationship often works in reverse directions. The harmony that is aforementioned is regarded as a result of this relationship with the state. Those members of the community who are in such relationships with the Turkish state are claimed to be the bufferzones and the brakes of Circassian community in Turkey. They were claimed to be functioning as the producers of the apparent harmony between Circassians and the Turkish state as Metin explains:

“On the individual level, it might have some benefits in terms of advancement and assignment etc. But when we think in terms of Circassianhood, in terms of a movement with national substance, they always had harms. They had always been the brakes, they had always been those who repressed. We had so many ministers for instance, which one did produce the slightest benefit for Circassianhood? None of them. On the opposite, it is “For Heaven’s sake! Do not!” With their effect, our parents used to pressure us stating that they would not know any better than them. So our movements are always repressed. In

¹⁶³ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶⁴ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

that sense the success in bureaucracy is not for our good, but it is harmful for us.”¹⁶⁵

However, embeddedness in state mechanisms is not limited to the individual level but also it is claimed to be apparent as far as the Circassian organizations are concerned. Taner argues that the organic ties of associations with the Turkish state explain their contemporary conformism in terms of ethnic demands:

“Since associations are bound by laws in Turkey and they have so little that they can do. Also since those working in the associations are connected to the deep structure of Turkey, by deep I do not imply illegal formations; since they are in very good relationships with the bureaucratic and military elites; and since they do not want to spoil those relationships, and since they happily lead their lives in such a situation; since they do not demand anything, you naturally cannot tell anything in these settings. It is now impossible to do something with them. I have seen that.”¹⁶⁶

Yet claims of embeddedness in the state mechanism sometimes goes beyond rejection of associations and search for alternative means of organization on the side of activists and it sometimes becomes very particular in that it focuses on a particular institution in Turkey, *MİT* (National Intelligence Organization) and its relationships with Circassians.

To better understand the relationships of Circassian activists with the Turkish state and how these narratives and discourses are formations of Circassian diasporic identity in Turkey, the remaining parts of the chapter will explore Circassian activists’ narratives on *MİT* and education.

4.3.1. Myth of *MİT* (National Intelligence Organization)

Throughout the interviews when I asked about the relationship between the Turkish state and Circassians, Circassian activists always referred to *MİT* as an institution with

¹⁶⁵ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁶⁶ Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

close ties to the Circassians in Turkey. From such a perspective, *MİT* and other institutions of intelligence are significant to understand Circassian organizations and their participation into Turkish politics as Meral criticizes the organizations:

“In our associations, always very conservative views are dominant. The associations were always being managed by people who were trying to keep young people outside politics with a protective mentality, who, if I question a little further, did not have very good intentions in the simplest sense. I do not want to say people who were “directed by some others.”¹⁶⁷

Similarly, Mert argues for the significance of these intelligence mechanisms in the Circassian community and perceives their existence on a very individual level:

“I believe that our associations are being guided by the state. I also know that those who are not being guided by the state are being prevented by our own institutions or our own people in the state who have either bad or good intentions. I also believe that if there is going to be a problem about me, they will protect me by saying that I am indeed a good and chaste man when it is necessary. But I also believe that they can make the computers of the newspaper that I publish stolen since all data is loaded in that computer.”¹⁶⁸

The idea of *MİT* and its significance for Circassians in Turkey is beyond the institutional level for Circassian activists. Surprisingly, several of them narrated on their personal encounters with *MİT* and other mechanisms of intelligence with laughter but sometimes with lower voices. Without even my questions, they shared their encounters with *MİT* while they were part of the associations. Kenan, for instance, who was arrested in the end of 1970s for political activism that was not related to Circassians highlights the significance of such mechanisms:

“But when you were being interrogated there, it was not just that [political activism] that is being interrogated. They also asked “What do you want to do in Turkey as Circassians?” and they knew a lot. Well, it is always said that there are many Circassians in police force and *MİT*. [He laughs] Yes, there are. It is not something to hide, it is very evident.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶⁸ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶⁹ Kenan, interview by author, 20 August 2007, İstanbul.

The three accounts that I will now quote are from three prominent activists among Circassians in Turkey who worked actively in associations and had close ties with the Caucasus:¹⁷⁰

“Before, they used to come from *MİT* when something happens in the Caucasus asking my opinions and comments and I used to tell them. When their visits have decreased recently, I asked them that they used to come more often. They told me that they did not need to come and that in our internet websites everything was there.”¹⁷¹

“Well, after 1972, a Circassian... from the police department... he told me that someone from *MİT* who is ...the head of that unit... called him one day and told him, these are his words: “Friend, we have a demand from you. Tell those Circassians to revolt if they have a revolt *vis-à-vis* the state. If they do not have one, they shall not make us doubtful with some palavers, to use today’s terminology. Since the War of Independence, we inspected Düzce, Hendek, Adapazarı¹⁷² at least 20 times by furrowing, that means separating into parcels. But Circassians do nothing but create fuss. Either they shall not create fuss and make us move by provoking us or they shall do something after the fuss.””¹⁷³

“One month before September 12 [1980], someone, the regional director of *MİT* came. ...He told me that he would like to talk to me if possible. I went there. ...He asked the places where there were Circassian associations. I told him to pass that question and ask the ministry of internal affairs. ...He laughed. He told me that I did not trust them at all. He told that there were associations abroad and asked their places. ...But this is interesting, maybe you are the first person that I am telling this. I said “Look boss. Let’s not be misunderstood. Ask something normal and I will tell; we have nothing hidden. I do not know, there are a couple of associations in Europe that Turkish employees go but I really do not know their addresses. Even if I know, I would not tell you that. Because I do not have to tell.” He insisted. Sometimes you have to be firm. I said “Look boss. You now like to add something to your file. But this is no news for *MİT*. I do not want to talk on these matters. Let me tell you another

¹⁷⁰ In these quotations I will not use even the pseudonyms. During their narration of these encounters, they did not ask me to quit recording, yet they used very low voices. Since the number of prominent Circassian activists who were in such key positions are quite limited in Turkey, I prefer to keep their names anonymous in line with research ethics.

¹⁷¹ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁷² Düzce, Hendek, Adapazarı are three locations in the Marmara region within which large groups of Circassians are settled.

¹⁷³ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

thing then. Since you insist, about that question that you just asked, *MİT* entrusted the head of X [Circassian] association, it paid his travel expenses, it sent him to Europe in...[recent dates] and he went there and visited each association there, he recorded etc. He gave *MİT* those so this will not be news for *MİT*.” Then he got shocked. [he laughs] He asked me how I knew that. I said “Sir, it is not that far. We are Circassians. We are a society. We hear things from each other. Do you think that *ÇİT* is asleep while *MİT* is working?” [*“O kadar da uzun boylu değil, biz de Çerkesiz, toplumuz, bir şeyler birbirimizden duyuyoruz. MİT çalışıyor da ÇİT uyuyor mu zannediyorsun sen?” dedim.*] He did not understand what *ÇİT* was. ...[The other person] [a Circassian in the lower echelons of *MİT* who was also present in the talk] told him that I was joking. He was trying to acquit me. He told that Circassians [*Çerkesler*] made jokes like that by putting *Ç* in front of the words, such as turning *TİKKO* into *ÇİKKO* and that meant Circassian Intelligence Organization. He explained that since Circassians knew each other, they heard these kinds of things from each other. I told him that this was actually how it happened.”¹⁷⁴

However, the idea of *MİT* in the narratives of Circassian activists is not limited to personal encounters with *MİT* but also constitute accusations between people in terms of who is a part of *MİT*. Some narrate on accusations and claims that are made about them like Gürsoy who mentions the claims about him:

“I still have the proceedings of that [some meetings]. Since there was no legal structure in those times, I did not give them to anyone. Why? To put a bookmark on history. According to some people I was giving those to *MİT*, to the police. I have labels like that.”¹⁷⁵

However, those who are accused may easily and instantly turn into an accuser as Kenan exemplifies:

“Was it Einstein who told that it is more difficult to smash prejudice than an atom? There is a real prejudice. ...For instance, they say that this newspaper is being published with the support of Chechnian mafia. ...I cannot believe it. On the other side, [there are people telling that] we are being funded by the intelligence service of Jordan. There are those never-ending stuff. ...Let me tell you very frankly, in our community, there are people who take directives from their brothers. These gossips do not just come from nowhere.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Rüstem, interview by author, 8 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁷⁵ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁷⁶ Kenan, interview by author, 20 August 2007, İstanbul.

Hence, any dispute can be transformed into such claims as far as Circassian activists are concerned. What matters, what is not known but still what is most debated becomes who is related to *MİT*. It is like a murder mystery game but the difference is that this game is continuous: there are always suspects, claims and proofs. In any moment, the accused may turn into accused and *vice versa*. As the objects and subjects of such a narrative is open to constant change, the idea that some Circassians are part of *MİT* and this can be anyone is always there. Parallel to those accusations of being entrusted by *MİT* to some tasks is a common accusation that can be employed in any controversy as Cezmi explains his controversy with a childhood friend:

“When I asked him whether he was entrusted a special task to repress those instead of praising them, he just stood up and asked who the entruster was. I said the Republic of Turkey was showing some carrot not to be disgraced *vis-à-vis* European Union and probably using such people to repress those. What does that mean? It means “you are a spy, you are the man of MIT.” How else shall I say that? He took his hat, got furious and left.”¹⁷⁷

Nezih repeats one of those claims about his friends with whom he had been competing in the associations and who was arrested in the *coup d'état* of 1980: “They were interrogated for 6 hours and they were set free in an advantaged way. This is why it was said very often in those days that they were spies of *MİT*. That label is still prevailing.”¹⁷⁸

Yet the narratives on *MİT* also go beyond the claims and accusations between activists. As many activists stated that they knew about the identity of those entrusted people among them, few narrated on particular instances of deciphering. Hasan tells such an event that happened just after the *coup d'état* of 1980:

“Like him, two people were arrested. There were people who were tortured after arrest. [In another city] two people got arrested and they were tortured. It was a result of a denunciation [*ihbar*] from the association. The one who denounced was probably a Circassian whose identity we guessed. ...That was very evident. The proofs back then were strong.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁷⁸ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁷⁹ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

Regarding the same turbulent years, Nezhir who was similarly arrested states that he met his denunciator in the following years:

“Nezhir: Because those who denounced me were Circassians, I was not guilty.

Setenay: So you know that?

N: I know. Those who denounced are also evident, I know.

S: Did they tell that to you?

N: One of them confessed. I also know why I was denounced. I also know the denunciators. But the interesting part is that [afterwards] I have not been hostile to them.”¹⁸⁰

Hence, surveillance is frequently normalized by Circassian activists. Surveillance by the state is taken for granted. Furthermore, regardless of the extent to which they represent the reality, these narratives are employed to gain some significance as Circassian activists. This is why these narratives on *MİT* and embeddedness in the state which may well be unacceptable in other contexts are easily taken for granted by Circassian activists. To the extent that *MİT* has some control in associations, some people working for it etc. any dispute, conflict, differences in terms of homeland, politics in Turkey, diaspora politics may be explained and explored. Furthermore, such a dominant image of *MİT* is also implicitly employed to legitimize and explain the very apolitical status of Circassians in Turkey. Such a myth of *MİT* as everywhere and everybody, as the all-present but unknowable is employed by the activists to explain the reasons of the so-called failure of the Circassians in Turkey as a diasporic community. As the arguments of Circassian embeddedness in the state is open to debate and part of the conspiracy theories which have become popular since late 1990s, what is evident is that such a normalization and acceptance of surveillance on the side of activists is in itself a form of embeddedness in the state mechanism and mentality. To the extent that *MİT*, intelligence services and organizations, and their formal and informal attempts to collect information about ethnic groups in Turkey are normalized; their acts, attempts are regarded as something to laugh at, a memory in life history, a fact of life at the diaspora. From such a perspective, diaspora

¹⁸⁰ Nezhir, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

cope and mocks with surveillance by the state through normalizing and unveiling it. Hence, though it creates and eases embeddedness in the mentality of the nation-state, such a myth also works as a mechanism of resistance which provides diaspora activists with a voice that narrates, suspects, “knows” and guesses.

4.3.2. “The Others” in Education

In 1961, in a political humor magazine, *Akbaba* a columnist, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç criticized the Turkish educational system for its so-called failure and “insufficiency” to influence the ethnic groups in general and Circassians in particular:

“...Thirty nine years later from the victory of Independence, here is a young handsome reserve officer and teacher in Çanakkale who burns the photographs of Atatürk and says that he is a Circassian, an Abkhazian.

Circassian!... Let me list the first easy questions that come to my pen:

So you are Circassian, aren't you boy?... Here is Europe, here is Asia, here is Africa... Take the binoculars and show me a spot: a spot as big as Kaşık Island that is written Circassian on it. Is there anything like that on earth?

Leave the map... Here are the waving flags of the countries... This is French, this is English, this is Greek, this is Ethiopian!... Among them there are even ones whose name we do not know.... Which one is the Circassian flag?...

Leave the flags... Can there be a nation without literature, music?

Can you show me one Circassian poet, one Circassian novelist, one Circassian composer?... Especially a Circassian on stage?... That could only enter into *Karagöz* (shadowplay) in Ramadan nights to make the Ottoman audience laugh.

....In that case primary school, secondary school, technical school, all those years of education were insufficient to make an Abkhazian boy embrace Turkishness, to make him forget his Circassianhood which is without a history, a victory and art!

What would you say? Are we still going to say that “we have a ministry of education” with the optimist smile of stupidity on our face?

For our national existence, this Circassian boy is more dangerous even than the Çerkes Ethem gang.”¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ See “Bir Çerkes Delikanlısı,” Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, *Akbaba*, 5 February 1961, <http://www.circassiancanada.com/tr/haber/0016_bir_cerkes_delikanlisi.htm> (17 August 2008).

As this text can be an instance of popular nationalism in the magazines of the time as exemplified by Bali in his studies on Jews in Turkey,¹⁸² this part of the chapter ironically aims to explore the same question with the humorous author: that is the relationship between the Circassian ethnic identity and educational settings in Turkey. In addition to understanding the formations of ethnic identities in Turkey in general and Circassian diasporic identity in particular, this exploration aims to contribute to the recent studies on educational system in Turkey.

Starting from the mid 1990s and intensifying throughout the 2000s, social scientists have explored education in Turkey from a critical point of view. As the policies of education at particular epochs have been studied,¹⁸³ education in Turkey has been examined on political and ideological levels. One of the studies on educational policies in Turkey, for instance, states that starting from the early years of Turkish Republic, Turkish educational system has been based on an authoritarian nationalist-statist ideology that has aimed to exalt the Turkish nation and Turkish state and associates any foreign idea and influence with harm.¹⁸⁴

Parallel to the studies on educational policies in Turkey, the mid 1990s and 2000s have also witnessed the proliferation of studies on textbooks as documents of official curriculum, as guides for teachers that are used nationwide and as a means of state to create the national identity, the ideal citizen and the ideal Turk. Mostly, the findings underline that textbooks used in primary and secondary education is flawed with militarism, intolerance, xenophobia, “passages, phrases and expressions that are prejudiced, degrading”, gender discrimination and Atatürkist nationalism.¹⁸⁵ The stereotype of

¹⁸² See for instance R. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni [1923-1945]* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005).

¹⁸³ See for instance B. J. Fortuna, *Mektebi-i Hümayun: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Son Döneminde İslami Devlet ve Eğitim*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005).

¹⁸⁴ İ. Kaplan, *Türkiye’de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi ve Siyasal Toplumsallaşma Üzerindeki Etkisi*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 390.

¹⁸⁵ D. Tarba Ceylan and G. Irzık, eds., *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks: The Turkish Case*, (Istanbul: The History Foundation of Turkey, 2004).

“internal and external enemy”, the external enemy being the more ambiguous one;¹⁸⁶ indoctrination as an implicit objective, the image of the Turks as “superior, privileged and even more divinely empowered than others”,¹⁸⁷ admiration of power, violence and authority¹⁸⁸ are stated as among the frequent themes in textbooks in Turkey. Regarding the minorities, it is stated that the language of the textbook oscillates between an assimilationist approach, a discriminatory language and silence which implies ignoring or denying the matter outright.¹⁸⁹ Also some statements in the textbooks assume Turkish nation as homogenous rather than composed of various ethnicities and ignore variation, and consider any difference threatening: as Muslim non-Turkish groups are ignored and seen as threats, non-Muslims are excluded from the definitions of the nation.¹⁹⁰ Hence, since the 2000s, social science has dealt with educational practices from a critical perspective, with the aim of democratizing and reforming education.

As this research is originally about diaspora nationalism and gender, throughout the interviews I had no particular question regarding education. Yet, in all of the interviews I realized that in the narratives of Circassian activists, regardless of my questions, education had a significant role in constructing their identities, that they loved to talk about their educational experiences without being asked, that they had an agenda on education, that they believe narrating on the way they were educated is a way of narrating on who they think they are. Most of the Circassian activists that I interviewed automatically talked about their educational experiences as Circassians in Turkey when talking about identity, difference and life histories. Hence, their very narratives of education, indeed, warned me

¹⁸⁶ T. Bora, “Nationalism in Textbooks,” in *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks: The Turkish Case*, eds. D. Tarba Ceylan and G. Irzik (Istanbul: The History Foundation of Turkey, 2004), 49-75, 65.

¹⁸⁷ R. Boztemur, “History Textbooks and Human Rights,” in *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks: The Turkish Case*, eds. D. Tarba Ceylan and G. Irzik (Istanbul: The History Foundation of Turkey, 2004), 123-148, 129.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁸⁹ M. S. Gemalmaz, “Evaluation of Data Concerning Human Rights Criteria Obtained From a Survey of Textbooks,” in *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks: The Turkish Case*, eds. D. Tarba Ceylan and G. Irzik (Istanbul: The History Foundation of Turkey, 2004), 9-48, 34.

¹⁹⁰ A. G. Altınay, “Human Rights or Militarist Ideals? Teaching National Security in High Schools,” *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks: The Turkish Case*, eds. D. Tarba Ceylan and G. Irzik (Istanbul: The History Foundation of Turkey, 2004), 76-90, 84.

about the significance of education not only as a tool to explore the state policies *vis-à-vis* the various ethnic communities in Turkey but also as a factor that shapes diasporic experience, identity and consciousness. This part of the chapter considers education as a heuristic tool to explore the relationship between state and ethnic identity in Turkey. Also, it aims to further our understanding of educational system in Turkey by focusing on the educational experiences of a cultural ethnic group in Turkey. Education is one of the various settings in which meanings and practices of nationalism, identity and citizenship are created and recreated. I argue that exploring the way Circassians relate to educational institutions, curricula and practices sheds light on the way Circassians as a non-Turkish Muslim minority group historically relates to the Turkish state, official historiography in Turkey and state policies such as education in Turkey.

I argue that there are three types of educational experiences that Circassians narrate on. These narratives of Circassian activists highlight that their experiences pertain to three interrelated levels. The first level considers the management of ethnic identity in educational settings, i.e. what being a Circassian means in a school, classroom; what young Circassians are advised when going to schools etc. The second level deals with language education as an educational policy and coexistence of other languages in educational settings. The third level considers a particular topic in educational curricula which is significant for Circassians in Turkey, the topic of Çerkes Ethem in history classes.

4.3.2.1. Managing the Ethnic Identity

For the Circassians in Turkey, educational institutions have been one of the first – but not the least- settings within which Circassians as individuals relate with state. In this encounter with the state, Circassian identity gains additional meanings: for instance, openly declared identities are transformed into hidden identities in schools; native language itself becomes something very different; the historical figures and local histories are transformed into insignificant and false knowledge. Mostly schools are the first setting within which

young people with Circassian origins encounter with the state, and this encounter shapes the conditions of Circassian existence in public sphere.

Nevertheless, before actually going to the school and meeting with the teacher or reading the textbooks, the community, relatives and friends inform the students about these conditions, like “an introduction to being a Circassian in school: 101” course. Mostly the advice from parents and grandparents point to the necessity of hiding the ethnic identity (talking about the 1930s):

“I listened from people of the previous generations from other Circassian villages. “Don’t!” they were told, “don’t tell that you are Circassian, don’t speak Circassian, if they understand, they won’t let you get educated, they will prevent you, they will stop you.”¹⁹¹

Though Circassians declare themselves to be publicly known as Circassians in their daily lives, in the streets, villages, apartments etc. that they live, the constant advice and reminder for a Circassian student is to hide their identity in schools and classrooms. From such a perspective, schools are not the continuation of daily life and social habitus but a setting which may exclude what is legitimate in other settings. It is a public area within which identities should be kept hidden. Especially troublesome is the expression of identity; it seems that it is not the ethnic identity that is being problematized but the very expression of it in that particular setting. The advices before going to school are sometimes successfully obeyed by the young Circassians. However, the obedience does not bring ease or comfort as another quotation highlights since the demanded obedience is based on hypocrisy. And the result is narrated as regret, a feeling of discrepancy and shock:

“While I was leaving for school, my grandmother advised me not to reveal that I am a Circassian. It was a big city that I was going. I had not seen it before. But my grandmother also had not seen it before but she told me not to reveal that I am a Circassian, why.... She was never schooled, she did not know Turkish, despite that she told me not to reveal that I am a Circassian. This was a shock for me, a question mark just appeared, if I am a Circassian, why should I need to hide it? ...These old people told us these. There was a huge discrepancy about what they told us and what we were being taught in schools

¹⁹¹ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

but listening my grandmother's advice I was not able to tell that I am a Circassian, I was not able to say "this is not so" but this has always been a bitter regret for me."¹⁹²

These advices are based on the assumption that the expression of ethnic identity is a reason of discrimination in educational setting. With such an assumption, Circassian identity becomes a hidden identity that is limited to daily lives and private sphere. Hence, classroom and schools are seen as not an extension of life in its entirety and richness but a space devoid of any personal difference, such as ethnic identity, cultural practice and languages other than Turkish. Education as a state mechanism is perceived as intolerant to the expression of different ethnic identities and ethnic identity itself is understood as a potential troublemaker within these setting, as a reason to be discriminated, excluded, and prevented.

However, there are also narratives on the instances of resistance. Some Circassian activists state how they openly declare their Circassian identity in some instances, for instance when national anthem was being sung, when the subject was the life of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (by the statement that "Atatürk is not the type of man who you think he is" which is followed by the warning of the parents) or the history of the Turkish War of Independence. Despite some resistances and some punishments that followed these acts of resistance as narrated by the Circassian activists, education in Turkey is perceived and experienced by the Circassians as a domain within which expression of ethnic identities is not acceptable.

Apart from the problem of declaring or hiding the Circassian identity in the schools and classrooms, educational setting in Turkey is perceived by the Circassians as ignorant of the needs of a child with a non-Turkish ethnic identity who is the native speaker of a non-Turkish language:

"My aunt was so knowledgeable about that, I grew up hearing Sosruko and Seteney¹⁹³ from her.And I was worried that no one else knew Seteney, I was worried that my aunt would die. As I was thinking about what to do, I made a Latin script for myself and with that script I wrote all the tales that she told, I was 13 years old. One day my Turkish teacher was looking at my

¹⁹² Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁹³ Sosruko and Seteney are the mhytological figures of Nart Saga, Circassian epic tales.

notebook, and I forgot those tales there.He took it, and looked at it, he did not make any sense out of it; he was not able to read it. He was not a person related to pedagogy, he was more of a dictator, he shouted at me asking what that was, he took me out of the classroom. There the teachers were gathered, they asked me “what is that, are you a spy?”, what would I be spying in Şarkışla?¹⁹⁴ That much intolerant they were, and they informed my father about the issue.”¹⁹⁵

Though, in the end, his father who was also a respected educator complained the state authorities about the teacher and made the teacher sent to other parts of the country which is called exile by the civil servants, not all students have these instances of empowerment (which he summarizes as “after that I became famous as the boy who sent the teacher away”). The quotation above highlights that any unidentified sign, culture, cultural practice or need tend to be associated with a threat, i.e. spy and the threat has no limits: it can be in Şarkışla, Sivas; it can be associated with 13 years old student etc. Circassian activists’ narratives highlight that educational settings in Turkey in general are perceived as ignorant and intolerant to and fearful of ethnic identities and needs. Such a perception also highlights that Circassians in these settings are not portrayed as students with special needs (such as writing Circassian tales heard orally from the aunt) but as students who are expected to hide their identity which includes a whole way of life; language, memories, tales and songs. From such a perspective, discipline and punishment mechanisms work to make ethnic identities invisible and unannounced, and educational policies, practices disciplines the difference which is displayed on either individual or group level by making it invisible, insignificant and potentially harmful.

Yet, not all identities were rendered invisible in education settings. As the “Turk” had been constantly defined and glorified with supreme qualities, other non-Turkish identities had been situated through the Turkish identity. Hence, many Circassian activists narrate on themselves asking their elders about their Turkishness and trying to prove the Turkishness of Circassians:

¹⁹⁴ Şarkışla is district of Sivas, a city in central Anatolia.

¹⁹⁵ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

“When I started to go to associations in 1977, I was a typical young person with rightist orientations endowed with the official ideology and education of the Republic of Turkey. I was doing research in the libraries to find out my identity. I was working on Circassians and I was trying to find out that they were Turks. ...While looking for clues of their Turkishness, I went to other directions. I used to see the word Circassian in a book of 300 pages just in a minute. It was a bit pathological. ...With that misinformation, that ideological premise that I am a Turk, we were of course trying to discover that we were Turks. But as we tried to discover, we saw that we were not...”¹⁹⁶

As Circassians from time to time are called Caucasian Turks in textbooks, this is an ambiguous term since there is no dialectical similarity between Turkish and Circassian dialects, since Circassians do not call themselves Turks but call non-Circassian people as Turks. Furthermore, given the memories of advises to hide the ethnic identity and insistence to speak Turkish, many Circassian activists state that they became suspicious that they were not Turkish. Hence, that oscillation between being the glorious Turk and being the insignificant other whose knowledge, culture and language is presumed to be non-existent indeed creates the “pathological” attempt to search for Turkishness. Given the relative impotency of Circassian culture, identity and language *vis-à-vis* the Turkish identity, being non-Turkish becomes quite unacceptable for many students:

“The real turning point came when I was at secondary school. When our political perceptions started to develop, we were hearing the stories that we were special Turks, qualified Turks, Caucasian Turks. ...One day I asked my grandfather, we had a good communication with him, I asked “are we Turks?”, he said “no, we are not.” That had such a negative influence on me. I was trying to prove that we were Turks and he told that in such an ordinary, indifferent manner. I was perceiving not being a Turk as a very bad thing.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁹⁷ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

4.3.2.1. Learning Turkish and Unlearning Circassian

The second level that the Circassian narratives highlight pertains to language education that prioritizes Turkish as the mother language and European languages as foreign languages. Article 42 of the constitution of 1982 of the Republic of Turkey states that “No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education. Foreign languages to be taught in institutions of training and education and the rules to be followed by schools conducting training and education in a foreign language shall be determined by law.” Circassian language is not one of those foreign languages taught in schools. But apart from the legal choice of the language of education, the use of the languages of the ethnic groups in Turkey is strongly discouraged in the classrooms. Most of the Circassians in Turkey till 1980s, till the years of urbanization when Circassians were transformed into an urban community from a local one were native speakers of Circassian dialects. Most of the Circassians, especially the elder ones from the villages that I interviewed highlighted that they learned Turkish when they started primary school. Another group stated that their Turkish was poor in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Hence, Circassian experiences with education are highly intertwined with learning Turkish. I argue that Circassian narratives underline four mechanisms through which Turkish is learned: Turkish courses for the members of the ethnic community of all ages; acts of physical or oral punishment and disapproval by the teacher in the classroom; statements by the teachers that warn the parents about the use of language; and finally appraisal and approval for excellence in Turkish.

The first mechanism is the Turkish language courses. As “Citizen Speak Turkish” campaigns of 1930s warn the people of Turkey to use Turkish, Circassians’ memories about speaking Turkish is particularly about Turkish courses which are organized specifically by the state for people of all ages. As the narratives of Circassians from various villages of Turkey underline that use and learning of Turkish has been a primary state mechanism to Turkify the people, the mechanism itself worked with multiple forms of resistance in their own locality:

“My mother did not know Turkish much. When the instructor came, he tried to teach all of them Turkish. But finally he had to learn Abkhazian.”¹⁹⁸

“My mother told me that they sent a teacher to the village to teach them Turkish; that all people from all ages were gathered in a classroom and forced to speak Turkish; that in 1930s, they were punished by the teacher when they spoke Circassian; that they used to make Circassian jokes when they got angry; that the teacher used to ask what they talked about him. My mother personally experienced that, it was absolutely forbidden to speak Circassian in the village, everybody would speak Turkish, this was a state policy and there was a teacher sent. There was a particular pressure.”¹⁹⁹

The quotations above underline the fact that teaching of Turkish is not narrated as a regular language education which may benefit people in their own lives, associations, relationships with state, neighbors etc. as far as Circassians in Turkey are concerned. The attempt of the state to teach Turkish and the resistance of Circassians to use their own language underlines the fact that policies of education and language are contested fields. Furthermore, the very discourse on the Turkish courses that “puts pressure on Circassians” is an indicator that language education is still a contested issue. As far as the Circassians are concerned these courses are regarded one of the reasons of why most of Circassians in Turkey today are not native speakers of Circassian dialects or speakers at all.

Apart from the Turkish courses for adults, there are more tangible and contemporary instances of the way Circassians have learned Turkish. As far as Circassians are concerned, primary school teachers have been one of the first people that they met who punished them for speaking Circassian and Abkhazian instead of Turkish:

“Being slapped is something very humiliating for Circassians. It is something like a reason of murder. But I was first slapped by my primary school teacher because I was talking to the boy sitting next to me in Abkhazian. That was a lesson: Turkish had to be spoken. After all, the school curriculum was based on Turkish language; maybe the teacher did that to imply that “my stupid boy, if you don’t learn this language, you will be very sorry for that tomorrow.” Or

¹⁹⁸ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁹⁹ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

maybe he wanted to tell me that speaking Abkhazian was not something good. That slap made me serious about Turkish. [he laughs] But it was humiliating. After those years, I have been subject to several beatings and tortures but I have always felt that slap here. Though I have been slapped several times after that, that slap is always there. Because it was about language.’²⁰⁰

“It was just after the *coup d’état* of May 27th [in 1960], back then high school and university graduates used to make their military service as teachers. We had a teacher like that. ...one day they complained us to the teacher, and then I was beaten harshly just because I was talking Circassian. I never forgot this. If I was going to be the enemy of the Turks, I would be one with this event. Then my teacher regretted a lot, I presume. Then I learned Turkish very quickly and I became one of his favorite students. Afterwards, he apologized me for that, he said that it was for my own good, that I would not have learned Turkish otherwise, that I would never forget Circassian but Turkish was what I needed to be educated.’²⁰¹

The presumption of the teacher that he would never forget Circassian proved to be true though he did not have any formal chance to improve it and though the younger people in his family have not learned Circassian, let alone forgetting. So classrooms are the first setting within which a non-Turkish community learns the difference between an official language and “the other language” through physical and oral punishments.

In addition to punishments and some forms of humiliation inflicted on students in the classrooms, speak Turkish rule also applies to home and families. As teachers warned them, it is one of the duties of Circassian families to speak Turkish with their children. Ironically, most of the families who were asked to speak Turkish for the well-being of their children were not native speakers of Turkish themselves:

“Well, in the village our teachers used to have parent meetings while we were at primary school. They used to warn our families not to talk Abkhazian at home because they [the students] would not be able to learn Turkish if they spoke Abkhazian at home, then they would fail at school. This was an unbelievable dilemma, meanwhile we were also called the Caucasian Turks. Turkish state, in our villages, tried to destroy the languages at first by oppressive measures and then by convincing measures. The oppressive measure is the “Citizen, Speak Turkish!” campaigns but later on there had been

²⁰⁰ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

²⁰¹ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

some work to abandon the languages used in the villages and substitute them with Turkish especially with the help of teachers. But these were made in such a subtle way that it did not become a problem for the Circassian society. For instance, in my childhood my poor grandmother who did not know the %10 of Turkish language was trying to speak to us in Turkish since the teacher warned her to do so.”²⁰²

Hence, learning Turkish becomes not only a personal matter but a collective one within which all relatives, grandparents and parents should take part. The presumption of these warnings to insist on speaking Turkish is that knowledge of Circassian would prevent learning of Turkish which is the language of the education. From such a perspective, the language of everyday life becomes a barrier to overcome, a language to unlearn.

These mechanisms of punishment and warning are also supported with praises as far as Circassians are concerned:

“They would make the children spy the one that talked Circassian at home. Well, they had done such things. It was mostly based on repression and violence.In some cases, it was the reverse. When we were working for the documentary, we asked the elder people to talk Circassian. One elder insisted on speaking Turkish. Why? It is the same psychology, it still continues. When he was in primary school, of course everybody spoke Circassian and there were so less speakers of Turkish, his teacher would praise him that his Turkish was very good. It seems that it had been very influential, he is speaking Turkish.”²⁰³

Being in command of Turkish language becomes an asset, a quality to be proud of. Command of any other language or perfection in any other language becomes insignificant and useless; the non-language does not count as an ability or knowledge but as a reason of incapability as Timuçin explains his experiences of languages: “When I was young I would think why I was not being educated in my mother tongue, why I was forgetting it and why I was trying to learn another one though I was not able to do it.”²⁰⁴

Similarly some of the Circassians that I interviewed highlighted that their Turkish is “exceptionally good, unlike others.” The very educational system ignores the capability of

²⁰² Cahit, interview by author, 23 May 2007, İstanbul.

²⁰³ Hakan, interview by author, 3 July 2007, İstanbul.

²⁰⁴ Timuçin, interview by author, 25 August 2007, Çanakkale.

students in terms of language: in such a setting, a native speaker of Circassian dialects – even though s/he is in command of several dialects simultaneously- becomes an unsuccessful and incapable student.

Hence, the schools are the setting within which an ethnic group learns the difference between the language that can be spoken in public and the language that is limited to the private sphere. Furthermore, most Circassian people did avoid teaching their children Circassian languages, because the native language, since 1930s, has been considered harmful, preventive and implicitly useless.

Discursively, Circassian activists today regard these mechanisms not only as mechanisms to learn Turkish but also to unlearn Circassian. Given that Circassian dialects, the very language of everyday life for native speaker students is associated with a “non-language”, a barrier to education, a habit to be forgotten and controlled; a crime and derivation that deserves punishment, educational experiences of Circassians in Turkey are far from a multicultural approach. As the learning of Circassian is prohibited by law, as there is no textbook in Circassian, there are particular acts of teaching staff that discourage speaking Circassian, and encourage getting excellence in Turkish. From such a point of view, the use of two languages simultaneously is unacceptable. Circassian dialects become languages that are insignificant, useless at best, and causes of physical or verbal punishment and harassment in class at worst. To that extent, they become the undesired languages that have been relegated to the private sphere, and even that existence in private sphere was claimed to have some serious costs for the “well-being of children” as a barrier to learn Turkish, hence, a barrier to education and career opportunities. As the national and official language of the public sphere, that is Turkish, is being learned, language itself loses its connection with daily life, memories, interaction, childhood tales and songs and identity. Language itself –which implies an act of speaking up becomes an act of masking the difference.

4.3.2.3. Çerkes Ethem Affair

Çerkes Ethem affair turned out to be very significant in the narratives of Circassian activists in Turkey partly due to the ways historical event is represented in history books and classes. Çerkes Ethem affair is the elimination of independent guerrilla forces in favor of a regular army in the 1920s during the Turkish War of Independence which is historically considered to be the constitutive war of the Turkish Republic. However, apart from historical debates, this part of the chapter explores its implications for the Circassian narratives on education. As there are multiple evaluations of Circassians regarding the Çerkes Ethem affair ranging from the arguments of political correctness to historical validity, what is common for Circassians is that they all narrate about the feelings of “presence” in the classroom while their own identity was being associated with a so-called historical traitor.

One extreme example of how this identification of Circassian identity and Çerkes Ethem is displayed in educational settings can be Çerkes Ethem's niece Güner Kuban who states that

“I still remember the other children calling me the daughter of the traitor. ...Then, I registered at the school as the daughter of Aytek Şay, my brother. This was the first step to a life based on a lie. ...It was a history lesson. My teacher told that Çerkes Ethem brothers were communists.” ...I said “No sir. They are not.” He asked “How would you know? You are talking nonsense.” I said “Sir, I am not talking nonsense. Saruhan deputy of the time, Çerkes Reşit Bey is my father. And my mother sewed those red broadclothes on their kalpaks.” Then he shouted and asked me to leave the class. I left. And I played the most pleasant game of my life. The lie was over.”²⁰⁵

Yet it was not just the close relatives of Çerkes Ethem that tried to hide their identity. Circassians had been implicitly considered the relatives of Çerkes Ethem.

²⁰⁵ Ö. Ercan, “Güner Kuban'la Söyleşi: “Çocukluğum Yalanla Geçti”,” *Milliyet*, 29 May 1988.

Association of the name Circassian with “traitor” has led Circassians to hide their Circassian origins as much as possible. The ones whose Circassian origins were known had sometimes been called “grandsons / granddaughters of the traitor Ethem”:

“The history teacher would make me lecture, throughout the high school years I lectured.When I was lecturing on Ethem affair, I lectured differently, different than the textbook since I knew elderly people who knew the affair and talked about it and the villages exiled after the Ethem affair. I said that though the books officially claimed so, the reality was different, that Ethem had suppressed many riots in Anatolia and most of the soldiers were Circassian. He just burst from the chair.... And he just hit my head with his prayer beads [*tespih*], the beads were spread, and he said “see if you do not crush the head of the snake, the tails will be left alive and try to be heads.” Such offensive words, can you imagine?After that he never made me lecture.”²⁰⁶

Hence, there are instances of direct association of Çerkes Ethem with Circassians. History classes and official history becomes the setting within which Circassian identity is associated with treason. From such a point of view, Çerkes Ethem is not a historical figure but a figure that carries an ethnic identity among many leaders and soldiers of the Turkish war of Independence whose ethnicity are unmentioned. Despite the differences in terms of analyzing the Çerkes Ethem affair, regardless of whether or not he was a traitor as far the history of the Republic of Turkey is concerned, there is a consensus among Circassians that the way history courses, textbooks, teachers etc. depict the historical event is humiliating, embarrassing, and discriminating as far as Circassians are concerned:

“Well, I was ashamed about the Ethem affair in high school history course because all of my friends knew that I was a Circassian, and when the subject was put as Çerkes Ethem, I felt as if everybody was staring at me.... Well, I told that he was not a traitor but it should also be discussed.It is interesting that my father had the same troubles in high school history courses. So each generation has its share from Ethem affair.”²⁰⁷

“I have always been sympathetic to this language, these songs and this culture and I never denied my identity. When I graduated from primary school, I went to teachers’ school and there were other Circassians there but I was the only

²⁰⁶ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

²⁰⁷ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

one whose Circassian identity was known because I was the only one that did not hide but also confess it. And my father told me “when you go to school, you will meet something and it is going to slap in your face.” I was surprised and wondered what that was, and he told me about Çerkes Ethem affair.”²⁰⁸

Most of the Circassians that I have interviewed mentioned that the moments that Çerkes Ethem affair were being lectured were the moments of trouble not only for themselves but also sometimes for the whole classroom. Their reactions range between debating and challenging the history teacher and using physical violence in some extreme instances:

“Well, we had a history teacher, he had been my teacher for a semester, and then my father changed my class so that I would not be in conflict with him. When he came to the class, he would say [with loud voice] “Traitor Çerkes Ethem whose extensions are now here,” he would say it openly. I did not become a target of his anger but when he told that continuously, my younger brother and his friends one day took him to the basement and beat him. He could not complain about them, he just left the village.”²⁰⁹

“When they said Çerkes Ethem, everybody would turn and look at us if we were seated in the back seats. Most of those who turned are the grandsons and daughters of people who registered themselves as gypsies [*Kıpti*] not to defend their homeland.When the teacher said “traitor Çerkes Ethem”, when they turn and look at us, Circassians got furious, shout at them. There were Circassians before us who left school because of these, objected the teacher or even battered the teacher. There were people who gave up education because of that. Though we did not deserve it... What was our guilt? That our families were extinguished. We did not need to go to the Greek frontline to be the traitor, that you could become anywhere. But they stood up and went to defend the country.We are no traitors.”²¹⁰

As the Circassians are associated with treason, they attempt to find other traitors. So the question becomes who the traitor is. Such a context is in line with the findings of textbook analysis: there are always threats and foes; the problem is finding who they are. Hence, one can imagine that classroom environment is far from being collaborative and friendly, but

²⁰⁸ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

²⁰⁹ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

²¹⁰ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

rather produces and reproduces new forms of hostilities, threats and conflicts among students with different ethnic origins.

The way the ethnic name Çerkes (Circassian) associated with Çerkes Ethem and treason is one of the many forms of discrimination and othering that can be find in official history. Yet as far as Circassians are concerned, this is personal and emotional.

“I may be in the first or the second year of high school. When our teacher was lecturing on Çerkes Ethem and Green Army in the history course, I got furious. And when he finally called Çerkes Ethem the traitor, I left the classroom without the permission of the teacher, it was an emotional reaction. I told nothing, I did not ask for permission, it was not proper but it was humiliating.there was another Circassian student in the classroom, I knew him since my family knew his family. In the break, I rebuked him for not leaving the classroom, I said the teacher called Çerkes Ethem bad, he called us bad, we are not bad. ...I had a discipline punishment; I had a warning for leaving the classroom. After this, the teacher’s approach towards me was not very nice and that year I failed in history.Well, this was one of the things that disturbed me; while we already had so many things in terms difference and questioning, encountering such an insult, it was not personal but....”²¹¹

The only way that Circassian community is named in textbooks, schools and classrooms is the Çerkes Ethem affair. Apart from Ethem, there is no mentioning of Circassians, that they live in Turkey, that they are a people. Hence, with such a neglect, indifference and avoidance the ethnic community is treated as a non-community. It is only with Ethem that history textbooks, teachers and courses remember Circassians. Circassian identity, like other non-Turkish identities in Turkey, is taken into account only when it is perceived as a threat, as a foe, as a harmful element. Apart from that, as their language is a non-language, their history is insignificant, their historical roles are important to the extent that an internal enemy, a potential troublemaker is highlighted. The way Çerkes Ethem becomes a subject of history courses signals the students that Circassians are not “from us”, that they had been traitors in history and that they can still be potential trouble. What Circassians experience is exclusion from history in general and republican history in particular, and the feeling that this history is not their history. Hence, some activists today state that after these courses they rushed to look for their history, history of Circassians, any knowledge on Circassians

²¹¹ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

to “defend themselves” *vis-à-vis* the claims of treason. It is ironic that within all assimilationist discourses and policies, by way of being associated with treason and excluded from “the glorious history of us” Circassians are made to explore the non-history of the non-community:

“February 12th was the independence day of Maraş. And a commander of the army came for the history course. He spent the whole class with the traitor Çerkes Ethem, traitor Çerkes Hasan, traitor Çerkes Hüseyin. I couldn’t tell anything, I did not have knowledge; it was just the first year of secondary school. I started to cry extremely, he asked the reason, and I said “I am Circassian, too”, he left. Second time when he came, he started to glorify Circassians. This was 1957.Then I got out of the class and went to library to find books on Circassians.I borrowed *Caucasus in History*²¹² from the library and I memorized it like the Holy Book.”²¹³

Though some of the Circassians do not feel much of a sympathy for Çerkes Ethem due to some of his actions towards Circassians during the War of Independence, since 1923 Circassians are left in a position to defend his actions, decisions and character. Since the foundation of the Republic, Circassians are doomed to live with the ghost of Çerkes Ethem; they have to talk about him, they have to defend him or reject him as they are automatically associated with him: “The thing that angers me most happened to everybody; I debated and quarreled a lot with my teachers about the issue of Çerkes Ethem. Because it is wrong. If what Ethem did was treason which I don’t agree, that is not about his ethnic identity. Ask Ethem about that, don’t ask my people about that.”²¹⁴

Since the 2000s, with some initiatives of the Caucasus Federation there have been some changes in terms of Çerkes Ethem in the history books. Despite the attempts of Circassians to separate their ethnic name from Ethem, the identification still persists partially in the textbooks and more extensively in daily usage. *Vis-à-vis* the association with Ethem, Circassians today emphasize their massive participation into the War of Independence and hence, the foundation of Turkish Republic. However, as this claim is

²¹² The book mentioned is *Tarihte Kafkasya* by General İsmail Berkok, published in 1958.

²¹³ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

²¹⁴ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

empowering as far as the community is concerned, Çerkes Ethem is still called Çerkes Ethem and he is still the traitor and no historical figure (either a founding father, or a soldier, or a politician) other than Ethem is called Circassian.

This analysis of education in Turkey is based on narratives of a group of Circassians in Turkey. These narratives on their experiences with education highlight that the way they are educated does not lead to the full development of human personality and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Circassians in Turkey experience education in Turkey not as understanding, tolerance or friendship but quite the opposite: education is confrontational, it promotes hostilities not only in textbooks but also in classrooms, educational practices exclude or assimilate but never tolerate or accept difference; it is insecure vis-à-vis any form of difference.

For most Circassians just like other Turkish citizens, education has been their first extensive relationship with the state and Turkish official historiography. Hence, education has been one of the basic mechanisms Turkish state has used to relate to the Circassians in Turkey. The narratives of Circassian activists in Turkey which pertains to the period between 1930s and 1980s highlight that education in Turkey prioritizes Turkish identity and Turkish language and consider other ethnic groups -in our case a non-Turkish Muslim group- a deviation from the norm, a group that should be Turkified, a group that should be nationalized and disciplined, “the others” that should be disciplined or at best persuaded to become proper Turkish citizens. From such a perspective, experiences of Circassian diaspora in educational settings range between neglect, exclusion, assimilation or even humiliation and multiple forms of resistance. Educational system in Turkey contributes to the relegation of Circassian languages to private sphere and to that extent contributes to the indifference that Esat, aged 38, a lawyer highlights:

“Well, the most efficient violence is violence which fulfills its aims without recognizing it. This is a violence: let me put it that way, for instance my parents used to talk Abkhazian, it was very often being spoken at home. Another language was being spoken outside. I was naively presuming that there was a street language and a home language, that everybody spoke a street language and a home language till I went to school. After I started school and started going to my friends’ houses for homeworks etc., I realized that their street language and home language was the same. [He laughs] Till that moment, I did not know about being Circassian or Abkhazian, I was so young, I

was unconscious. Well, that is a violence for sure in the sense that it is being regarded as non-existent, not being counted.”²¹⁵

However, given some reforms in education and educational curricula; and the decrease in the number of native speakers of Circassian, there have been some changes in the last two decades which is beyond the scope of this work. As these changes are far from being consolidated, the main problem is the embeddedness of Turkish educational system in Turkish nationalism.

Ironically and unexpectedly, this part of this dissertation has worked as a tool for me to explore this embeddedness when it was presented in a conference on education in Sweden in September 2008. Among the questions that I received after the presentation was a question and several comments from a professor of an education department in Turkey where primary and secondary school teachers are educated. As the question started with a statement of the “political” nature of the issue rather than educational, he asked me the percentage of the Circassians in Turkey. After I gave the estimated number of Circassians in Turkey as varying between 1 million and 6 millions, he declared that it is 1%, that I should “correct and learn” the number of Circassians in Turkey and that there are 500 cultural groups in Turkey. He highlighted the impossibility of the state teaching all these languages and said in a relatively loud voice “Can you come to Sweden and say I will talk Turkish? Is it possible? The same for immigrants in Germany.” Despite my affirmation of the parallels between the Turkish and European contexts, after the conference he stated that “you are just coming here and complaining to Europe about Turkey”, that this study is neither scientific nor valid, that “these are the attempts of minority groups to enlarge their rights.” Furthermore, he explained the insignificance and invalidity of my arguments by saying “you, as a Circassian, can have your Ph.D. in one of the best universities in Turkey and come here and present papers like that and I, the son of a Turk (*Türk oğlu Türk*) cannot do that.” As we were at that moment chatting with another Turkish graduate student from Europe who was studying Turkish immigrants in Europe, the professor was ironically left in a position to defend the cultural rights of Turks in Europe and marginalize and underestimate the Circassians in Turkey by saying that as Turks have a glorious state, flag

²¹⁵ Esat, interview by author, 10 August 2007, İstanbul.

and history, Circassians have no language, no state, no history and that they are no nation and hence, their education is not an issue. Throughout the debate, it was hard not to remember Yusuf Ziya Ortac's reaction 37 years ago; and think about its contemporary duplications in the field of education and the very embeddedness of education and nationalism in Turkey.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter aims to explore the Circassian relations with the host community and host state. The common idea that Circassians is an advantaged group in Turkey is quite misleading. The part on education which takes education as a tool to explore the relationships between the state and ethnic identity in Turkey highlights that most of the Circassian activists narrate on neglect, discrimination and rejection of differences.

Furthermore, the other common idea that Circassians are pro-state or embedded in Turkish state is oversimplified. Circassian relationships with the Turkish state are far from being homogenous, and they range between neglect, inclusion, exclusion, trust, gratitude and harmony. As this relationship has less tension when compared to the relationships of some other ethnic groups in Turkey, there are some reasons of this apparent lack of tension. As Circassian relationships with the state are not exempt from fear, oppression or being ignored on several levels, Circassians in Turkey have other forms of relating with the state. Through the myth of MİT, Circassian activists do normalize state surveillance over ethnic groups in Turkey and also resist such surveillance through overnormalizing and demystifying the very practice of surveillance by the state. By the discourse of the constitutive element which has its origins in the Circassian participation into the wars of the Republic, activists claim agency in Turkish history and state. The narrative on Circassian embeddedness in the state mechanism also normalizes relationships with the Turkish state and it also empowers Circassian activists to some extent.

All of these narratives are used to explain the current status of Circassian diaspora in Turkey, its incompetence and failures. While the Circassian community and the organizations in Turkey were toughly criticized, the critique of state mechanism mostly came through the critique of educational settings. However, despite the narratives on assimilation, Turkification and homogenization by the state, Circassian activists are today in a position to demand multicultural policies and positive discrimination from the Turkish state which will be further explored in the following chapter.

Finally, I argue that Circassian activists in Turkey employ an undecidable position. Such a position constantly shifts between the migrant, the citizen, the founders of the state, lonely and rootless strangers. I argue that this undecidability in terms of defining the community and relating with the host state and host community is one of the basic formations of diaspora. Yet such an undecidability, when coupled with and supported by the rising waves of Turkish nationalism and Kurdish nationalism also contributes to the formation of a highly insecure diaspora.

CHAPTER 5

DIASPORA IN TRANSFORMATION

On March 4, 2007, in a daily national newspaper published in Turkey, an article on Circassians focused on the transformation of Circassian identity in line with the current political developments in the Caucasus and Turkey and explored Circassians' demands and enthusiasm to learn the Circassian culture and language and visit the homeland. Furthermore, the article quoted the president of the *KAF-FED* (Caucasian Associations Federation of Turkey) as stating: "Turkish citizenship is prior and indispensable for us. There is no family that did not have martyrs or veterans during the foundation of modern Turkey. Hence the protection of the secular and democratic indivisible structure of Turkey that we built together is very significant."¹

On January 5, 2009, same organization, *KAF-FED*, a federation formed among 56 Circassian associations in Turkey met the Turkish President Abdullah Gül. In the meeting, representatives of *KAF-FED* demanded first, Turkish citizens' freedom of travel to Abkhazia which, they believed, "will be prestigious and beneficial for Turkey in the region as well as it will please Circassians living in Turkey." Secondly, they demanded the inclusion of Circassian language and literature in the university curriculum. Thirdly, they stated that Circassians in Turkey thought that they deserved sufficient broadcasting in their own languages and cultures in the radio and television channels of the Republic of Turkey

¹ See "Çerkesler Kültür Ayaklanması Başlattı", *Star*, 4 March 2007, <<http://www.stargazete.com/pazar/cerkesler-kultur-ayaklanmasi-baslatti-65380.htm>> (11 February 2009).

“within which 6 million Circassians are citizens who represent the Republic of Turkey in politics, bureaucracy, art, sports; in short, in all spheres of life proudly and rightfully.”²

I argue that these two events are not only instances of the Circassian claims in terms being ‘the constituent element’ of modern Turkey but also the transformation of the Circassian diaspora, its demands and relations in Turkey since the 1990s with the impacts of the processes of globalization, end of Cold War and liberalization in Turkey. One should also note the impact of the Turkish-EU accession process here as a critical variable that has contributed to the liberalization of Turkey since the mid 1990s.

Globalization is not only the mobility of people beyond national boundaries and borders but also the problematization of boundaries and borders that creates the possibility for a condition of post-nationality which is marked by the production of “diasporic public spheres” and “nonterritorial principles of solidarity”.³ Hence although establishing an

² This meeting took place after TRT 6, state channel that broadcasts in Kurdish for 24 hours a day, started broadcasting in January 2009. Turkish media, including leading newspapers and news networks covered the meeting and consider it in line with the initiation of TRT 6. For some of the news on newspapers, see “Çerkezler de Yayın İstedi,” *Hürriyet*, 6 January 2009, <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/10706499.asp>> (6 January 2009); “Çerkesce Kanal Açılacak mı?” *Yeni Şafak*, 6 January 2009, <<http://yenisafak.com.tr/Gundem/?c=1&i=160923>> (6 January 2009). In one of the newspapers, *Hürriyet*, among the 107 reader comments, there were several reactions to the news. Among the readers who commented on the news and stated that they were Circassians, some of them consider this demand acceptable and stated that the Turkish state ignored Circassians till today since they did not have any destructive and divisive activities while some of them stated that these demands concerned only *KAF-FED*, not all Circassians and “Circassians have gratitude to Turkish history.” Other reader comments evaluated the meeting in various ways. First, it was seen as the best way to divide Turkey as a nation-state. Secondly, it was seen as a result of the populist policies of the government and a potential problem which would end up in each group demanding broadcast in its language. Thirdly, the demand of Circassians as one of the ethnic groups in Turkey was seen as rightful. Fourthly, some of the readers stated that they, too, wanted broadcasting in their languages as the other ethnic groups in Turkey. Fifthly, some readers asked “Who is the next?”: from such a perspective, TRT 6 was regarded as an opportunity for ethnic groups in Turkey and each group would demand such a right; the meeting was seen as the Circassians embracing ethnic nationalism and hence attempting to divide Turkey just like Kurds. Sixth type of comments was based on mocking the demand itself by underestimating and marginalizing the languages of broadcast such as “I am a bird and I would like a channel that broadcasts in bird language.” (Bird language is a made-up language used by children in Turkey. The exact phrase used in Turkish is “*Ben de bir kuşum, kuş dili ile yayın yapan bir kanal istiyorum.*”) Another example for this type of reactions was “We are a nuclear family. We use the *çan çunu gak guk* language that we formed among ourselves.” (No such language exists and the original comment in Turkish is “*Kendi aramızda kendi geliştirdiğimiz bir dil olan çan çunu gak guk dilini kullanıyoruz.*”) The final type of reader comments in this particular newspaper was concerned about the status of the original Turks in Turkey: “I, as a Turk with Turkish origin have become a MINORITY in my own country.” (As minority is originally written in capital letters, the original reader comment is “*Kendi ülkemde bir Türk asıllı olarak AZINLIK olmuşum.*”) For the reader comments on *Hürriyet*, see “Çerkezler de Yayın İstedi,” *Hürriyet*, <<http://haberyorumlari.hurriyet.com.tr/ListArsiv.aspx?HaberID=10706499>> (24 January 2009).

³ A. Appadurai quoted in S. Shami, “Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus,” *Development and Change* 29(1998): 617- 646.

exact causal connection between “diasporization” and globalization is hard, diasporas are disproportionately advantaged by some aspects of globalization such as global economy; new forms of international migration; the development of global cities; the creation of cosmopolitan and local cultures; and finally, deterritorialization of social identities which challenges the hegemonizing claims of the nation-states.⁴ As “alternate public spheres” diasporas refer to globally mobile categories of identification⁵ that are complex and contested on various levels. Hence, since the 1990s, diasporas are regarded and studied as processes rather than being organic and unproblematic entities.

This chapter deals with how Circassians, a Muslim non-Turkic ethnic group in Turkey redefine and transform the knowledge of its own identity, history and diasporic experience in the post-Soviet conjuncture which overlaps with the processes of globalization. It claims that though there has always been a group that has embraced diaspora nationalism within the Circassian community in Turkey, after 1990 in a particular historical context that has been available through the processes of globalization and post-Soviet conjuncture, Circassian diaspora nationalism has gained strength. Only within that context, diaspora nationalism of Circassian elites become more visible, extensive and 'recognized'. Thus, rather than being a taken-for-granted, diaspora nationalism of the Circassians in Turkey is an emergent phenomenon that should be explored in the light of globalization, nationalism, ethnicity and diasporization.

This chapter analyzes the transformation of Circassian diaspora in the 1990s on three interrelated levels. The first level concerns the homeland: it explores the relations with the homeland during the Cold War to better understand the transformation in the 1990s and then discusses post-Soviet encounters and relations with the homeland. The second level is related to the relations with the host community. It aims to analyze the transformation of Circassians' relations with the Turkish state and how Circassians situate themselves in terms of ethnicity in Turkey. To explore the second question, perspectives of Circassian diaspora nationalists on current ethnic problems in Turkey, namely the Kurdish question and claims of Armenian genocide will be explored. The third level aims to

⁴ R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Pres Limited, 1997), 157.

⁵ B. Axel, “Context of Diaspora,” *Cultural Anthropology* 19(1)(2004): 26-60, 27.

explore the transformations on the community level and understand how the Circassian community's constructions of its past and future have been transformed in line with these developments.

5.1. Initial Encounters in the Soviet-Era

As the end of Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union is generally considered the starting point for encountering the homeland as far as Circassians are concerned, such an argument that takes 1990 as a turning point needs to be used with some reservations. The idea that all encounters and communication with the homeland starts with the 1990s is missing the fact that there were some forms, instances and memories of communication with the Caucasus since nineteenth century and starting from the 1960s, with the return movement which argued for the necessity of returning to the homeland, these chaotic and unexpected encounters with the homeland and other Circassians have been relatively more frequent. Though post-Soviet era for the Circassian diaspora in Turkey means a direct access to the homeland and regular relations and visits; before the 1990s, there were always some forms of communication with varying frequency and risks involved in the act of encountering. Before discussing the post-Soviet encounters, tensions and relations with the homeland, this part of the chapter aims to explore relations with the homeland in the Soviet Era.

As there are stories on the instances of initial returns from the Ottoman Empire to the Caucasus after the deportations in late 19th century; starting from the Second Constitutional Period of 1908, Circassians in the Ottoman Empire had some political and social connections with the Caucasus through their own organizations as a result of the opportunities provided by the First World War, Bolshevik Revolution and support of the Ottoman government. Starting from the mid-1920s, as both regimes within which Circassians were settled, namely Turkish nation-state and Bolshevik Russia were

consolidated in terms of political power, these connections between diaspora and homeland faded away.

The earliest encounter between Circassians in Turkey and the Caucasus that Circassian activists personally remembered and shared in the interviews pertains to the 1940s. Köksal whose family came to Turkey in the 1920s for instance states that in his family, a very loose form of communication with those relatives in the Caucasus persisted throughout the 1940s:

“But somehow they sent us pictures and photographs before I was born. I do not exactly know the channels through which they were delivered. ...But in the Soviet era, when somebody was going abroad, they gave him/her letters, things. For instance we used to receive a letter from Italy. Well, when s/he went abroad, s/he went to Italy; delivering from Russia was hard, I presume. S/he delivered the mail from there.”⁶

Similarly Nesibe tells her father’s encounters with the Circassians from the Caucasus in Istanbul which might have taken place in the 1950s or the early 1960s. Knowing that a group of Circassians came to Istanbul, her father mobilized a group of Circassians in Istanbul to meet them. ‘Meeting them’ meant dealing with bureaucratic procedures, KGB and other institutions of the nation-states in the Cold War years:

“My father told this but I did not very well know how it happened. Later a friend of him, one of our elders told me before he died. One day my father requested from the police stations for the Circassians, Abkhazians, whoever there were to come. [*Çerkes Abaza kim varsa gelsin.*] ...[Because of his job] he had acquaintances everywhere, his network was very large. This was how his friend [who told me the story] met my father, he told him that a ship came to the harbor and there were Circassians in that ship. He told that they would do everything to take them out of the ship [*onları ne yapıp yapıp gemiden çıkaracağız*] and arrange something. ...They met a Circassian, Abkhazian commissary while dealing with the permission. Well, in those days, they could not... They were coming with a man of KGB, and they could not do anything, they could not get out of the ship, they used to go to the bazaar like that. But they could [go out only] with a commissary or police etc. Well, he and my father went to the ship and met them. They took them with their guides. They traveled, ate together. They spend three days together. When they were returning, when they were on the ship, when the ship was leaving, those in the ship started to sing a song. [silence] ...My father and the others came with a

⁶ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

group, I presume. Everybody including those who were there for the other passengers cried.”⁷

Neval also remembers such a visit to her neighbors in Sivas when she was a child in the early 1960s:

“This did not happen to our family but I remember something in Sivas, somebody from Ossetia came. ...An elder from the X family came, I do not know how they contacted him or how he came. He was the relative of a friend of my father. My father and his friends told about how he was welcomed in Sivas, they told us about the soil of the homeland that he brought. He told them “you are here; I brought you the soil of the homeland inside a fabric.” I even wrote a poem on that on 1977s, ...it was like “what dispersed in the peron was a handful of soil.” [*bir avuç topraktı işte peronda yayılan*].”⁸

Nezih explores the limitations of these visits from the Caucasus and highlights the difference between these and the later practices of returnists starting from the 1960s:

“Well, it was not only in 1950s, there were people who came in 1940s, too. But they used to come on a ship, they were being taken out of it, they had the men of *MİT* [National Intelligence Organization] with them, they had Russian police and soldiers with them. Let alone that, even in 1970s *MİT* interrogated in our house since we met them in a hotel. In that sense, it was not much of a system that provided communication, these things more or less started after 1967.”⁹

What is interesting in these early visits and encounters is that they had been initiated from the Caucasus. It was the homeland and Circassians in homeland who visited diaspora, not *vice versa* as it had been before the formation of the Turkish nation-state. Hence starting from the 1920s until the mid 1960s, Circassians in Turkey kept an absolute silence and refrained from the idea of the Caucasus. I argue that such a silence and disconnection was a diasporic maneuver which resulted from the formation of a new nation-state; the memories of the affairs of Çerkes Ethem and pro-Sultan riots in Marmara region during the War of Independence; the loss/assimilation/silencing of Circassian intellectuals and urban

⁷ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

⁸ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

⁹ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

elites as remnants of the Ottoman regime; and the ideological bipolarization that shaped Cold War. Therefore in these early and very timid connections with Circassians in the Caucasus, Circassians in Turkey were passive receivers; they were not those who helped the Caucasus as they had been in the early decades of twentieth century.

Apart from these exceptional and mythical visits and visitors from the Caucasus, the most commonly used channel that was open for Circassian diaspora in Turkey was radio broadcast from the Caucasus. These broadcasts were regularly followed by the parents of the interviewees of this study, as they claimed. Cezmi remembers that the unknown and incomplete maps of the Caucasus were filled with the pieces of information that were attained through these broadcasts:

“There were always dreams. Since my childhood, I used to open the atlas. ...I used to make my father buy a larger atlas so that I would be able to see the details. I used to read it; I remember that I shouted when I saw the word Çerkessk. I showed my father, he told me that that was our district. When I told him that there was also Nalchik, he told that it was the capital city of Khabardeys as far as he was concerned. Because in the village in those years, my father used to listen radio broadcast from the Caucasus. In the 1950s, 60s, the broadcast used to start with songs in Adyghe language sung by sopranos, we used to listen them with envy.”¹⁰

Turgay, who was a young Circassian in the 1960s and the 1970s in Ankara, narrates on the transformation from these radio days to face-to-face encounters that were less personal, more frequent and systematic when compared to the previous ones:

“For us, the Caucasus was a country that we heard its voice and which existed with the music broadcast on the radio of Maikop from medium wave on Fridays at 8 p.m, if I am not mistaken. ...For us, it was different to dance [kafe, sheshen] with that music. That used to excite us. Then in those years, there happened to be people who came here for the first from the Caucasus, we met them. It was 1970s.”¹¹

¹⁰ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

¹¹ Turgay, interview by author, 4 February 2008, Ankara.

Starting from the mid 1960s, a group of young Circassians who came to the cities from more rural parts of Anatolia for education and socialized in Circassian associations, respectively, in Istanbul and Ankara, “returnists” as they would call themselves in the coming years criticized this disconnectedness with the Caucasus with the idea of return.

Just like first generation diaspora nationalists, second generation Circassian diaspora nationalists were influenced by the ideas that surrounded the young people in Turkey such as 1968 movement and politicization. Metin, as a returnist in the 1960s and 1970s narrates on their critique of the Circassian organizations and elders as elitist and underlines the fact that they were regarded as communists in line with the Cold War terminology:

“After the Republic, there was still a search to remove this loneliness, to keep our traditions alive even in the most primitive sense so that our children would not lose it entirely. ...So they had a mentality to be happy for playing the accordion, knowing how to dance their own dances, meeting in the funerals, sharing the happiness and grief. [*akordeon çalmayı, oyunumuzu oynamayı biliyorsak, düğünlerimizi beraber yapıyorsak, cenazelerimizde buluşuyorsak, acımızı sevincimizi paylaşıyorsak şükür buna der gibi bir anlayış içerisindeydiler.*] ...There were moonlight tours for example. Grand balls were being organized. These were what we reacted because these balls, tours had very high fees that addressed the economically higher parts of the society; because that was a practice that showed that they did not care about the lower income groups and look for their needs. This might be the reason of why we were considered communists. [he laughs] We really took entertainment out of luxurious hotels and brought it to the wedding saloons, Şehzadebaşı Yenisaray Wedding Saloon.”¹²

Nezih further clarifies that there was a class dimension in their critique as returnists but he also highlights that the basic fault line between the returnists and other activists before the 1960s were on the Caucasus:

“I will explain this like that. For example in 1961, in a ball that I joined, they made us hold their coats so that their irons would not be spoiled. We could not enter the room which the elders entered. We could not eat the food that they had eaten. We could not oppose what they said, we could not tell anything. They had an absolute rule: “We have no intention. We do not intervene in state’s business. Our only goal is to organize a ball, a trip, a picnic once a

¹² Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

year.” That ball was very trendy. ...*Dosteli Yardımlaşma* Association in 1946, North Caucasian Association in 1951, Caucasian Cultural Association in 1952, in all of these there was no policy but opposition towards the Caucasus.”¹³

Starting from the mid 1960s, this new and young group of Circassian activists reconnected with the Caucasus. During the mid 1960s and 1970s, the timid welcomes that took place in the exceptional and unexpected encounters of the 1940s and 1950s were transformed into conscious searches for people from the Caucasus in the ships that came from the Soviet Union as Cezmi explains:

“In the 1960s, 1970s when tourists from Russia started to come and when there happened to be Circassians among them; we used to find out the hotels they used to stay when they got off the ship. Sometimes, there happened to be no Circassian. We used to go and ask from the records. Their dates of births, etc. were written there. Sometimes there happened to be Russians born in Nalchik or Çerkessk. Well was s/he a Circassian? But we used to look at their surnames. We found so many people like that and they became so happy that those who were there got revived as they received news about us. It was not a one-way thing indeed, it was mutual interaction. As our news reached them, they started saying “Thank god, they did not disappear. So they are still alive.”¹⁴

The searches for the Circassians in the tourist ships from Soviet Union were also followed by the attempts of the diaspora nationalists to learn the Cyrillic alphabet and gain the ability of reading and writing in Caucasian languages. Returnists considered Cyrillic alphabet necessary to connect with the homeland and in the coming years, their knowledge of Cyrillic and Caucasian languages would be tested in the books and letters sent from the Caucasus. Already a native speaker like most of the returnists, Cezmi explains his attempts to learn Cyrillic alphabet:

“In 1968. ...When I learned that Circassian was being written in Cyrillic, I thought about how to learn it. The departments of History and Geography had night classes back then. I went to the night classes of the department of

¹³ Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

Russian Language and Literature. ...Meanwhile, an author from the Caucasus brought me a Cyrillic typewriter when s/he heard about my works.”¹⁵

Returnists, at the beginning, learned the Cyrillic alphabet which they seemed necessary to contact with the Caucasus from the most unexpected settings as Metin tells the story of how he learned the Cyrillic alphabet:

“Probably, towards the end of 1967, I learned how to read and write. How did I learn? They used to give Russian lectures to the students in the military college, there were Circassians being educated there. They were a little older than us or we were almost at the same age. They used to know the letters more or less. Through that, we started to recognize the letters. Then x [*abi*] [name of an older Circassian] went to the Caucasus, he brought some books, we advanced with those.”¹⁶

Unlike their elders who refrained from Russia as a result of the Cold War anti-communism, returnists were not terrified with the idea of returning to a communist Caucasus. Though communism was not particularly their reason of return, they were well aware of the fact that they would be in a position to deal and bargain with Soviet Russia to “return” to the Caucasus.¹⁷ Timuçin further exemplifies how returnists utilized the nation states’ mechanisms in the beginning and the kind of relationship they envisaged with the Russian state:

“Timuçin: There was much anarchy back then. We used to go to our association and work there, we were learning the language; for example, the learning of how to read and write was fulfilled in that phase. We made Cyrillic alphabets to be brought from the Caucasus. For example I learned reading and writing in Circassian, in Cyrillic, in Kabardian dialect.

Setenay: How were the alphabets being brought?

Timuçin: We demanded them with letters. We frequently requested them. We even requested from the consulate, Russian consulate. There was not much of a

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁷ After the Cold War and the end of Soviet Union, this tendency of returnists to sideline with Russia has been a major source of criticism from the other Circassian groups as it will be discussed in the other parts of this chapter.

problem about the books. If you were caught with that, they might ask what it was but what might have happened for an alphabet? There was a Latin alphabet written in Turkey but it did not fit.”¹⁸

The letters and requests that Timuçin mentioned were sometimes addressed to state organizations in the Caucasus such as *Rodina*.¹⁹ However, some requests and letters were also addressed to the penpals of the activists in the Caucasus. Yasemin explains the beginning of such a penpal relationship as a result of encounters between Circassians of the diaspora and homeland:

“It was the year 1970 or 1971, slowly people started to come here. For the first time, a group came; they were the authors who were being educated in Moscow. There was an Abkhazian among them, he took our addresses. We had, of course, learned reading and writing in the Cyrillic alphabet. When he took our addresses, for the first time I received a letter from an Abkhazian young man. ...What they asked most were their relatives. This was the first. Finding the people of their own lineage, finding their relatives was their problem. The second was genealogy. They found it very important. Thanks to them, my consciousness of research developed; [they helped me] in terms of what I should be doing, what I should collect such as the sagas. Then of course they started sending books.”²⁰

¹⁸ Timuçin, interview by author, 25 August 2007, Çanakkale.

¹⁹ As the word *Rodina* in Russian means homeland, Rodina is a Soviet institution that had a significant role in the emergence of the returnists and their contacts with Caucasus in 1960s and 1970s. The State Committee for Cultural Ties with Compatriots Abroad [Rodina] was set up in the Soviet Union in 1957 and its branch in Kabardino-Balkaria was opened in December 1966. Today it is the Rodina Charity “working for closer cooperation with the compatriots and their associations on the basis of historical, language, cultural, religious, and other types of community.” (A. Ganich, “Circassian Diaspora in Jordan (Self-identification, Ideas about Historical Homeland and Impact on North Caucasian Developments),” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 19 (1)(2003) <http://www.ca-c.org/online/2003/journal_eng/cac-01/03.ganeng.shtml> (9 May 2009). The relationship between Rodina and returnists would be part of a very hot debate that pertained to the past and future of the relationships with the homeland in 2000s as returnists would be criticized on the grounds that they had been utilized by Rodina which was a propoganda mechanism that worked in favor of Soviet interests. (For such a critique of the returnists in 2000s, see “Dünya Çerkes Birliği Dosyası; Moskova’nın Kuzey Kafkasya’daki Yeni Eli: Dünya Çerkes Birliği (D.Ç.B),” <http://www.nartajans.net/nuke/modules.php?name=News&file=comments&sid=2295&tid=1533&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0> (16 May 2009).

²⁰ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

Metin explores the limitations and risks involved in communication with the Caucasus. As the limitations were huge given the pace of international mail, the risks involved were high given the restrictions of nation-states' policies:

“Metin: I personally had many penpals, I had tens of penpals. We wrote letters to each other. ...Of course our letters were being opened and read. But we had nothing like... Even if we had, we would not have written it since we knew that they were being read. But we were exchanging letters regularly. It was almost in 20-22 days that a letter came. It took that much of a time for the other side to receive the answer. Well, we received and sent a letter in 45 days. [he laughs]

S: Do you still keep the letters?

Metin: I cannot find them immediately but probably there are some that I have kept. Since my house was interrogated and cleaned out twice, presumably there are not many left now. But still, some may have been left in one or two places.”²¹

The surveillance over the letters to and from the penpals in the Caucasus was mentioned by most of the interviewees of this study: for instance Mert, who started these personal correspondences in 1977 as an activist who was younger than the initial returnists states that all of his letters came as opened and some of his friends received their letters in the police station. Yasemin explores the practice of surveillance and the role of *MİT* (National Intelligence Organization) and those Circassians who were part of *MİT* in these correspondences. She employs the myth of *MİT* which has been discussed in the previous chapter:

“Let's be frank; back then, our associations were extremely scared. In Turkey of those days, the Caucasus meant Russia, Russia meant communism, communism was the pain in the neck, and according to them we were all communists. There was no doubt about it, we were all communists. And later on I learned that all letters that were sent and received were very well controlled. And this was done by our own people. [She lowers her voice] They were being controlled by our people in National Security. But the sincerity in our letters... [she laughs] Later on those who controlled them told me that they used to read our letters with tears in their eyes.”²²

²¹ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

²² Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

During the late 1960s and 1970s, Caucasian penpals; books and alphabets from the Caucasus; and encounters with Circassians in the tourist ships from Soviet Russia were followed by visits to the Caucasus. Four of the interviewees of this study were the early visitors to Caucasus of the Soviet Era in the 1970s. Nezh, who personally went to the Caucasus in 1972 with his wife, tells the story of their trip. After long bureaucratic processes, he went to Caucasus almost without any information on geography and politics of the Caucasus:

“It was the Breshnev era, it was the strictest period of communism. They gave us [visa for] Dombay.²³ They did not make a problem for Abkhazia because there was Intourist²⁴ in Abkhazia. For the North Caucasus, they gave visa to Dombay. To be frank, I did not know where Dombay was. We had no information on the Caucasus. It had neither a map nor geography. It was written as the Caucasus in the maps that we had here and there was nothing else. They said that Dombay was far away from Nalchik, they said that Pyatigorsk²⁵ was closer, I gave a petition for Pyatigorsk, they let me go. ... We went to Yugoslavia, there was no flight from Turkey to Moscow.”²⁶

After spending a couple of days in Moscow and later in Abkhazia, Nezh, who wanted to go to Nalchik, after several bureaucratic encounters, petitions and bribes etc. came closer to Nalchik:

²³ Dombay is a resort settlement in Karachay-Cherkessia in Russia. Tourists are the main visitors of Dombay. Winter is skiing season and summer is for mountain hiking.

²⁴ Intourist was the Soviet travel agency that was founded in 1929 by Joseph Stalin to control domestic and foreign tourists as they were shepherded sternly around the Soviet Union. It became one of the largest tourism organisations in the world, its network spanning banks, hotels, and currency exchange bureaux. Intourist was privatised in 1992. (L. Chong, “Intourist, Shorn of Its Stalinist Past, Plans LSE Listing,” *Times*, 6 October 2006, http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/banking_and_finance/article663342.ece (3 May 2009))

²⁵ Pyatigorsk, also known as Beshtau, is a city in Stavropol Krai on the Podkumok River in the Southern Federal District of Russia, about twenty kilometers from Mineralnye Vody. Pyatigorsk is considered a convenient starting point for numerous tourist routes. The Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov was shot in a duel at Pyatigorsk in 1841. There is a museum in the city devoted to his memory.

²⁶ Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

“Nezih: We got on the plane, we got off at a place called Mineralnye Vody.²⁷ I never heard about Mineralnye Vody, I never knew something like that. Where was that? We got off the plane. A girl like you greeted us, I asked her “xetxe vırapğu?,” I asked which family’s daughter she was. [*Kimlerin kızısın dedim.*] because I thought that she was a Kabardian. She did not reply. I asked her whether she knew English, she said she knew English and she was Russian. I asked her whether there were Circassians there, she said no. X [Nezih’s wife] started crying. She said that I brought her to annihilate her. [*Beni dedi, beni yok etmeye getirdin buraya*]

Seteney: You did not have any maps?

Nezih: None. We knew nothing. We did not know Mineralnye Vody either. It was the only airport there and it was 130 kilometres away from Nalchik. How could we know? There was nothing here [in Turkey].”²⁸

After spending the night in the Mineralnye Vody and panicking that their entire trip would be a shame for him since he could not go to Nalchik as opposed to his wife who went to her country; Nezih made a walk in Mineralnye Vody. It was here that he finally found a trace of the homeland that he was literally searching:

“I was walking. I saw a group, an old woman, a young girl, one was the bride I presume, and an old man with a squint eye. I thought that these irregular walks were definitely Circassian. I followed them, I waited for them to say something, they were looking at the shops. When she said “Tha sihomey nene”, “I do not want,” I just went to the old woman and said “Yade,” in Circassian, “our mother, I am Circassian too and I came from Turkey.” She did not make a sound Seteney. [*Hiç tınmadı Seteney*] I understood that there was no other option, I shook her and said “Don’t you understand, I am Circassian, too. I came from Turkey. I am looking for Circassians.” She just turned and looked at me. She said “Yawwey muga”, “you, poor” [*vay zavallı*]; she said “are you one of those Circassians who went to the place called Turk and got vanished?” The old woman started to cry. She was mumbling something like a *ğibze*, like a requiem. When she started crying, the other one started crying too. It just turned into a phase of lamenting. I said there was no need to cry. ...Later on I found her relatives in Kaynar.”²⁹

²⁷ Mineralnye Vody is a town located in Stavropol Krai, Russia. Mineralnye Vody serves as a gateway to Caucasian Mineral Waters. It has an airport connecting Mineralnye Vody with some other major Russian cities as well as some international destinations. It is not in Kabardino Balkaria that Nezih and her wife aimed to go.

²⁸ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

²⁹ Ibid.

Despite several bureaucratic correspondences and attempts, Nezhik was not permitted to enter Kabardino-Balkaria and Nalchik, its capital city. However, through this initial encounter, Nezhik was visited by his relatives:

“We waited just like that. The maid of the hotel came to my room and she told me something, I did not understand. She [Nezhik’s wife] said “you will now see”, we were just like enemies there. Something would happen when I went downstairs. There was no news of my family. “Will they do anything to me?” That was the problem. Two men were standing near the stairs, and I was going down the stairs. Two ugly guys who were like me... When I looked at them, I said “these are from us.” Just at the beginning of the stairs, one shouted at me “*Turkum kiga X'er vera?*” [*Are you X –family name- who came from Turkey?*], I said “*seras.*” [*It is me.*”] They hugged me on the stairs, I went down the stairs on them. I went down and my loneliness was over.”³⁰

Spending the day with them and the next day in a dinner in a restaurant named after Russian romantic writer and poet Lermontov, “a friend of the Caucasus,” Nezhik felt that he was being tested by his relatives in the homeland as a Circassian from the diaspora:

“Next day or the day after, they came with such a ceremony. They came with 12 cars, each including 4-5 people. They came with men and women, it was such an order, it was just the traditional Circassian way. ..I told her [his wife] to see that, now I was made the hero, I asked her whether these happened in Abkhazia. ...They hired the restaurant; a very long table was set. ...Here, listen to me very carefully. There was a 107 years old man. ...he rose his glass, and said “...this bride and son of ours, since they were exiled from the Caucasus, are the first people who have come to their own homeland and who know their mother tongue. So if you let me, I will make him sit before me.” Everybody applauded him. I told myself “here comes Khabardey fickleness.” They were trying to test me. There were people from my family there who were 97 years old. How would I go and sit before them? ...I requested to talk and said that “according to traditions [*xabze* rules] that our ancestors and fathers taught us, ...those people who were made to leave their homeland unwillingly were not considered guests when they came back to their homeland. If you treat me as a guest now, I will be sad.” Even in terms of sitting, I gave my first exam.”³¹

Hence, the search for the homeland, the relatives and the lineages was not complete after meeting them but it was just the beginning for both sides. Embedded in excitement, hopes,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

feelings of affinity and fulfillment of dreams were always the attempts of diaspora nationalists to prove themselves that they knew the language, the tradition [*xabze*], social life etc. as much as those in the homeland. In addition to those tests between the homeland and diaspora, Nezih summarizes the reactions of his family and those Circassians he met in the Caucasus:

“They were surprised how I came. ...Another reaction was that we were all from the same roots; yet we were scattered, divided. Another reaction was that we were from the same roots and “God helps us to come together.” A common reaction was that whoever was guilty, God shall damn him; there were curses like that. ...Another reaction was that they would be Circassians till death and would not do the same mistake again. Maybe the most interesting part was that most of them regarded coming here [to Turkey] as a fault. ...The general question that was always asked concerned their own families.”³²

As Nezih was not officially permitted to go to Nalchik, he could have a 20 minutes tour in Nalchik in a car. Different from Nezih’s trip, in 1978 Cezmi went to the Caucasus with three of his friends, two of whom are currently living in the Caucasus. As a committee invited by *Rodina*, Cezmi tells his trip to the Caucasus:

“We were in Nalchik, a group from the television of Nalchik came, they interviewed us. They used that interview with a title such as “those who, for the first time, came to these lands where the bones of our grandfathers are buried as a committee and those who turned their faces toward here instead of Kaaba.” ...I saw a magnificent picture of *Oşhamafe, Elbruz* on the wall. It continuously caught my eye. He said “this mountain is sacred. ...And it will call you just like it called my grandfather to come to his homeland.” While leaving Nalchik to go to Cherkessia, he took the painting from the wall and packed it. I still have it on the wall of my house.”³³

As these early visits to the Caucasus in the Soviet Era were exceptional and risky, their effects had been greater than personal adventures. Each of these visits to the Caucasus inspired the returnists’ arguments; each of the visits brought new relatives, penpals, books, maps and information to those diaspora activists in the diaspora. As Timuçin states, “They even found our relatives, they specifically recorded their voices and made them tell about

³² Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

³³ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

their conditions, life styles.”³⁴ All of these initial visits and encounters contributed to the formation and intensification of the feelings of affinity and rootedness on the side of Circassian activists.

I argue that in terms of the communication of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey with the homeland in the Soviet era, returnists were a different phase. Willing to reconnect with the Caucasus despite the existence of a communist regime; -sometimes literally- searching for the homeland, relatives and maps; they were the initiators of the first – relatively- systematic contacts with those Circassians in the Caucasus. Yet, it was in the 1990s that these encounters would be more frequent and normalized.

5.2. Encountering the Post-Soviet Homeland

The meanings and effects of the Post-Soviet conjuncture; that is, the collapse of Soviet Union, end of the Cold War, and the formation of new nation-states, which implies simultaneously the formation of several newly formed diaspora communities, have been multiple for the Circassian community in Turkey.

The Circassian community in Turkey has always referred to a homeland that is considered sacred. Even when discourse on the homeland has not been accompanied by a discourse on exile before the 1990s, the homeland has been regarded as the site where Circassians were once 'rooted'.³⁵ Yet for most of the Cold War era, there were almost no actual relationships with the homeland: what remained as the homeland for most of the Circassians in Turkey were in songs, folk tales, and narratives of the elders on immigration and resettlement.

³⁴ Timuçin, interview by author, 25 August 2007, Çanakkale.

³⁵ For the naturalization of links between people and place through botanical metaphors see L. Malkki, “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees” in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 52-74.

Starting from the 1990s, the Caucasus has been accessible for the Circassians in Turkey. During the early 1990s, Circassians in Turkey and especially activists visited Circassia in several forms: collectively and individually, by air, car, sea etc. Most of the interviewees of this study declared that they went to the Caucasus after 1990. Their narratives on the first moments of these initial post-Soviet encounters help us not only to understand these first –relatively- massive encounters between diaspora and homeland but also to explore their imaginations of the Caucasus and homeland. Yasemin and Nesibe, two Circassian women are more generous than male interviewees in terms of sharing their feelings in these moments. The famous mountains of the Caucasus for which diaspora nationalists had been writing poems, stories, and songs for more than a century had been transformed into panoramas, tours, and flights. The language which they tried to learn, practice, read and write despite some risks involved was just on the radio. During the interview, interviewees' excitement, silence and sometimes tears had been the reflections of the very emotional side of these instances:

“We landed beyond the mountains. I had never seen such a beautiful panorama. Of course, he [her husband] started to cry. We all cried; we were touched. When we landed, for the first time... We landed and we got on the car. When I heard Abkhazian on the radio, I just let my tears go.”³⁶

“The first thing I read was *Ismail-Bey* by Lermontov. I read it when I was in the primary school. Since that day, when you say the Caucasus, Lermontov's description comes to my eyes. The description that Lermontov used when he described the moments when a cavalry was climbing the hills. ...In 1992, I went to the Caucasus. ...We were 33 people. We went with a bus. We entered through the Sarpı border. We made a tour with a helicopter on the mountains. When we came to the mountains, on the mountains, [it was as if] a soldier came out of each tree. [silence] and I started to cry. [Her voice weakens, she cries] They [Circassians in the Caucasus] asked me why I was crying and whether I was crying since we came to Adygea. [She laughs] It had nothing to do with that, I did not care about Adygea but of course they did not think like us, they did not know.”³⁷

³⁶ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

³⁷ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

Furthermore, their excitement was well received by the Circassians in the Caucasus. Especially the early visitors were being celebrated and honored in public events. Hasan, İzzet, and Meral narrate on their experience of the initial welcomes in the Caucasus:

“When we went to the concerts, they announced us; everybody stood up and applauded us. A quiet emotional thing was taking place. ...Maybe now it does not happen that much, because there have been many visits.”³⁸

“We went to establish World Circassian Federation as delegates. Back then they put us on Abkhazian TV. Of course those were unexplainable. ...The president met us; I made my speech for the first time in my mother tongue in the parliament. ...It is the parliament of your own people.”³⁹

“We went to Abkhazia through Georgia. There was a little bit tension but we were not much aware and conscious of it since there was less communication. ...Well, it was like a feast for us. They made theatrical performances for us. For example, we went to a football game; they said “our people from Turkey came, our siblings from Turkey came” and all people in the stadium stood up and applauded us.”⁴⁰

As the initial visitors of the Post-Soviet era more or less witnessed the same forms of celebration, the implications and meanings of their own presence in the Caucasus were different for each Circassian visitor from Turkey. Each searched for what they thought were missing and lacking as a diaspora in Turkey. Their initial experiences of the Caucasus were reflections on their diasporic experiences in Turkey as Özer, Neval and Meral explore:

“The idea of having a country of my own. That always distressed me. From time to time, I might have had feelings which can be called shame. Sighing. [*İç çekme*] This is why I feel very relieved when I go there. Especially when I went to Nalchik, I remember that I took a good breath in that sense. ...In the emotional level, the classical sensational adventure took place of course when I was above the mountains. ...But those mountains should be thought as the homeland that could never exist. [*O bir türlü olmayan vatan*] Into that you can also put even this: I remember that even the very daily things such as we did

³⁸ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

³⁹ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

⁴⁰ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

not have a national football team were hard for me. ...I had not supported the Turkish national team by heart and soul for a long time. Though I want it very much, I still cannot do that; I am not able to, I will not lie.”⁴¹

“I was very touched. For the first time I watched a theater in my own mother tongue, in Kabardino-Balkaria, in Nalchik. ...It was called *Ğıbze*. It was a magnificent thing; that atmosphere, watching that play in that language... I never had that satisfaction during time I lived in Turkey though I started my life speaking Turkish here. Despite that, I did not get that satisfaction.”⁴²

“Apart from the scenic beauty, things that seem to be insignificant might affect you: such as a person on the street who speaks Circassian, a very small child speaking Circassian, going to a restaurant and ordering *psihalive*. Or, how shall I put it, having a *düğün* in Lenin Square with 1000 people gathered. There are those Italian feasts in Fellini movies; there [in the Caucasus] one experiences that feeling very intensively.”⁴³

Small things that they were looking for such as people speaking Circassian on the street, public *düğün*s in the city squares, a national team, a theater performance in Circassian language were all self-reflections on what Circassian diaspora in Turkey was missing in the host state. As the initial search was towards the homeland, what they found in the homeland was their own reflections as Circassian diaspora in Turkey.

Yet these initial encounters also included some disappointments, still ongoing bureaucratic problems and negative observations on the homeland. Nesibe, Köksal and Mert narrate on these problems and observations that they witnessed in their first visits to the Caucasus:

“It was very beautiful. Of course, many people said that many things were not found there; the soups were bad, toilet papers were bad etc, that it was awful etc. Everyday somebody complained. It just came to my mind, I had never thought about it before, I said “why are you complaining so much?” ...When did you forget those days when something that needed to be packed was packed in newspapers? ...Why should I back out of this place just because the soup is melting? Well, you will ask me whether or not I think about

⁴¹ Özer, interview by author, January 2008, İstanbul.

⁴² Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

⁴³ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

returning. I always think about it but I am scared about how to live there, I do not know the language. Neither Russian nor Adyge language.”⁴⁴

“From those 80 people, 40 were those whom I knew closely. We landed. It is interesting of course, for the first time a plane from a foreign country landed there. Well, we landed. They put us into a small room like this one as 80 people. We were dying because of stuffiness. There was nobody taking care of us. We waited there for 5 hours.”⁴⁵

“I wrote my memories with the title *Caucasus Slavery of 21 Days [21 Günüik Kafkasya Esareti]*. I did not publish it. I made my close friends read it; they said that people would roast me if I published it. And I wrote everything, but everything I saw and lived. They made me a prisoner for 21 days for example. There is a saying in the Caucasus that guest is the prisoner of the host. We really became prisoners. I would have liked to walk on this beautiful street with my wife alone, I would have liked to walk in this park with my wife hand-in-hand. They did not let me. There was that much of an interest. But after years, I realized that among all that interest, there were people who had been there with me for observation and surveillance.”⁴⁶

Instead of commonality and a naturalized ethnicity, these post-Soviet encounters with the so-called homeland have generated an experience of difference, disjuncture and a sense of rupture.⁴⁷ The other Circassians that were encountered in the homeland were regarded as different in terms of appearance and life styles as Şener’s and Meral’s statements imply:

“While I was going, what did I know? I knew nothing. I just wondered very much how people looked like, how they were dressed, what they ate, how they strolled, were they using horses, were they wearing Circassian costumes. ...There was wonder but alcohol etc. did not bother me much, their extensive consumption of alcohol etc. I cannot drink that much, I still cannot but it did not bother me. Their lack in terms of religion did not bother me at all.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

⁴⁵ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁴⁶ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

⁴⁷ S. Shami, “Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus,” *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 617-646, 630.

⁴⁸ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

“Sometimes I wonder whether I exaggerate the situation but it is like two separated siblings who come together and they start to talk the same language. This is impressive. ...For instance, recently a guest from Adygea came. S/he was very modern. If s/he did not talk, you will think that s/he is from Turkey. His/her appearance and his/her everything advanced.”⁴⁹

Furthermore, the perceived difference between two groups of Circassians, namely diaspora in Turkey and homeland was also experienced by the Circassians in the homeland. In several instances of return after 1990s, the Circassians who left Turkey (or other countries) and returned to their “homelands” had been dubbed “Turks,” “Syrians,” etc. for a long time as Nesibe and Esat highlight:

“Recently, one of our girls who is an instructor there came. We talk when we have time. ...She said “I have been there for many years; I am working as an instructor in university and they still tell me that I am not a native of this place [*buralı*], they still consider me a foreigner.” I told her “For sure, they do regard you as such. ...They had been conditioned for that for the last 80 or 90 years. Furthermore, they too had pain there. There is something which they have been taught that we left them, we left them behind. ...So do not expect them to consider you in good terms. If I were the one who stayed there, I might have thought the same way. ...From now on, we have to think like this. We will think like both us and them.”” [*Hem kendimiz gibi düşüneceğiz, hem de bir de onlar gibi düşüneceğiz.*]⁵⁰

“There are those comments from the visitors or those people who thought they found the opportunity to do this. Comments such as we are more attached to our values while they are quote en quote more degenerate. ...On a healthy level of relationships, differences do not become a problem, they might add new colors. On an unhealthy level, you might be the Turk when you go there. There are also stories like that.”⁵¹

Hence, for the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, these encounters with the people, politics and problems of the homeland had been multidimensional. These interviews demonstrate that the Circassian community in Turkey today has its multiple ties to the Caucasus. In the formation of these connections, the 1990s proved to be significant. Experiencing commonality and difference; enthusiasm and disappointment simultaneously; Circassians,

⁴⁹ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

⁵⁰ Nesibe, interview by author, 18 May 2007, İstanbul.

⁵¹ Esat, interview by author, 10 August 2007, İstanbul.

since the 1990s, have been faced with a real diasporic homeland with which real and systematic relations should be established.

5.3. Relating to the Homeland

For the Circassians in Turkey, as the 1990s have brought their 'roots', their relatives and imagined homeland into reality,⁵² the concerns, politics and geography of the “homeland” had also become accessible for the Circassian diaspora. When compared to the 1970s and the very early 1990s when travels to the Caucasus were done without any kind of map of the Caucasus, today Circassian diaspora nationalists not only own the maps of the homeland but also observe the transformation of these maps in line with Russian politics as İzzet is concerned about the removal of the Caucasian mountains from the maps. He is concerned that the mountains of the homeland which have been turned into real in the 1990s for the Circassian diaspora nationalists after years of dreaming about it “do not exist in Russian maps any more. ...The Caucasus which has existed for centuries, which has existed in the time of communism is now getting out of the maps. Those maps in Turkey too keep up with this. Here is this map, it was advertised as the touchpad atlas. The Caucasus does not exist in those maps. This is a very important danger for the future.”⁵³

Meanwhile economy of the Caucasus also became accessible for the Circassian diaspora as the socialist Soviet Block was being transformed into capitalist economy. Here some entrepreneurs within Circassian community related to the homeland in terms of economics as Şener witnessed during his first trip to the Caucasus with his father and some economically and politically affluent Circassians from Turkey:

⁵²Throughout the encounters with those relatives in the homeland in the early 1990s which took place either in Turkey or Caucasia, apart from the information regarding the families to fill out and complete “the family trees”, I, as a child remember that gum, socks, vodkas, chocolates filled with liqueur, and Noël adornments were exchanged as gifts between newly found relatives.

⁵³ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

“For the first time I went [to the Caucasus] in 1992, we went with a crowded group. It was my father’s first time, too. [He lists some Circassians who are retired soldiers and members of the Parliament as among their group] It was a severe group. [*ağır bir gruptu*] ...Upper-level contacts took place, presidents were visited. The mission that the group attributed to itself was to support the transformation in the Caucasus, to support their transformation to market economy, to give know-how support; I mean, “we can give you this support from Turkey if you would like; we may send you the necessary cadres.””⁵⁴

Yet the problems of the diasporic homeland proved to be more than the transformation to free market economy. During the 1990s, the Caucasus proved to be the most unstable region of the former Soviet Union, witnessing five wars: Nagorno-Karabagh (Armenia – Azerbaijan, in 1989-1995), South Ossetian - Georgian (in 1991-1992), Abkhazian - Georgian (in 1992-1993), North Ossetian - Ingush (in 1992), and Chechen - Russian (in 1994 - 1996). Each of these wars had led to the mobilization of Circassians in Turkey either in the form of donations or as volunteer soldiers serving in the Caucasus.⁵⁵ The affects of these wars in the Caucasus on the Circassian diaspora in Turkey had been multiple. For Hasan, these wars produced an image of the Caucasus that had been associated with war and militarism by the Circassian diaspora in Turkey:

“Soviet Union dissolved. But more importantly, I think that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was not a problem *per se*. There could have been organizations after that. But the emergence of wars in Abkhazia and Chechnia changed the flow of the events. I think that it also affected the return movement negatively. It led to the emergence of the perception that there was a war there.”⁵⁶

Gürsoy, a Chechen underlines the fact that wars in the Caucasus meant the revival of ethnic identity on several grounds; it implied increasing communication and cooperation among the Circassian community in particular and Caucasian community in general:

⁵⁴ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

⁵⁵ For instance, at the outbreak of the war in Abkhazia several Circassians (not only Abkhazians) were immediately gathered at the Abkhazian Association in İstanbul. The association was turned into a headquarters from where communication and political connections with Abkhazia were managed.

⁵⁶ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

“After 1990, I am telling this from my point of view, the two wars that were witnessed made the diaspora in Turkey totally in touch in itself. If these wars did not take place, other things would have happened. But I do not think that it would be on this level. Well, we, for instance, learned about Chechens in Muş, in Sivas, in Uzunyayla, Kars, when you go beyond Turkey, those in Australia, Japan, America, everywhere. We got into communication with each other. ...That wind produced communication also within the Adyghes.”⁵⁷

For Özer, who is in his mid 30s, the 1990s and the wars in the Caucasus meant normalization of his relations with the Caucasus:

“Normalization with the idea that there is a country there, I can live there, I can start a life; that it is not beyond the mountains. [The facts] That there had always been people who went to war, that I had friends who went there made the Caucasus put on its feet for me. [*çok ayakları yere basar hale getirdi benim için*] ...In very early times, I rationalized that this place was livable; I constructed the idea that a life could be built there.”⁵⁸

The post-Soviet conjuncture and processes of globalization proved to be a fertile ground for diaspora politics at the international and local levels as far as organization and communication are concerned. The end of Soviet Union which meant the expansion and liberalization of networks between the homeland and diaspora communities in terms of scope and extent was simultaneously coupled with the rise of ethnic identities in Turkey in line with Turkish nationalism and other nationalisms.

Within this context, Circassian identity, which has been limited to the activists and associations up until that time, became more pronounced, visible and public. Hence the post-Soviet conjuncture implied a revival of Circassian identity and politics, which also reflected itself in the production and reproduction of culture by the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. For instance, major nationwide newspapers and magazines had focused on Circassians: many celebrities had publicly announced their Circassian origins. For the first time, in 1995, a Circassian music cassette, *Çerkes Ezgileri* (Circassian Melodies) was

⁵⁷ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

⁵⁸ Özer, interview by author, January 2008, İstanbul.

produced for consumption on the national market;⁵⁹ it was soon followed by *Çerkes Halk Şarkıları: Wered 1* (Circassian Folk Songs).⁶⁰

Furthermore, starting from the 1990s, Circassian diaspora in Turkey has started using new channels of communication. Since the 1950s, Circassians in Turkey has published several magazines such as *Yamçı*, *Kafkasya*, *Marje*, *Nart*, *Kafkasya Yazıları*, and *Kamçı* which have been the unique sites of communication -except associations and personal networks.⁶¹ Although Circassian community in Turkey today still have magazines, I argue that there are other -quite contemporary- channels through which members of the diaspora communicate and meet each other, act and decide as the diaspora, and participate into diaspora politics. Recent Internet practices have invited social scientists to deal with the new modes of subjectification in general and the formation of diasporic subjects through Internet in particular.⁶² As computer-mediated communication has the capacity to build online communities from a sense of belonging based on a group identity and a claimed homeland (as mythological as all of these can be),⁶³ the characteristics of these practices remain controversial. Contemporary research on Internet claims that in cyberspace there is the potential for more voices to be heard simultaneously.⁶⁴ Yet real life hierarchies and inequalities continue to be perpetuated on

⁵⁹ See A. Toğuzata, *Çerkes Ezgileri [Circassian Melodies]* (Istanbul: Ada Müzik, 1995).

⁶⁰ K. Doğan, *Çerkes Halk Şarkıları: Wered 1 [Circassian Folk Songs: Wered 1]* (Istanbul: Majör Müzik, 2000). *Circassian Folk Songs* was also advertised on television, which was something totally novel for Circassian artifacts that had always been produced for in-group consumption. When it first appeared in the national market, there occurred some debates in the Circassian e-groups on how to make it more popular. One idea that was repetitively voiced was individually going to several music markets and asking whether or not they had it so that particular cassette/CD would appear popular. Commercially, Circassian Folk Songs had not been very successful since it had not gone out of ingroup consumption. Despite that, it was still received as a source of pride by the Circassian community; they were proud that they had such a professional music artifact. For Circassians, it served as a proof that their culture could be professionally studied, reproduced and marketed. In year 2008, *Çerkes Halk Şarkıları: Wered 2* has also been on the market. (K. Doğan, *Çerkes Halk Şarkıları: Wered 2 [Circassian Folk Songs: Wered 2]* (Istanbul: Serbesler, 2008).

⁶¹For a more detailed list of magazines published by Circassians in Turkey, see Appendix II.

⁶²B. Axel, "Context of Diaspora," *Cultural Anthropology* 19(1)(2004): 26-60.

⁶³H. H. Hiller and T. M. Franz, "New Ties, Old Ties and Lost Ties: The Use of the Internet in Diaspora," *New Media and Society* 6(6)(2004):731-752.

⁶⁴M. Poster, "Postmodern Virtualities," in *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/ Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, eds. M. Featherstone and R. Burrows (CA: Sage, 1995), 79-96.

the Net.⁶⁵ Gender is one of those inequalities reproduced in the cyberspace; building on advanced computer technology traditionally developed and used by men, the Internet as a medium connotes masculinity⁶⁶ and net-mediated discussion remains still heavily dominated by men.⁶⁷ Since the late-1990s, Circassians utilized e-mail discussion lists such as *Marje*, *Adige*, *Çerkesler*, *Demokratik Çerkes Platformu*, *Nart Kültür*, *Çerkes Sohbeti* and *Zekoşnig* (meaning brotherhood).⁶⁸ Despite their differences, these e-mail discussion groups have been the grounds for the nationalist debates after the mid 1990s. Though some of the members of the groups do not primarily identify themselves as nationalists, active members who bother to participate are nationalists. Hence diaspora nationalism and Circassian identity set the limits, scope and norms of discussion in these e-mail groups in addition to several blogs, websites and currently, Facebook groups etc.⁶⁹

The 1990s had proved to be significant also in terms of the organizations of Circassian diaspora in general. After several congresses with the participation of many groups of Circassians from different countries and the homeland, the World Circassian Federation was established in the mid-1990s. In Turkey, *Kaf-Der* (Caucasian Association), which was established in 1993 as an umbrella organization, constituted the largest Circassian associational network in Turkey until 2004 when it was replaced by a larger organization, *KAF-FED* (Caucasian Associations Federation of Turkey).⁷⁰

⁶⁵E. N. Ignacio, "Ain't I a Filipino (Woman)?: An Analysis of Authorship/Authority Through the Construction of "Filipina" on the Net," *The Sociological Quarterly* 41(4)(2000): 551-572.

⁶⁶J. C. H. Bromseth, "Constructions of and Negotiations on Interaction Norms and Gender on Electronic Discussion Lists in Norway," *Nora* 9(2)(2001): 80-88, 80.

⁶⁷S. Herring, "Gender Differences in CMC: Findings and Implications," *The CPRS Newsletter* 18(1) (2000). Available on <http://www.cprs.org/publications/newsletter/issues/2000/Winter2000/herring.html>.

⁶⁸ For a more detailed list of e-mail discussion groups that are going to be used for this dissertation, see Appendix III.

⁶⁹ For analysis of these virtual dynamics of the Circassian diaspora, see A. Çakır, Building and Maintaining Online Communities, presented on the Fourth International Cyberspace Conference on Ergonomics, Johannesburg, 2005 available on <http://web.wits.ac.za/NR/rdonlyres/95111AC7-6654-411F-92B5-18FFE681314A/0/build2.pdf> (17 May 2009).

⁷⁰In addition to former *Kaf-Der* and *KAF-FED*, the two other major associations are *Kafkas Vakfı* and *Birleşik Kafkas Demeği*, both of which are relatively Islamic-oriented. Also there are minor micro-ethnic associations, for the Ossetians, the Alan Culture and Support Foundation established 1989 in Istanbul, 1993 in Ankara and 1997 in Izmir; and for Abkhazians, the Abkhazian Cultural Association in Istanbul.

As the 1990s has implied the formation of new organizations and new forms of activism for the Circassian diaspora, it has also meant totally new challenges, problems and questions for the diaspora. The collapse of Soviet Union and its aftermath have challenged all the Circassian activist groups in Turkey and the existing discourses with regard to identity, culture, homeland and ethnicity. In the 1990s, no revolutionaries were left and the so-called “utopia of return” was challenged by the changing meanings of 'homeland': instead of being a space that symbolized the timeless qualities of Circassians and the immemorial past, the homeland became a real territory⁷¹ which could now be settled and repatriated by the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. While *Glasnost* and the collapse of the Soviet Union fuelled an initial enthusiasm about the homeland, return,⁷² and repatriation;⁷³ living the ideal proved to be far from unproblematic. First, Circassians as habitants of Anatolia for more than one hundred and thirty years were emotionally embedded in Turkey as Cahit highlights:

“Well, they, especially middle aged and older people there [in the Caucasus] often ask me: “Why don’t you come? This is your country.” I tell that we do not come because we are Abkhazians. They get surprised. ...I say if you were in our place, graves of our fathers are there; graves of our grandfathers are there; before all, graves of our siblings are there. It is not that easy to leave those and come. I ask them whether they could leave. They say “you are right.” ...Emotionally they say “it is their country, they shall come” but they would do the same if they were in our place.”⁷⁴

⁷¹S. Shami, “Circassian Encounters: The Self as Other and the Production of the Homeland in the North Caucasus,” *Development and Change* 29(1998): 617- 646, 643.

⁷²See for instance, S. Çelik and H. Karadeniz, “Türkiye'deki Çerkesler: Kafdağına Dönsek mi?” [“Circassians in Turkey: Shall We Return to Kafdağı (the Mythical Mountain)?”] *İkibine Doğru*, 12 March 1989, 11; A. Görmüş, “Çerkesler: Kafkasya'ya Dönüyoruz,” [“Circassians: We are Returning to the Caucasus”] *Nokta*, 17 June 1990, 24; “Türkiye'deki Çerkesler Kafkasya'ya Göçüyor,” [“Circassians in Turkey Are Emigrating to the Caucasus”] *Milliyet*, 28 April 1991; “Çerkesler Kafkasya'ya Dönüyor,” [“Circassians in Turkey Are Returning to the Caucasus”] *Ekonomist*, 28 April 1991, 17; U. Ertem, “Çerkesler'e 'Dön' Çağrısı,” [“The Call of Return to Circassians”] *Güneş*, 19 June 1991; M. Uçar, “Çerkeslere Davet,” [“Invitation to Circassians”] *Milliyet*, 12 November 1991; Z. Erdal and E. Özcan, “Türkiye'deki Çerkeslerden 'Gelin!' Çağrısına Yanıt: 'Gideriz, Ama...’” [“The Reply of Circassians in Turkey to the Invitation to Come: ‘We Will Go But...’”] *Milliyet*, 12 November 1991; H. Soysü, “Çerkesler'de “Kafkasya'ya Kesin Dönüş” Tartışmaları,” [The Debates of Final Return to the Caucasus among Circassians] *İkibine Doğru*, 12 January 1992.

⁷³See for instance, J. Colarusso, “Circassian Repatriation: When Culture is Stronger than Politics,” *The World and I*, Washington, DC: Washington Times Publishing Corporation, 1991), 656-669.

⁷⁴ Cahit, interview by author, 23 May 2007, İstanbul.

Secondly, return as a nationalist diasporic project was from the beginning a masculine project. Hence, most of the Circassian women rejected to live in the Caucasus when their husbands talked about settling in the Caucasus. Today wives are still regarded as a problem for the idea and practice of return by the diaspora nationalists in Turkey as Mert and İzzet, respectively, exemplify their wives' opposition to any form of settlement in the Caucasus:

“With my wife, we went through the highway in year 1990. After the day I went with my wife in 1990, my wife said that she would neither go and live there nor let her children live there. But I am very glad that I went and I am still going. ...[When we returned from the Caucasus] I always told the good sides, she always told the negative sides. This was how we became even.”⁷⁵

“I would never like to lose my connection. If my wife was as concerned as I was, I might have spent the late years of my retirement there. ...I still keep that hope. We have never disagreed till this day but we do not have the same ideas on this subject. Her approach is different.”⁷⁶

Thirdly, some Circassian activists regarded the Caucasus as socially different since returning to the homeland not only implied the fulfillment of nationalist goals but also adaptation into a new life style. Coming from urban centers in Turkey, some felt that the Caucasus was much more rural in terms of social relations and life styles as Kaya tells his experience of leaving Istanbul and starting a life in the Caucasus in 1990s:

“Another thing is the problem of social relations on the town level. That attracts you for a while. It attracted me when I went. At first you like everybody's interest in what you say and what you do. But after a while you see that it affects your private life and it owns you just like a clamp. So you conclude that towns are not places that you can easily bear. This is how it happened. Since I got used to Istanbul, it was hard for me. ...The Caucasus is my homeland, I speak the same language, I share the same feelings. ...Moscow was a fully foreign city for me but it was a metropolis.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

⁷⁶ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

⁷⁷ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

The fourth problem in terms of settling in the Caucasus which is also the one which is mentioned the most by the diaspora nationalists concerns the economy. As the socialist economy was being transformed into capitalism, the plans of return and repatriation that were designed for returning to a homeland in a socialist state became meaningless. What the returnists in 1960s and 1970s imagined was a massive and systematic return movement which would be economically supported by the socialist policies of the Russian state: the Soviet state would economically take care of those activists who returned to the Caucasus. Yet, in the Post-Soviet era, there has been no such state to economically support the people from the Caucasus. Hence, settlements in the diasporic homeland have been irregular, personal and they have based on the personal wealth of the individuals. Metin and Nezih, two activists of 1960s and 1970s, respectively, explore the implications of such an economic and social transformation in the Caucasus in particular and Russia in general as far as the plans, projects and visions of Circassian diaspora nationalists were concerned:

“When we said ‘return’ before, we would not have a problem of survival if we could have managed to return. Socialist state would give a house to live, we would somehow live, and we would not have much of an economic problem. We would have such a guarantee because of the characteristics of the state. But now in capitalist conditions, since it is all about capital, all about money, there is no possibility of return though there is the freedom to go. ...But this was not the return that we envisaged. ...From now on, return has become an economic matter if you look through the individual level. If you have money, if you can prepare the conditions on your own, then you can return. ...We are not able to find an answer except “those who takes his/her luggage may go” [*valizini alan gitsin*]. Since we cannot find it, we are not able to formulate it as a policy and strategy.”⁷⁸

“For instance, I give you myself as an example. I went to the president. I am one of the two or three most prestigious people there. I told him that I would like to immigrate here [to the Caucasus]. He said “Wow! That would be good.” This was 8-10 years ago. I said “But I am a lawyer, I will tell you how I may be useful in terms of archival work, legislation. But I would like to have a salary with which I can live comfortably.” He looked and looked, and then he laughed. He said “Also bring some money with you.” [I asked him] “How much will I bring?” He said “Bring something like 150.000-200.000 dollars.” Well, now that is the story.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

⁷⁹ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

Hence, as a result of these multiple reasons, systematic and massive settlements in the Caucasus by the Circassians in Turkey which were expected in the early days after the dissolution of the Soviet Union did not take place. The continuous calls from the homeland to return to the Caucasus were ambiguously received by the Circassian diaspora nationalists in Turkey as Taner's dialogue with his friend living currently in the Caucasus highlights:

“We are losing the homeland. I am pro-return. Someone from *Aktüel* [a magazine in Turkey] made an interview with me. It was also published in *Aktüel*. I used an unlucky sentence such as I would like to die in my homeland. [He laughs] Then there is a friend of mine in Nalchik [who went there from Turkey]... she mailed me... She said “If you are going to come, come now! This place is not a cemetery.” I laughed a lot at that. That is true.”⁸⁰

Furthermore, as resettlements were far from being systematic and massive, the rare examples of returns from Turkey to different regions of the Caucasus have also produced new debates and diasporic tensions among the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. Timuçin, a returnist during the late 1960s and 1970s, narrates on the difference between two groups, namely the returnists who imagined return in the 1960s and the 1970s and those who have fulfilled return since the 1990s. For him, the two groups had different characteristics, different aims and motivations:

“If we had those opportunities when we were young, a very useful group would then be able to immigrate and the Caucasus would have been different today because there was a very idealist and realist cadre in Turkey. In love with their traditions, language, homeland and nation; a very honest and sincere group would act. But back then there were obstacles, we could not open up. If we had those positive contacts with Russia, we would have been useful to that region and our contacts would have been different. These happened afterwards. And those people who were after their own interests and loots made the contacts. They became negative examples. They defrauded there, they made them [those people in the Caucasus] addicted to drugs, some tried to pull them to bigotry, some tried to pull them to fraud. Those people who knew himself/herself and loved his/her nation and identity could not reach there.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁸¹ Timuçin, interview by author, 25 August 2007, Çanakkale.

For Nezh, these settlers in the Caucasus from Turkey since 1990 harmed the image of diaspora in the homeland:

“Return. If you are going to raise those people’s life standards there, then work for that. But if you would like to fit into their life circumstances and standards, if you struggle together with them and adopt yourself to them, then you will be counted as someone who has returned. Otherwise, X has a villa [*daçe*] there, here he was a doorman, he married a doctor there, she gets ashamed when she sees me; that guy ...cannot finalize his divorce. There is no return like that. [*Böyle dönüş olmaz.*] ...What is our name now? They call us Turkish Circassians. [*Şimdi adımız ne, Türk Çerkesleri diyorlar bize*] ...Tax dodgers, women sellers, gamblers, enemies of the state. Believe me, there we, those who went from Turkey, have more negative identities than we have here.”⁸²

In addition to those critiques on the motives and patterns of resettlements in the Caucasus, post-Soviet encounters with the homeland and the political events that took place in this period in the Caucasus and Turkey led also to the formation of new fault lines for the Circassian diaspora in Turkey. As the old debates were affected by the ideological inclinations of Cold War, after the 1990s the ideological camps were transformed into groups which openly and explicitly discuss the future of the Caucasus and the relations of the diaspora with the Caucasus. The basic debate here concerns the relationship between diaspora and homeland based on questions such as how diaspora should act, to what extent it can part and parcel of homeland politics; to what extent it can intervene in the affairs of the homeland; whether long-distance nationalism is a viable option or it is a form of diasporic arrogance which ignores the political conditions and *reel politik* of the homeland; how relations with the Russian state should be managed, whether it should be based on remembering and resisting Russian state for the exile and its dividing or policies and politics or these relations should be shaped by bargains and negotiation. Şener’s and Köksal’s statements on these relations of the diaspora with the homeland are examples of the two sides in these debates. For Şener, diaspora cannot be the savior for the homeland and it should adopt itself to the politics of homeland which may be in cooperation with Russia if the interests of the republics in the Caucasus require such cooperation:

⁸² Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

“Saving the Caucasus etc. is no more valid. Because there are no people in the Caucasus who want to be saved. Who will you save and from whom will you save? In that sense, the Caucasus, too, may save [those Circassians in] Turkey. If they say “Diaspora! Do you have radio channels?” No, we do not. “Do you have schools?” No, we do not. “Do you have alphabets, books, TV channels?” We have none of these. If it says “then I shall save you,” it will be right. So we should give up these ideas of saving or being saved etc.”⁸³

On the other hand, Köksal argues that diaspora may and should intervene in homeland politics; it does not have to act as the exact mirror of the short-term interests and politics of the homeland. For him, there is no hierarchy between the homeland and diaspora in terms of having a say in the Caucasus:

“They are criticizing that we have been supporting those people in opposition there by giving them material support. This is a perspective. Then I may also say that they help the oppression of people by supporting the governments which are servants of Russia, and this is the truth. Today the easiest thing to do there is to cooperate with governments who operate in line with the status quo, Putin and make toasts with them. I am doing the harder thing. ...They act in a mentality such as we would create problems for the people living there. They say “we shall let those people living there to decide about their own destiny.” I criticize that harshly. Because diaspora and homeland is a whole. I, too, have rights there. I, too have relationships there. ...Now the number of Circassians living in Turkey is higher than the number of all those Circassians in the Caucasus.”⁸⁴

As the debates on the nature and dynamics of the relationships between diaspora and homeland have dominated the Circassian diasporic sphere in Turkey since the mid 1990s, the much debated concept of return in the 1970s and initial enthusiasm for return in the 1990s have been part of this general discussion on the relationships of the diaspora with the homeland. Yet, despite these discussions and conflicts in terms of the role of diaspora which are to some extent results of those post-Soviet conflicts and wars in the Caucasus, most Circassian activists interviewed for this study have prioritized homeland in terms of the establishment of the relations. Almost all of them state that homeland should feed and inspire the diaspora. As Nezih’s statements highlight, Circassian diaspora nationalists in

⁸³ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

⁸⁴ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

Turkey argue that Circassian diaspora in Turkey is not powerful enough to lead the homeland because of its status in Turkey as an ethnic group:

“I think that presently the formation of the nucleus for return and a structure that will represent return is not possible for Circassians. That is gone. [*Bu gitti. Veledalin Amin*] ...[What is crucial] is the dialogue and good relations with our people in the homeland. How can this happen? It may be being educated there, it may be settlement, it may be visits. ...According to me, these relations will be sources for the nourishment of culture here. Because it [homeland] is luckier than here in term of written examination of Circassian culture, education, publication. Because there are opportunities for that. Here you do not have the means to publish a book but there they can publish hundreds of books. ...This will give Circassian culture a guarantee and courage. ...Well the person in Khabardey Republic has now a characteristic; s/he is more self-confident that we are. Why? Because s/he says “this land is mine, it is not given to me by anyone.” And this is very significant, it is a registered right. They have the self-confidence which is provided by that [situation]. This is why they are stronger than us on this level.”⁸⁵

Hence, in terms of educational institutions, rights and collective participation into public domain, Circassian diaspora activists in Turkey today do not regard themselves in a position to lead the homeland. In that sense, they are different than the first generation of Circassian activists and nationalists who could envisage not only supporting but also leading and in some cases “saving” the Caucasus during the late years of the Ottoman Era. Yet, despite their lack of confidence for mimicking these visions of the Ottoman Circassians, Circassian diaspora activists today refer to these first generation diaspora nationalists on other levels: as part of their past; as Circassians just before the “break” which will be explored later in this chapter in terms of the changes in the boundaries of knowledge since the 1990s.

⁸⁵ Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

5.4. New Claims of Citizenship

This part of the chapter aims to explore how Circassian activists, since the 1990s, have been redefining their relationships with the Turkish state. I argue that since the 1990s, Circassians in Turkey have been trying to develop new relationships with the Turkish state based on multicultural citizenship policies. I further argue that Circassians' search for new relations with the Turkish state is part of larger debates on the redefinition of the notion of citizenship during the 1990s as a result of globalization processes and the rise of politics of identity.

Citizenship is a concept with various meanings, "an essentially contested concept" which is "contested at every level from its meaning to its political application, with implications for the kind of society to which we aspire."⁸⁶ Despite its contested character, most of the political scientists and sociologists consider citizenship crucial as "a 'classical ideal', one of the fundamental values" that is "inherent in our 'civilization,'"⁸⁷ as "one of the central ongoing features of Western political discourse."⁸⁸ Yet, starting from the 1980s, the concept of citizenship has been criticized from various strands while its various components were rejected by many groups as either insufficient or deceptive. Its universality has been challenged on the ground that "universality of citizenship in the sense of inclusion and participation of everyone, stands in tension with the other two meanings of universality embedded in modern political ideas: universality as generality, and universality as equal treatment" both of which create the demand for homogeneity and perpetuating the already existing oppression and disadvantage for some groups.⁸⁹ Using the motto 'personal

⁸⁶ R. Lister, *Citizenship : Feminist Perspectives* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997), 3.

⁸⁷ J. G. A. Pocock, "The Ideal of Citizenship Since Classical Times," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. R. Beiner (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 29-53, 29.

⁸⁸ B. Hindess, "Citizenship in the Modern West," in *Citizenship and Social Theory*, ed. Bryan Turner (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 19-35, 19.

⁸⁹ I. M. Young, "Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 175-208, 176.

is political', feminist scholarship with the help of multiculturalists has criticized the neutral language of citizenship that brings a deceptive and oppressive equality before law, and an imposed identity that actually excludes these groups. For them, "neither the equal opportunity of liberalism nor the active, participatory democratic citizenship of all the people can be achieved without the radical changes in personal and domestic life."⁹⁰

The same critiques of citizenship also have found their counterparts since 1990s in Turkish politics in line with the rise of Kurdish nationalism, political Islam, feminist groups and the issue of Turkey's accession to European Union: the concept and practices of citizenship have been not only criticized but also redefined.⁹¹ Furthermore, for most of the accounts on the redefinition of citizenship, this search for new citizenship practices and rights have been part of a larger process which has been called as the crisis of Kemalist project of modernity which is from-above, 'for the nation, despite the nation.'⁹² Yet, for Keyder, the crisis of Kemalist project of modernity may not mean the end of the modernization project and ideals of Enlightenment only if the project is "to divest itself of its modernizationist encumbrance" which has been shaped by the elitism of Kemalism; binary oppositions constructed through a local Orientalism that values new, universal and Western while devaluing and denying *ancienne*, Eastern and local; its sharp definitions of what constitutes modern and what constitutes progressive.⁹³ According to Keyder, what is needed therefore is a "radical surgery on the moribund state tradition in order to prepare the legal and political coordinates within which the public space of autonomous individuals may flourish" through the recognition and institutionalization of full citizenship rights.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ C. Pateman, "Feminism and Democracy," in *Citizenship: Critical Concepts*, eds. Bryan Turner and Peter Hamilton (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 372-386, 382.

⁹¹ See for instance A. Kadiođlu, *Cumhuriyet İradesi Demokrasi Muhakemesi* (Istanbul: Metis, 1999); A. İçduygu, "Türkiye'de Vatandaşlık Tartışmalarının Arka Planı," in *Liberalizm, Devlet, Hegemonya*, ed. F. Keyman (Istanbul: Everest, 2002), 283-300.

⁹² Ç. Keyder, "Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990's," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, eds. Reşat Kasaba ve Sibel Bozdoğan, (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1997), 37-51.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

This part of the chapter claims that Circassian activists since the 1990s have been part of this transformation of the meanings, rights and claims of citizenship in Turkey.

Since the 1990s, Circassian activists have been defining themselves as the constitutive element (*kurucu unsur*) as far as the Republic of Turkey is concerned. In several interviews conducted for this research, despite the emphasis on some tensions and different levels of relationships with the state of Turkey, the discourse of ‘the constitutive element’ was repeated several times. Such an argument includes not only the contemporary existence of Circassians in state institutions but also historical claims, such as the significant roles of Circassians in the Ottoman Empire, modernization processes which took place throughout nineteenth century, the War of Independence and the foundation of the Turkish nation-state. Okan narrates on such an overarching role of Circassians in Turkey:

“Circassians are people who are in upper positions in Turkish armed forces and security forces; they are preferred. They do not earn that but they are preferred. This is a tradition that has started from the foundational years of the Republic and continued till today. Well, they say that the foundational base of the Republic of Turkey is culture. I make fun [of that argument]. The foundational base of the Republic of Turkey is Circassians because in security forces, intelligence service, armed forces, never mind the rest... ..literature, art... I would start with Sait Faik and count till Kemal Tahir.⁹⁵ ...Actor, author... Well, Circassians are really beyond the autochthonous people of this peninsula.”⁹⁶

Therefore, for the Circassian activists defining Circassians as a diasporic community which is in touch with a distant historical homeland is not an impediment to consider themselves as a significant actor in Turkey and have some claims over history, geography and culture. Being the diaspora does not negate the claim of being the constitutive element. The claim of being the constitutive element, indeed, is strategic to demand equal rights as the citizens of Turkey as Taner states:

⁹⁵ Sait Faik and Kemal Tahir are the well-known authors of Turkish literature. They are claimed to be Circassians.

⁹⁶ Okan, interview by author, 9 February 2008, İstanbul.

“And we, as the constituents, as the constituents of the Republic of Turkey are in a state of demanding equal rights. What are these equal rights? I had not been able to give Circassian names to my children till the last couple of years. I had not been able to use my Circassian family name. I had not been able to speak Circassian. There is no school for that, no Circassian music, no Circassian broadcasting, there is no state support for the development of Circassian culture. Doesn't the ministry of tourism collect the taxes of Circassians? It does. Doesn't the Turkish state collect the taxes of all Circassians? It does. Don't the children of Turks in Turkey learn Turkish in schools? They do. So what is the impediment of my child learning his mother tongue? Fine, Turkish shall be the official language but Circassian should be taught in schools as an elective course. ...Well, they permitted the Circassian broadcasting in TRT, and it is once a week and 20 minutes.”⁹⁷

Hence the claim of being the constituent element is strategic as far as Circassians are concerned. To the extent that they define themselves as the founders of the republic who are as significant as the autochthonous people of Turkey, they are in a position to state their demands from the state as a policy making mechanism and this is related to another change in their relationships with the Turkish state: the demand of multicultural policies.

Starting from the mid 1960s and 1970s, Circassian activists regarded themselves as the object of state policies and state as a policy making mechanism. In the narratives of activists in the 1960s and 70s, Turkish state was criticized for assimilation, Turkification while Ottoman state was criticized for the resettlement of Circassians in Anatolia strategically in accordance with the Ottoman interests. Gürtuğ mentioned assimilation as among state policies:

“When you start from the Ottoman era, we see that this [state's] policy has changed a lot. However, it has one basic quality: we should be assimilated. The best Circassian, let him be Circassian but upon the condition that s/he is assimilated; there is a thought like that. There comes a time when this is severe and there comes a time when it is loose but it is always there.”⁹⁸

Furthermore, diaspora activists remember the 1960s, '70s and to some extent, '80s as “hard years” in terms of their relationships with the Turkish state. In those years, oppressive

⁹⁷ Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

⁹⁸ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

policies and laws were abundant though they were not strictly enforced. Yet some cases are still remembered as Cahit narrates on such an event in those years:

“Though it was not enforced in recent times, the punishment of having a cassette in Circassian language at home was something between 3 and 10 years. Now many people who consider themselves intellectuals reject that when you talk to them. They say that no such thing happened. Well, there was something like that. ...It was illegal. Let me give a very simple example, his name was... He was put on a trial on the basis that he said “I am Circassian.” in a meeting. One of our best lawyers defended him. ...In years close to ‘90s. ...Because he said that he was Circassian in public sphere. ...Think about it. Though there have been events like that; when you say something, today people, even those who consider themselves very intellectual, just because of their interests and national feelings, challenge you and say that nothing like that happened in Turkey. I say “How can that be? The guy was put on trial, I know him. Let me bring you the legal documents.” They say “no.””⁹⁹

Compared to those hard years for the activists, the 1990s and the last decade are regarded as the “golden years” by the activists. In addition to general liberalization that followed the *coup d'état* of 1980, Turkish state recently initiated some policies regarding the ethnic groups and the issue of EU membership enlarged the space within which ethnic groups in Turkey can voice themselves. During the late 1990s, demands for group rights – especially the right to education in the mother tongue – and independent relationships with the European Union have dominated the recent debates in the Circassian public sphere.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, some initial contacts with EU also contributed to the rise of expectations on the side of diaspora activists in Turkey:

“When we were talking to the committees from European Union, they had approaches that raised our morals. They told us that they thought that Circassians were the significant reformist power of Turkey based on their historical and sociological knowledge. ...Well, this observation was based on the previous processes. They knew that Circassians had a more open family life, their gender relations were different, and they were more egalitarian and individualistic. Not individualistic but based on individual. [They knew] That Circassians did not have the herd reflex. Indeed we have an aggregate cultural

⁹⁹ Cahit, interview by author, 23 May 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁰⁰ For a review of the recent debates concerning language, see Z. Besleney, “Race Against Time for Circassians in Turkey: Can the North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey Grasp An Opportunity to Revive Their Historic Languages?” *CRS 225* (April 2004).

plaster [*toplām kltr harcı*] that may fit into the general European cultural structure more. But within Turkey’s history, this plaster ate the alum of first Turkification, then Islamization, then another Turkification and another Islamization. So the description of Turkey’s significant reformist power is a pleasant description but it is a little bit in suspense. I hold unto that when I am stuck. I hold unto this word so that it makes me a little more comfortable.”¹⁰¹

As the most dominant way of relating with the Turkish state had been narrating on assimilation in the 1970s for the activists; today in the first decade of 2000s, Circassian activists start to imagine regeneration and revival through state policies and call for positive discrimination in terms of broadcasting, language education, and culture. Unlike the activists’ discourses of the 1970s which regard Turkish state as an assimilating, Turkifying and homogenizing mechanism which implicitly or explicitly, consciously or unconsciously works for the vanishing of Circassians in Turkey, Circassian activists today can demand multicultural policies from the state for the achievement of a substantive equality among citizens of Turkey:

“Well, Circassians in Turkey now is in need of positive discrimination like other small peoples in similar conditions. In a point, saying that “you are equal too, do whatever you do” is not valid, this is the approach that the world accepts today. In that sense, groups and people who are having trouble in terms of reproducing itself and transforming itself to the future, who are having hardships in terms of producing that energy are being supported in the civilized world.”¹⁰²

However, state’s policies beyond assimilation which aims to give some cultural rights to ethnic groups in Turkey are regarded by Circassian activists as insufficient when compared to the positive rights that they envisaged. The broadcasting in Circassian language and the right to learn their mother language in special and paid courses which had produced long public debates and controversies are useless as far as Circassian activists are concerned. The next part of the chapter will explore one of those instances of Turkish state’s policies with regard to ethnic groups and it aims to understand the tensions and problems involved in these policies that also concern Circassians as an ethnic group in Turkey.

¹⁰¹ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁰² Kksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

5.4.1. The Broadcast in Circassian: “Our Cultural Richness”

The broadcasting that Taner and Köksal mentioned during the interviews has started as a result of seven reform packages that had been enacted between 2002 and 2003 as a result of the Turkish state’s desire to realize the EU accession criteria and covered a wide range of legislative provisions. Restrictions on the music albums and movies which are in different languages and dialects have been removed by lifting some of the articles of the Anti-Terror Law No. 3713 and the Law on Broadcasting in different languages and dialects other than Turkish No 2932. “The Regulation on the Language of Television and Radio Broadcasts” prepared by *RTÜK* (Radio Television Supreme Council) entered into force on December 18, 2002. According to this Regulation, Turkish Radio Television Corporation (TRT) has been entrusted with the sole right of broadcasting in various languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives. The Regulation, in Article 5, states that

“Broadcasts can also be made in the different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives. Broadcasts in the different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives shall be made by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation. In these languages and dialects, broadcasts can be made for adults on news, music and culture. No broadcasts can be made towards the teaching of these languages and dialects. ...The duration of radio broadcasts in these languages and dialects shall not exceed 45 minutes per day and a total 4 hours per week. TV broadcasts shall not exceed 30 minutes per day and a total of 2 hours per week. TV broadcasts shall be accompanied by Turkish subtitles which will fully correspond to the broadcast in terms of timing and the content. As regards radio broadcasts, a Turkish translation will be broadcast after the program.”¹⁰³

The sixth harmonization package, approved in July 2003, introduced in its Article 14 an amendment to Article 4 of the Law No.3984 on the Establishment of Broadcasting by

¹⁰³ <http://www.ciemen.org/mercator/bulletins/53-06.htm>

Radio and Television Channels, stating that ‘... public and private radio and television corporations may broadcast in different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives.’ On January 25, 2004 “Regulation Concerning Radio and Television Broadcasts in Languages Used Traditionally by Turkish Citizens” was published in the Official Gazette. The Regulation, issued by *RTÜK*, aims at allowing broadcasts of languages and dialects used traditionally by Turkish citizens along with Turkish language. According to the Regulation, these broadcasts should be in compliance with the rule of law, the general principles of the Constitution, fundamental rights and freedoms, national security, general moral values, the basic characteristics of the Republic enshrined in the Constitution, the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation, the Law No. 3984, the essentials and principles based on the regulations enforced with respect to this law and the conditions and commitments envisaged by the *RTÜK*.¹⁰⁴

In June 2004, just before the broadcast began, the President of *RTÜK* stated that there would be no problem in terms of the content the broadcast.¹⁰⁵ In June 2004, the broadcast in different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives started on TRT3. As the broadcast on TRT3 had been initially announced as a one-hour program; then, in line with the 5th article of the Regulation quoted above, it was announced that broadcasts would be 45 minutes. In June 2004, the broadcast on TRT3 started with 30 minutes once a week.

In the beginning, in June 2004 the program was supposed to start at 10:30 a.m at TRT 3 and 6:10 at Radio 1 [*Radio 1*]. Yet in April 2007, without any explanation by TRT or any request of explanation by any ethnic group, the schedule of broadcast on TRT3 had been changed from 10:30 a.m to 7:30 a.m.

Initially, the program was broadcast in Bosnian on Mondays, in Arabic on Tuesdays, in Kurmanji on Wednesdays, in Circassian (Khabardey dialect) on Thursdays, and in Zaza on Fridays. Yet, in 2009, with the opening of TRT 6, state channel that broadcasts in Kurdish for 24 hours a day, the broadcast in Kurmanji and Zaza were abolished.

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.cultural-rights.org/program1.aspx?pgid=31>

¹⁰⁵ See “Erken Kalkan Kürtçe Dinler,” *Radikal*, 5 June 2004, <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=118484>> (16 February 2009).

After the initial broadcasts which led to various discussions in Turkey in terms of national language, national identity and the relationships between the state and ethnic groups, many Circassian activists regarded the broadcasts in Circassian as a sham and a disappointment; but still a turning point as far as the policies of Turkish state were concerned. Alternatively, the foundational president of the Düzce Caucasian Cultural Association stated that the broadcast was liked and broadcast in other dialects would be demanded. Another Circassian in Düzce was quoted as stating that this was a very important and positive step and Circassians submitted their “deepest gratitude to our state and people working in TRT for this enormous cultural service.” [*“Devletimize ve TRT çalışanlarına bu büyük kültür hizmetinden dolayı en derin şükranlarımızı sunarız.”*]¹⁰⁶

The thirty-minutes program in Bosnian, Arabic and Circassian languages is still being broadcasted on TRT 3 once a week. The television program called “Our Cultural Richness” [*Kültürel Zenginliğimiz*] is broadcasted in Circassian on Thursday mornings between 7:30 a.m and 7:58 a.m.

I will now briefly explore one of those broadcasts in Circassian on TRT 3. On January 5, 2009, the first ten minutes of the program was the news. “The Summary of the Week” that started at 7:30 a.m was composed of news on a speech of the prime minister of Turkey on ethnic nationalism, a project of Housing Development Administration of Turkey (*TOKİ*), the change in the state subsidies for agricultural products, a project between the municipalities of Batman and Istanbul for 500 students from Batman to spend their holidays in Istanbul, the errors in terms of the use of the stoves; the commemoration of those who were killed by the terrorist organization, PKK in Mardin; and a social project for the women in Mardin. At 7:40 a.m, a cartoon that explained the traffic rules followed the news. Between 7:40 a.m and 7:44 a.m, the types, uses and names of the daisies were narrated with a video on daisies. Between 7:44 a.m and 7:49 a.m, a video of a Circassian dancing troupe whose name, location and date was anonymous was broadcast. Yet, given the techniques of screening it was obvious that the video was not contemporary. It may be predicted that the video belongs to 1980s. From 7:49 a.m to 7:58 a.m, a piece of a documentary called “the Beauties of Anatolia” [*Anadolu Güzellikleri*] was on broadcast.

¹⁰⁶ “Çerkezler Yayını Beğendi... K.Batı Kafkas Lehçesi İçin de Başvuracaklar,” *Milliyet*, 10 June 2004, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2004/06/10/son/sontur18.html> February 2009).

During those 9 minutes of the documentary, six waterfalls of Sinop, a city in the Black Sea region of Turkey were visited. The voice that was hardly heard in the back implied that documentary was shot in Turkish years ago and put into use for this occasion. When I searched for some additional data on the documentary, it turned out that a columnist in a daily newspaper who wrote that the broadcast of TRT was just a fiasco and a showcase of disrespect also mentioned that same documentary in June 2004.¹⁰⁷ Hence within these five years, the same documentary was either broadcasted continuously or repetitively.

As this is the common pattern of broadcasting as also narrated by Circassian activists, this pattern may change on special occasions. For instance, on October 30, 2008 which was the day after the commemoration of the foundation of the Republic on October 29, a documentary on the history of the foundation of the Republic was broadcasted in Circassian. Coincidentally, I watched the documentary with a taxi driver who had a mini television in his cab and who was trying and “studying” to learn Circassian to visit the Caucasus. As he told us his plans to visit the Caucasus, he also said that he was called by the name of the ethnic group that he belonged by the other taxi drivers. It was 7:30 in the morning and as we were trying to avoid the traffic jam, we, three people with Caucasian roots were listening the history of Turkish Republic in Circassian language and for the first time seeing the speeches of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk translated into Circassian. Ironically, we hardly understood the meanings of the Circassian words while we perfectly knew the content and audio visuals of the documentary. The very local and daily language of the ethnic community was transformed into a state language that narrated the official historiography: for instance, the concept of *thamade* which means the elder and respected people of the Circassian community who earn wisdom through experience, age and proper behavior was substituted for the members of parliament.

However, the broadcast seems exactly what the Turkish state aims it to be as TRT describes the program in its webpage:

“This is a program that helps to give consciousness to the people as citizens of Turkey who are aware of their responsibilities and duties towards the Republic of Turkey which is a democratic, secular and social State that is

¹⁰⁷ See “Anadilde Saygisizlik,” Mehmet Tezkan, Sabah, 12 June 2004, <<http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2004/06/12/tezkan.html>> (14 January 2009).

respectful to human rights; to strengthen people's trust and respect in the State [the first letter of state is originally capitalized]; to explain that racial differences are natural [*tabii*] as well as cultural differences such as religion, language and sect; to prevent abuse in terms of these matters; to place the idea that the State of Turkish Republic is an indivisible unit with its nation and country; to make our country's cultural richness known; to make the people think about the solutions of its own problems; to be informed about the happenings in the world, Turkey and its regions; to provide correct information *vis-à-vis* the various broadcasts (radio, television, newspaper, bulletins etc.) from other countries which are intended for our citizens inside or outside the country.”¹⁰⁸

For most of the Circassian diaspora activists, broadcast in Circassian has been a source of disappointment. After it had started in June 2004, it was neither debated nor watched: despite so many early discussions and tensions in terms of the meanings and implications of these broadcasts, they had been as insignificant, boring and old-fashioned as they could have been. Köksal, just like many activists interviewed for this study, criticizes these broadcasts in particular and Turkish state's contemporary policies in general as meaningless and insincere except being a turning point as far as the overall policies of the Turkish state are concerned:

“...Because I do not think that the broadcasting in Turkish is... It is insignificant. Well, it is a breaking point in some sense but it is no use for us. They made it the most important issue of Turkey. Let me ask you today, when did you last watch the broadcast on Thursday? Did you watch it recently? Why not? Because there is nothing special about it. If you ask those people who struggled for that, they did not watch it either. In the program, it tells me about the characteristics of anemo tulip that is found in Manisa mountains in Circassian. God damn it, what is the use of it? They just put that program in TRT to make people hate. ...Well, now people will come to paid courses for what they did not come to the associations when it was free of charge. ...Do not make me laugh. ...When this is being done, positive discrimination should be applied. ...Otherwise, how are we going to deal with that all by ourselves?”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ See the website of Radio 1, <http://www.trt.net.tr/radyo/RDDetay.aspx?kimlikid=248&tur=Radyo&Kanal=RADYO1> (16 February 2009).

¹⁰⁹ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

Hence, broadcast in “programs in vernaculars and dialects still practiced today in daily lives of Turkish people” is related to anything but the demands and needs of those ethnic groups.¹¹⁰ As the initiation of the broadcasting created great fuss in the Turkish public, the broadcasting itself has been insignificant and trivial in terms of its contents, schedule and popularity. Unlike these broadcasts, TRT 6, state channel that started broadcasting in January 2009 and broadcasts in Kurdish for 24 hours a day, has become a different phase in terms of Turkish state’s policies on ethnic groups in Turkey.

5.5. New “Others”

For the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, post-1990s also has meant the formation of new “others” as a result of new dynamics of Turkish politics. As Turkey has been in a position to deal with the rise of Kurdish nationalism and the problematization of the Armenian deportation in 1915; Circassian diaspora, as an ethnic group in Turkey also have been in a position to situate themselves *vis-à-vis* these questions and ethnic groups. Next parts of this chapter will deal with how Circassian nationalists deal with these two ethnic problems in Turkey and how they situate themselves *vis-à-vis* these ethnic groups and their claims: namely, Kurds and Armenians.

¹¹⁰ For a couple of criticisms from the activists and intellectuals on the way broadcast is being organized, see for instance “Bize Neden Danışılmıyor?”, *Evrensel*, 8 June 2005, <<http://www.evrensel.net/05/06/08/gundem.html>> (7 February 2009).

5.5.1. On the Kurdish Question

In February 2009, one of the most influential newspapers in Turkey, *Sabah* broadcast a new advertisement on TV. The advertisement video, as it started with the photo of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk that turned into the map of Turkey, moved on to other slides with some key words. Meanwhile, the voices that followed the slides and constantly changed not only in terms of gender but also in terms of pronunciation and dialect were reading a text which said

“We built the Republic of Turkey. Some of us were civilians, some were soldiers. Some of us were urban, some were workers. Some of us were Kurds, some were Circassians. There were Sunnis and Alevites. There were educated and less educated. There were young and old. This was how we became what we are. Brothers/sisters, which part of us shall we give up?”¹¹¹

As the advertisement is quite interesting not only for *Sabah* but also for the Turkish media and advertisement sector which usually and strategically employ Turkish nationalism; in the part that mentions Kurds and Circassians, there is a big tree that stems from the soil and in front of the arms of the tree, the words Circassian and Kurd are written.

This coexistence in the same slide and in the same category as two non-Turkish ethnic groups in Turkey which this advertisement also highlights is what I will try to explore in this part. This part of the chapter aims to explore how Circassian activists regard Kurdish question as an ethnic group in Turkey. Such an exploration aims to understand not only the dynamics of this coexistence but also Circassian perspectives on Kurdish question which is related not only to Kurds *per se* but also other ethnic groups in Turkey and their relationships with the Turkish state.

As Kurdish question has been narrated as a crucial reference by Circassian activists to understand the relationships between the Turkish state and Circassians, there are variable approaches on the Kurdish question *per se*.

¹¹¹ For the advertisement of Sabah, see the website of the newspaper, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/video_detay,4722ce1c6302757278a2305db8bc02e5~1.html> (25 February 2009).

First, Circassians consider Kurdish question and its effects in Turkish politics as an opportunity for Circassians in particular and other ethnic groups in general. Şener, for instance, highlights that the contemporary developments in terms of broadcasting in languages other than Turkish are a result of Kurdish question:

“If we are going to speak in the name of Circassians, Circassians should absolutely stand by the territorial integrity of Turkey. But it is also evident that Kurdish question will bring some democratic openings. As a matter of fact, TV broadcasting etc. is all results of those questions. Circassians will also benefit from that, whether or not they want it.”¹¹²

Kaya explains this as a reason to be thankful to Kurds despite the problems it created:

“We should thank Kurds. I am telling this for those Circassians who care about their identity. Because they [Kurds] put that problem of identity on national and international agenda by struggling. This is mostly an advantage, sometimes it becomes a disadvantage but it is OK, we shall take its advantages.”¹¹³

Secondly, Circassian activists regard Kurdish question as an impediment as far as the ethnic groups and Circassians in Turkey are concerned. From such a perspective, the very existence of such a problem inhibits any possibility of dialogue and contributes to the rise of Turkish nationalism. Hasan, for instance, argues that it is hard to demand group rights when any ethnic demand is perceived as a challenge to the territorial integrity of Turkey and as a possibility of armed resistance:

“The right to protect one’s culture and to use one’s language are rights that should be recognized. When we think in the name of Circassians, the fact that Kurdish question is such a crucial question impedes the solution of cultural problems in Turkey. ...If the Kurds were not seen as a threat in Turkey, then Turkey might have had some openings in terms of cultural rights. But the situation is that if there is going to be an opening, then it will be seen like a gain that has resulted from the armed resistance of PKK and then the state will be seen as compromising. So the idea is not to give such a compromise before the armed phase is over. For sure, this is a process that impedes the granting of

¹¹² Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

¹¹³ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

cultural rights. The impediment of these rights naturally affects other ethnic groups living in Turkey.”¹¹⁴

Thirdly, Circassian activists regarded Kurdish question as having some similarities with the problems of other ethnic groups in Turkey. From such a perspective, the problem is not Kurds *per se* but rather the ways the Turkish state deals with ethnicity and ethnic groups. Timuçin and Meral, respectively, narrate on such common problems of ethnic groups in Turkey:

“Kurdish question, too, is a reality. If that group that we call Kurds are living in this country and if they grew up here, then you shall let them use their own language and their traditions. ...There are still people in the East who do not know Turkish. We were like that too, we did not know how to say come and go till we started school.”¹¹⁵

“Indeed, calling that Kurdish problem makes me restless. Well, it is not Kurdish question actually. It is the problem of all people who are not Turkish. When we say Kurdish problem, it becomes something negative for the Kurds, it makes them lonely. ...Well, supporting and approving PKK or any kind of terrorist event is impossible for me. ...There is a problem of democracy in Turkey. ...It is not right to call it Kurdish problem, such a problem exists for the Armenians, and it exists for the Circassians.”¹¹⁶

Fourthly, despite the existence of similarities, Kurdish question is also regarded as the problem of an ethnic group that is different from Circassians. Gürsoy for instance states that the ways ethnicity is politicized are among those differences:

“Unfortunately, the state had wrong policies for 80 years. It followed the policy of ignoring. ...In year 1986, I did my military service and there I saw the Kurdish problem. I saw how Kurdish boys were beaten there since they did not know Turkish. This is a problem for them. It was forbidden to own a Kurdish cassette; unfortunately, it was the same for the Circassian cassettes. Since we did not have any further claims, these were forgotten, it was overcome as a cultural question. But for the other side, since there are other strategic games in the region, there occurs unease. With manipulations, what can be overcome with democratization turns into syndromes of disintegration.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

¹¹⁵ Timuçin, interview by author, 25 August 2007, Çanakkale.

¹¹⁶ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹¹⁷ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

Nezih argues that Kurds and Circassians are historically different and Circassians, as a diasporic community, are different from the Kurds who are regarded as the autochthons of Anatolia. For him, Kurdish ability to connect to land which is an actual, not a diasporic land differentiates Kurds from Circassians:

“Kurds are very different. On the land over which they have some claims, they are stem cells. And they slowly attain that consciousness. ...We should prove everything so that they will accept it. We will not gain anything if we wait for the recognition and granting of these by others. Thus, in Turkey in terms of human rights, Copenhagen criteria and use of language, not even a single Circassian contributed a word. They were all result of Kurdish struggle. ...That is why I say we are different from Kurds. We have difficulty in that sense. If Kurds protect the Southeast region, then homeland and people become connected. In our case, to connect to the homeland, we should either use Caucasian identity well or accept the identity of being part of Turkey [*Türkiyelilik*] by giving up Caucasian identity. I do not know.”¹¹⁸

From such a perspective, Circassian activists feel that Kurds have stronger roots in Turkey as they are tied to a region in which they are historically autochthons. Despite their narratives on being the founders of the state, being entrusted at the key positions of the state and being the loyal elements of the Ottoman and Turkish state; their diasporic position makes them less secure in politics. Kurds is seen as the rightful owners of some claims while Circassian activists regard themselves as the guests who are unable to have some demands and raise his/her voice.

Fifthly, Circassian activists criticize Kurds for the way Kurdish question has been politicized since the last decades. In the interviews, almost all of them highlight the significance of the integrity of the Turkish state and state that any other action beyond that is unacceptable for them. Köksal argues that he cannot support and empathize with Kurds on such a level:

“If Kurds are having a struggle for freedom in Turkey, I will be with them till the end. This is not what they struggle for. [It is] Beyond the claims of speaking Kurdish, it is dividing and disintegrating the country. I will not be a

¹¹⁸ Nezih, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

cover for that. About Kurdish language or about cultural rights, I will be with them till the end.”¹¹⁹

Mert criticizes Kurds on the ground that their nationalism is excluding other ethnic groups in Turkey, and their organization and political demands are based on a single ethnic group. Such a perspective highlights that, with the emergence of Kurdish question, Turkish politics is shaped by two nationalisms that are equally exclusive as far as Circassians are concerned:

“Kurds are acting opportunistically. What are they doing? First, they do not demand what they demand for themselves for other ethnic groups. Second, in order to reach an end they are ready to shed blood, this is wrong. ...Well, they speak as if there are only Turks and Kurds in Turkey. I am against that, this is wrong. ...*Vis-à-vis* Turkish nationalism they have formed a Kurdish nationalism, and they reject me. Why? Because I am lesser in terms of number. Because I do not demand anything. These are very wrong things. I may be smaller in population, I do not evaluate people by the counting the heads. Who told that I do not have any demands? I do. ...Well, Kurds will one day understand that they shall not reject but accept us.”¹²⁰

Rüstem criticizes Kurds for being politically insufficient despite their advantages that Circassians do not have due to their diasporic and historical conditions:

“Kurds are strong due to the fact that it is their geography; they are strong in terms of the land on which they put their feet. Except that, they are nothing; they are neither as nationalist as Circassians nor as strong as them. For the Circassians, it was the policy of the Ottoman Empire and it was the policy of the empire, it should not be grudged. What was it going to do? Would it make a calamity out of Circassians by settling them together? They even tried to establish a state, they would have done that if they had been together and nobody would have prevented that. ...Kurds tell me that “Circassians are good people but they always support state and prevent revolution, they do not participate to it.” ...I always tell them that there are several millions of Kurds in this country and if a group of Circassians which is one tenth of that Kurdish population would be settled and lived together somewhere, we would not have demanded anything from anyone, we would just deal with it and get it. [*Bu memlekette bilmem kaç milyon adamsınız, sizin onda biriniz kadar bir yerde*

¹¹⁹ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹²⁰ Mert, interview by author, 12 June 2007, İstanbul.

Çerkes bir arada yaşayabilseydi, oturabilseydi, biz zaten kimseden bir şey istemez, kendimiz halleder alırdık diyorum.]]¹²¹

5.5.2. Remembering Armenians: “We Do Know Armenians More Than...”

In December 2008, a group of intellectuals in Turkey signed an online declaration that apologizes for what they call "the great catastrophe" that overtook Armenians in Turkey in 1915, and stated that they share "the pain" of their "Armenian brothers and sisters, and apologize to them."¹²² As the very act of apology itself was hotly debated in Turkey, the historical debates once again followed the polemic that the apology triggered.

Throughout these debates, among the crucial questions was which groups were responsible for the deportation and the ethnic composition of the military units that dealt with the deportation. Along with the Kurds, Circassians has been named among the ethnic groups that dealt with the deportation of Armenians. Yet, the association of Circassians in Turkey with Armenian deportation is older than these debates which are triggered with the apology of the intellectuals in Turkey. Within the last ten years, Circassians have been increasingly named as one of the leading groups in 1915 events in studies on Armenian deportation or genocide. Arsen Avagyan, in his book on Circassians published in 2004, focuses on Armenian deportation as the key to understand the relationships between the state and Circassians in Turkey. In his study which is mostly based on Russian archives, Avagyan calls Circassians as used efficiently by the Committee of Union and Progress to fulfill the policy of Armenian and Rum deportation.¹²³ Taner Akçam underlines the importance of the migrants who migrated to the Ottoman lands from the Christian oppression in terms of increasing the hatred among the people and organizing massacres

¹²¹ Rüstem, interview by author, 8 February 2008, Ankara.

¹²² For the text of the apology, see the website <<http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com/default.aspx>> (12 January 2009).

¹²³ A. Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), 279.

against Christian population.¹²⁴ Canefe further explains the geographical origins of these migrants as Balkans and the Caucasus, and states that the memories of these communities and their resettlement in Anatolia as their last resort for survival and as their homeland to be claimed through defending it against invasion by others might explain the nationalist resort to a final solution in the last years of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁵ Zürcher uses a different terminology and states that “genocide was a product of the reactive Muslim nationalism that motivated the Young Turks” and that the persecution of the Armenians can be understood only in the context of the traumas suffered by those fugitives from Russia and the Balkans.¹²⁶ Another study mentions the role of ‘93 immigrants in terms of raising the anger towards the non-Muslim minorities in Anatolia and states that they aimed to take part in the economic activities that non-Muslim minorities were engaged.¹²⁷ Berktaş, in his column on a daily newspaper, reiterates the argument by stating that special tools of violence had been created by the Ottoman State since the Tanzimat Era and this process had gained new dimensions in 19th century when the Caucasian tribes that had been exiled by Russian expansionism and, therefore, had vengeance for everything that was Russian/Armenian had been used in the genocide of 1915.¹²⁸ Baskın Oran, in an interview done by Haçik Muratyan and published in both Armenian and Turkish newspapers, states that the events of 1915 did not start at 1915 but had its origins in 1850s when the Muslim Circassians were exiled to Anatolia and chose “the easiest way to get food” which was to plunder the people who possessed things but who were not protected by the Ottoman state.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ T. Akçam, “Ulusal Kimliğimizin Oluşumu Üzerine Bazı Tezler,” *Birikim* 33 (1992): 20-23.

¹²⁵ N. Canefe, “Turkish Nationalism and Ethno-symbolic Analysis: The Rules of Exception,” *Nations and Nationalism* 8(2) (2002): 133-155, 149.

¹²⁶ E. J. Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed. K. Karpat (Boston: Brill, 2000), 150-179, 160.

¹²⁷ M.S. Erden, “The Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations in the 1920s and its Socio-economic Impacts on Life in Anatolia,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 41(3) (2004), 261-282, 273.

¹²⁸ H. Berktaş, “Milliyetçilik ve Sado-mazohizm,” *Taraf*, 11 October 2008, <<http://www.taraf.com.tr/makale/2224.htm>> (11 October 2008).

¹²⁹ B. Oran, “Ermeni Diasporası: Hrant'tan Sonra Neredeyiz?” *Radikal*, 18 August 2008, <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetay&ArticleID=894178>> (18 August 2008).

Starting from these arguments on Circassians and genocide /deportation/ violence/ massacre, this part of the chapter aims to explore how Circassians in Turkey remember Armenians in their daily lives, and how they evaluate the events of 1915 and the claimed participation of the Circassians in those events. As the “historical truth” regarding the events of 1915 and the participation of Circassians in 1915 as vehicles of state violence is beyond this study, I argue that any understanding of the events of 1915 and the Armenian question would be missing without the memories of the peoples of Anatolia. Furthermore, archival research on which most historians base their account is insufficient in terms of reaching the very memories of ethnic groups. In archival research, the social scientist hears the voice of the states, their accounts and their correspondence. What matters in studies based on archival research is the numbers, strategies, oppressors versus oppressed, or the vehicles of violence used by the state. What this part of the chapter aims to ask is how the grandchildren of the Circassians who are claimed to be the agents of the events of 1915 evaluate these arguments, how they remember Armenians, what they heard about Armenians and what they were told. Regardless of the historical validity and political correctness of these claims of agency in deportation, any account on Armenian question that emphasizes the participation of Circassians should be complemented by Circassian accounts, memories and stories.

In the beginning of the field research, I expected that the questions regarding the argument of Circassian participation into the events of 1915 might get the highest reaction from the interviewees. Yet, as I did the interviews, it seemed that Circassian activists were not in a sense of denial or anger in terms of these claims. Kaya, aged 49, a businessman and an activist in several Circassian organizations highlights the embeddedness of Armenian question with Turkish nationalism to explain the link between Armenian question and Circassians: “It is more about claiming the reflexes of Turkish nationalism. In the Turanist ideology, Armenians are something, it is based on the perception that they are an obstacle to overcome.”¹³⁰ İzzet, aged 62, an independent researcher shared his experiences in the field regarding the events of 1915:

¹³⁰ Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

“Since we are in a position of serving, getting the commands wherever we go, since we are not in our homeland, it is being delegated to us. ...But I have voice recordings with people who personally lived those events of Armenian events and who practiced those orders in the hierarchy; I cannot declare or write these. ...there are directly our people but not as Circassian people or Circassian state or Circassian nation but as the Ottoman soldier. He was the soldier, he was the commander, he was given the command. What would he do? There is the task of cleaning the dirty staff you know, they are usually assigned to those tasks. [*Pis işleri temizleme olayı var ya, oralara genellikle seçilmişler.*] ...I have some analysis and recordings on why Kanlıdere¹³¹ in Sivas is bloody river and Karakuyu¹³² is Karakuyu.”¹³³

As most of the interviewees plainly stated that they do not know and hear anything regarding the participation of Circassians, almost every interviewee mentioned that there were other sides of the story even if there was participation by Circassians. Hakan, aged 46, a language instructor and an independent author exemplifies one of these other sides:

“For instance, *kaymakam* of Pınarbaşı. Well, he was from the X’s [a Circassian family name] and he saved a bunch of Armenians by sending them to Circassian villages. There was a clause like that: the artisans, the ironman could stay by being resettled in Turkish villages. Based on that, he sent them to Circassian villages though they were not artisans. He hid some of them in the caves. Well, it is not just Circassians, there are lots of people doing that in those personal stories.”¹³⁴

As the most commonly reference was to the Armenian children saved by the Circassians, it was mostly people over 60 years old who met these Armenians and who know them by person. The young people just heard about them from their families. Meral, aged 51, a businesswoman and one of the woman activists is an exception from such a point: “I even know that there are Armenian families and children taken and protected by Circassian families. For instance, I have a relative in Uzunyayla that is originally an

¹³¹ Kanlıdere can be translated as bloody river.

¹³² Karakuyu is one of the Circassian villages in Uzunyayla, Kayseri.

¹³³ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

¹³⁴ Hakan, interview by author, 3 July 2007, İstanbul.

Armenian but taken by a Circassian family. Well, today s/he is my relative, I call her/him my relative.”¹³⁵

Yet it was those people who were activists in late 60s or early 70s that personally met those people who were originally Armenian but also close friends/relatives for Circassians. Gürtuğ, aged 62 tells the story of two such encounters:

“Circassian people never did those things, as people. Because in those events, there had been many Armenian and Rum children who were saved by and trusted to Circassians. Some of them had lived like Circassians. Open the telephone directories in Istanbul; you will see many Armenians whose surnames are Çerkesoğlu, Çerkesyan. Once one of our brothers told us something, it was almost 35 years ago. One evening he said, in one of the neighborhoods of Istanbul, there is the voice of the accordion. He said “Well, there should not be any one here that we do not know. If there is a meeting, we would know it.” They were the young Circassian people of the time and there was a Circassian meeting [*diğün*] somewhere. “Well,” he said, “we just got to the second floor, and we saw the accordion, there are Circassians dancing, they are talking in Circassian.” He said “My goodness! We know none of them.” Then he said when they were asked, they told that they were Armenians. They told that they were Armenians who once took refuge in Circassians in Uzunyayla, that they had the Circassian culture, language. They told that when they were bringing a bride, they did it in Christian way and afterwards had Circassian marriage. There are things like that. ...One day Istanbul Caucasian Culture Association was unable to pay its rent. Again a brother told that. He said that the president [of the association] told him to go to an address in Grand Bazaar [*Kapalıçarşı*], a shop and tell them that we needed that much amount of money and that “you come from us.” He went there, an old gentleman meets him, he told him and when he said he was coming from the Caucasian Culture Association, the old man said “welcome and come in”. The old man asked, and he gave the message. The old man, he says, said “Certainly, my son.” [*Hayhay, evladım.*] and immediately opened the safe and said “tell them my greetings, and whenever they need it, you are welcome”. [*“Evladım selamımı söyle, ne zaman ihtiyaçları olursa buyurun.”*] He said that he went back and said “there are Circassians like that!” [*“Ne Çerkesler de varmış.”*], the president laughed and said that he was not a Circassian, he was an Armenian.”¹³⁶

Hence Circassian memories of Armenians do not only include the terms of deportation, massacre, genocide etc., and their memories do not contain numbers of

¹³⁵ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹³⁶ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara

deported or massacred people but very personal stories which are engaged in each other, which continued for almost a century. In these stories, Armenians are relatives, friends; they are people with names and stories. Cezmi, aged 65, tells Zeynep's story which is embedded in his family's story and which extends to the Republican era:

“In 1910s, on a day of fall, a Circassian group with 8-10 carriages moved from the village of Gemerek¹³⁷ to an Armenian village called Burhan. ...Close to the village, my grandfather ...heard the sound of guns and told the carriages to stop. Then an Ottoman gendarmarie battalion came and advised the group to leave, they told that this village should be sent to Lebanon or Syria but that the Armenian gangs that took refuge in this village opened fire. The Circassian carriers who were going back to Uzunyayla shouted my grandfather, they told them they heard a baby cry among the bushes. My grandfather who got off from his horse and looked at the bushes saw a baby who was almost 6 months old; her mother left her while she was being sent to death. ...When they got home, they gave the baby to my father's nursing mother, one of the *wunewuts*,¹³⁸ slaves. They called her Zeynep. Zeynep became the sister of my father.They were raising Zeynep as their own daughter, both the family and the village was trying a lot to avoid Zeynep from learning about her origins. One day my uncle's wife ...requested water from Zeynep, they waited a long time for Zeynep who went out to take water. ...They looked everywhere in the village but she never came back. My old grandfather who lost his daughter got sick because of desolation, my father who lost his sister was a child back then, and our house was burdened with a deep mourning. ...After this, almost half a century passed. One day gendarmarie brought our home an envelope with a heading of General Secretariat of the President.Inside the envelope, there was a letter to my father from our aunt Zeynep. ...It was the years of Democrat Party government, 1950s. ...the president of the time Celal Bayar in his trip to America where he was invited by Eisenhower was in a visit to a motor factory and there was a young person among the guests with a very sad face ...he told them that his mother came to America from Turkey while she was a kid and since then she was crying and looking for a Circassian family who raised her. He told that her mother wrote that letter when their visit to factory was heard. ...the president who got very influenced by the event ordered his secretariat to deal with the issue.My father who opened the letter cried that Zeynep was still alive. Our aunt Zeynep came to Turkey afterwards, I saw her too. Our

¹³⁷ Gemerek is a district of Sivas.

¹³⁸ *Wunewut* is a social stratum among the Circassians. Within the traditional class structure, it is considered the lowest. As *wunewut* can be and is sometimes translated into Turkish as *köle*, (slave); some Circassians state that the relationships between the *wunewut* and upper classes were different in nature and hence, the concept is different from slavery. As not all Circassian tribes have such social strata; these concepts, to some extent, have vanished.

aunt was taken to America like that: her uncle, brother and husband of her aunt who got alive from the conflict in Gemerek came to Turkey as American citizen. Starting from Gemerek, they followed the trails of their daughter. After they found about her location... When they found her alone, they made her pass out with ether. ...Zeynep cried for days, they told her that she was Armenian and their daughter. ...They went to Beirut from Hatay and then arrived to America. After a couple of years, she became the bride of a rich Armenian family that owned the motor factory.”¹³⁹

Furthermore, Circassian memories of Armenians point to dates later than 1915. In these relationships as deportation/massacre/violence is the theme, there are other themes such as cooperation, trust and friendship. Cezmi tells the end of such a relationship:

“They were his children in Şarkışla, they had a big store, they had a draper store. When the events of 1956-57 in which the minorities were ravaged took place, they got so afraid. I never forget, it was a summer day, a truck came from the road of Şarkışla to the village. My mother asked them “Welcome, Ohannes Usta,¹⁴⁰ are you selling something?” They sometimes used to come to the village and sell fabric. “No,” he said, “this time our visit is painful. We decided; we are leaving our homeland.” ...Then my father came, he asked what happened, they told that when those events happened in Istanbul, Ankara; in the bazaar that drapers were located, people were hitting them with shoulders and telling them things, that they had no chance of survival. “So what are you going to do?”, “Well, we came here for that” ...he told “I know that your house is big, your barn and warehouse is big, all of these are naphthalined, they are balls that will not be spoiled. ...Let them stay here. Starting from today count ten years. Within ten years, if one of us will return back, we believe that you will give us these without even a missing meter.” They trusted so much, they did not give to any Turkish family. ...Well, we do know Armenians more than Avagyan.”¹⁴¹

None of them returned. Ten or eleven years later, when Cezmi’s family started spending less of their time in the village, her mother got concerned that those textile balls in their yarn would get spoiled. She refused to use the textile and with the help and advice of *müftü* [the state official for religious affairs in the districts], Cezmi convinced her that these textiles could be used. They, finally, gave them to a girls’ orphanage in Talas, Kayseri and

¹³⁹ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁴⁰ In Turkish, *usta* is an expression used for artisans.

¹⁴¹ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

the textiles were transformed into dresses by a woman group to be worn by the girls on a national commemoration.

Based on these memories with Armenian friends, foster children, relatives, and neighbors; Circassians claim that the accounts of Armenian genocide/deportation/massacre that call Circassians participants ignore their memories, their voice and their experiences. After telling his simultaneous encounters with Armenians, Cezmi reacts to one of these accounts:

“I wonder if Arsen Avagyan knows about the existence of hundred of Armenian kids with life histories similar to Zeynep who lived in Central Anatolia and who were protected by the Circassians. Or while analyzing Armenian and Circassian relationships, did he need to look at the relationships of friendship and neighborhood between the Circassian people and Armenian people which are beyond the soldiers and administrators that took orders from the Ottoman Empire? Of course, what they call as agents of genocide was 3-5 soldiers who were given orders; this is easy to explain. Well, he is saying that by way of using the documents of official ideology which do not need to be explored. Through scapegoating an ethnic group which is unable to voice itself, which he considers defenseless, [this is] having a thesis in the easiest way and getting on the agenda with a popular issue.”¹⁴²

However, the concerns of Circassians *vis-à-vis* the claims of agency in the Armenian question are beyond the arguments of Arsen Avagyan. Their concerns over how knowledge is being and going to be produced in the near future regard the way Turkish state is going to deal with the Armenian question. Metin, a lawyer, aged 62 voices these concerns over the very selective and political nature of the production of knowledge:

“I am afraid of this: there will be a time when Turkey will no longer be able to deny it, there will be proving documents everywhere. As a result, Turkey will have to accept it. I am afraid that, then, they will say that this is done not by Turkey but by Circassians and Kurds. I am afraid that they will make us pay the bill. I am concerned that this is going to be both the state’s official policy and unfortunately, intellectuals will lead this.”¹⁴³

In terms of the debates on Armenian questions, the very politically correct search for a public sphere to share and voice pain ironically represses the very voice of the people

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

who claim that they remember, share and hear about these events. From such a perspective, their relationship with Armenians is not just massacre, genocide, violence, deportation or economic confiscations but also friendships, cooperation, trust, neighborhood and solidarity which all worked as mechanisms of resistance *vis-à-vis* state violence. Without exploring these relationships, what remains is the absolute categories of oppressor and oppressed in the bloody lands of massacre and genocide. Such an approach creates monolithic blocks of victims and victimizers as the people and groups of Anatolia have several stories to tell about its multiethnic, multireligious and multilingual history.

5.6. Changing the Boundaries of Knowledge: Talking about the Silence and the Break

Since 1990s, Circassian activists have reclaimed and reconstructed the diasporic past through the notions of the silence and the break. Circassian activists reinvent the past and hence transform Circassian identity through “unveiling the silence and the break”.

Circassian activists, since 1990s, narrate on the memoirs of a break which is the elimination of the Circassians from the public sphere with the transformation from the Empire to nation-state. The argument that has been frequently used since 1990s is that this transformation from a multi-cultural and multilingual empire to a nation-state that is based on one language, one ethnic group and one religion had been destructive for the Circassians in the newly-formed Turkish republic. As the newly established republic lost its urban bourgeoisie with population exchanges, migrations and wars; Circassians also lost its own urban bourgeoisie and intellectuals.

Most Circassian I interviewed highlight that throughout 1960s, 1970s they were unaware of Circassian organizations, newspapers and their activities of the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. Circassian Union and Mutual Aid Association (established after 1908 and closed in 1923 by the republican regime) the first Circassian school in Istanbul, Circassian women’s Mutual aid society, newspapers *Guaze*, *İkdam* and *Diyane* were all

beyond the knowledge of the second generation of Circassian activists that emerged after 1960s:

“We were not aware of these organizations, newspapers. Today we start to learn and think about them. But back in those days we had no idea. Now I realize that I used to know the people who were in those organizations. But they were not talking. And we never asked. I wish we would have asked.”¹⁴⁴

“Unfortunately this is a reality. Of course, I heard about it. But we absolutely had no information on those organizations. The people active in those organizations and wrote in those newspapers mentioned a little. But they kept it for themselves like a privilege. I don’t know whether or not they had an intention like that. I don’t want to blame them but this is the practical conclusion. They could not present that to us, they did not. I met the Guaze newspaper in 1978. This is so late. I should have learned about that at least in 1968.”¹⁴⁵

The unwillingness of the first generation to speak, to inform, to share their experiences and stories with the next generation is quite critical here and this silence about the past is narrated by the Circassian diaspora nationalists as mostly related to newly established Turkish Republic which prioritized Turkish identity, Turkish language and Sunni Islam.

Hence, Circassian associations which were opened in 1950s and Circassian activists of the time started anew without any idea of the previous organizations. It was as if they were the first group of Circassian activists and it was as if before them there was no activity as far as Circassians were concerned. The lack of knowledge of a Circassian school, organizations and newspapers deprived the Circassian activists of a history of activism and organizations.

Without the acknowledgement that they were the continuation of a group of Circassian organizations, intellectuals and activists; Circassian activists narrated, thought and organized as if they were “the first”. Furthermore, –this time- coming from the rural areas of Turkey they lacked information on the experiences of the Circassian urban bourgeoisie which was part of the Ottoman administrative elite. Hence Circassian activism from 1950s till 1990s lacked information on the first generation of Circassian nationalists.

¹⁴⁴ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴⁵ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

The second generation of 1960s started anew only with a history of immigration and an idea of a distant homeland. The first generation, the Circassian urban bourgeoisie and intellectuals were unwilling to speak up and willing to be assimilated. This break between the two generations which is due to the transformation from empire to a nation-state shaped Circassian society.

Since the 1990s, ashes of the first generation Circassian activism during the Ottoman era are being found. Explorations into the past are quite shocking for the Circassian activists. Research on these organizations, publications, the translations of the newspapers and documents produced at the time are now being done. For instance. Guaze, the first Circassian newspaper published in 1911 in Ottoman and Adyghe, is now –in year 2008- being translated into Turkish. Family albums are now being explored to follow the tracks of these first generation activists. Contemporary activists today find their origins not in the 1970s but in the early twentieth century, not in a nation-state but in a multilingual, multiethnic and multireligious empire. Narrating on the break means to reconstruct a new past not only shaped by the policies of the nation-state but also first generation of Circassian activists who displayed agency as Circassians and Ottoman patriots, simultaneously.

Quite related to “the break” the people I interviewed mentioned about the silence when I asked them what they heard from their relatives, elders, on particular instances such as exile, Cerkes ethem Affair, Citizen speak Turkish campaigns. Mostly the answer is “they would not talk,” “they would just stare, look far away and they would not talk”. As silence in itself may tell a lot, the pain, the trauma, the displacement, the fears of being the migrant again, “the shame of being the migrant, the guest;” narratives of Circassian activists on silence are also significant in terms of post-1990s. The very act of remembering, voicing and unveiling the silence and the break is empowering as far as Circassians are concerned.

In 1975, in a magazine published for by Circassians, a poem by Karden D. calls for a diasporic voice.

“This is the return of the Circassian
To Circassianhood
This is the growth of the crops...

The eyes are sharper
And this time the vision is very clear.
This space should be ours,
This game should be from us.
And our voice should be as loud as it can be.
This time we should talk.
This is the time.
We should write,
 Shout
 Tell.”¹⁴⁶

This demand for a diasporic voice to break the silence is going to be public in the 1990s when the Caucasian (*Kafkas*) Associations and some Circassian activists considered the year of 1864 the “Great Circassian Exile” (*Büyük Çerkes Sürgünü*) which has been symbolically commemorated every year, on May 21. During the last decade, statements on Circassian exile have become public notices in some newspapers. One of these statements declared:

“Up until this day, we have survived, fought and died for others. Up until this day, we have become the heroes for others’ ideologies, religions, aims and interests. Up until today, we have sung the songs of others’, played their games. Up until today, we have had others’ dreams. From now on, we are asking ourselves: will that continue?.. Will we be indifferent to our removal from history? Will we be quiet while all of our tribes are disappearing like the Ubikhs? Black Sea was a sea of death and exile for us. We want to reconcile with Black Sea. We want to reconcile with our history and geography. We want to reconcile with ourselves, our culture and we want to exist. We want our songs and our dreams.”¹⁴⁷

Reconciling with history means reconstructing the past. The reconstruction of a past which tells a lot about the silence and the break transforms Circassians in Turkey from being a group with no actual historical and geographical links to the homeland, other diasporic

¹⁴⁶ Karden D., *Yamçı* 2 (December 1975), 45.

¹⁴⁷ From the declaration of Democratic Circassian Platform (DCP), on May 20, 2001 that was published on some of the national newspapers with the donations of several Circassians. The next declaration in 2002 was titled “We Want Our Dreams and Our Songs Back.” For the declaration in May 2002, see the DCP website <<http://demokratikcerkesplatformu.org/surgun.htm>> (20 May 2009).

communities and the host country to an historical entity who has relationships with the homeland, transnational networks and host community. These multiple diasporic connections have been intensified with the processes of the globalization: the diaspora is now linked to the homeland and other diasporic communities politically, economically, culturally through tourist tours, conferences, social and political organizations, cyber space etc. However, the processes of globalization also change the boundaries of knowledge on Circassian society, history and identity. Reconstruction of the past, narrating on the break and the silence are the mechanisms of breaking the break and the silence. Voicing the break and the silence becomes a diasporic strategy not only to overcome these historical conditions but also redefine Circassian identity and diasporic experience as agents. Since the 1990s, Circassians in Turkey becomes a diasporic group with a history and a voice to talk about it. From such a perspective, Circassians in Turkey is an instance to explore how boundaries of knowledge pertaining to identity, inclusion, exclusion, ethnicity, past and present are challenged, deconstructed, reclaimed and reconstructed within the processes of diasporization and globalization.

5.7. New Visions of a Diasporic Future

The final part of this chapter aims to explore how Circassian activists in Turkey envisage the future as a diasporic community. Apart from the various personal projects of collecting antiques, writing books and dictionaries, producing documentaries, opening exhibits, publishing journals and newspapers, translating multiple books, and working in the organizations; Circassian activists have also some reflections on future.

Among these reflections are the changes in the meaning of the name “Circassian.” In the future, Circassian identity may be further transformed into new identifications in line with new political developments in the homeland. For Hasan, such a process of the

formation of new identities beyond “Circassian” has started even before the 1990s; yet, it has accelerated with the political events in the Caucasus:

“It particularly accelerated after 1990 but it started before. Daghistanis, Chechnians, Abkhazians started establishing organizations of their own. So when we came to the mid 1990s; there was Daghistani association, Chechnian association, Ossetian association, Abkhazian association. There was no association titled as Adyghe. In 1990, when the associations were united [in a federation], some of our friends proposed to use Circassian as a name. Circassian is a more political name, it is not neutral. ...The decision was made as Caucasian.”¹⁴⁸

What Hasan highlights is the emergence and consolidation of micro identities -such as Chechnian, Ossetian, Abkhazian which can be explained in terms of the developments in the homeland, such as the Abkhazian War, Chechnian War, and the conflict in Ossetia. Each of these wars and conflicts has been experienced as a result of different problems and relations. Hence these developments in the homeland have led to the differentiation of respective groups in diaspora who have different problems in the homeland. Therefore, starting from the mid 1990s, Circassians in Turkey have been discussing which groups can and should be considered Circassian. This process of consolidation of new national identities and their divergence from the name Circassian is also experienced in terms of organizations: each of these groups today have their own associations bearing their own ethnic names. For Şener, these developments in the homeland have different implications for each diasporic group:

“In the current situation that we have reached, each group should live its own processes. Well, this should be set: Adyghe and Abkhaz are two different peoples. Chechnians, Ossetians, Daghistanis, Karachays are different. They are all common in destiny; exile made all these [groups] common in destiny. ...They all have diasporas. ...The assimilation of 5000-10000 Chechnians or Ossetians do not influence the destiny of Chechnia or Ossetia. But assimilation of Adighes and Abkhazs in diaspora will result in the disappearance of Adyghe and Abkhaz culture from world history. The situation is that much dramatic.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

¹⁴⁹ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

As the meanings of the name Circassian is still an ongoing debate, Circassian diaspora nationalists in Turkey also state that after the 1990s, the responsibilities of the Circassians in Turkey as a community have increased. Meral highlights that there has emerged new missions for the diaspora and diaspora should aim to go beyond the protection of culture:

“After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the *raison d’être* and claims of Circassians living in Turkey have been transformed. Before it was coming together, having organizations, celebrating the culture and making it survive. After that, the low caliber [*düşük kalibreli*] claim of protecting and developing the society and culture, protecting the culture, dances etc. is suddenly transformed into a claim of existence in history. Because we saw that Circassians in the Caucasus were on a fragile ground. It was understood that they were on very fragile ground with their population density, economic situation and their power in the Republics which bear their names.”¹⁵⁰

As the necessity of the Circassians in Turkey acting as a diaspora is highlighted as a vision for future, the traditional elements of Circassian identity are also being redefined. For example, as the activists beyond the age of mid 60s constantly highlight the significance of the protection of the language as a national asset, today some Circassian activists in their middle ages narrate on alternative national identifications that go beyond language. The reasons of such a turn is pragmatic, today most young Circassians living in urban centers are not speakers of Circassian at all and currently, there are no attempts by the state nor the Circassians to open new educational institutions within which Circassian can be taught in a systematic way in early ages of childhood. Hence activists highlight the necessity of other definitions of Circassian identity that go beyond language as Şener, Kaya, and Hakan, respectively state:

“We have to prepare ourselves to those days within which we can be Circassians without Circassian language. And we have to refrain from reducing Circassian identity solely to language. Because language is a very fragile notion. We have to be Circassians while speaking Russian.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵¹ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

“Language is a good thing if the life of your language is sustained. But if it is not, it is not the end of everything. Today there is still an Irish culture but it is not a culture that lives in its language. Many examples can be given. ...There is also a reality that we have to accept. Globalization is a process that will accelerate the disappearance of languages in the coming days. It seems that we will accept it. Rather than laments, [*vah vah deđil de*] we will accept it a little.”¹⁵²

“We have to have some works on that. But on the other hand, language should not be considered as the first determinant of being a Circassian anymore. Because identity and national belonging are not always defined through language. Though nationalist ideology proposes that... Especially in Turkey, speaking Turkish is one of the basic parts of being a Turk. ...But there are very different examples in the world. ...The fact that all of us speak Turkish does not necessitate that we are Turks. ...We may speak Turkish, our mother tongue may be Turkish, we may not know or we may know our language to some extent and we can still say that we are Circassians.”¹⁵³

Therefore Circassian activists envisage a future within which these new formulations of Circassian identity will be explored. Through these new formulations they aim to overcome the –Russian and Turkish- nation-states’ policies.

As the activists search for new identifications that are less based on traditional notions and categories for the future, they also envisage new forms of relating to Caucas in the future. These new relations which they hope to build in the near future are alternative means of relating to the homeland as a diasporic community. The idea of return which was hotly debated in the mid 1960s and 1970s is now being replaced by multiple means, forms and routes of connecting to the homeland. Almost all of the Circassian activists regard the Caucasus as a part of their personal visions of future. Yet most of them imagine a “six months here, six months there” future in addition to commercial relations, touristic trips, researches on the Caucasus, educational activities etc. Şener, Köksal, Hakan, Hicran and Özer respectively explore the role of the Caucasus in their future plans:

“We already have organic ties. I am already connected with commercial reasons even if nothing else happens. But what is important for me is buying a house there, spending some seasons or some months of the years there.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Kaya, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵³ Hakan, interview by author, 3 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁴ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

“Going to the Caucasus, owning a house there. Even if I do not spend all my life there, spending 5 or 6 months there and 5 or 6 months in Turkey. I think about living as a person who has a house both here and there. But I do not know when I will have that chance.”¹⁵⁵

“I do not think that in that sense. I do not think that as leaving everything here and starting a new life there. But I will absolutely have a relationship with that place. Based on future conditions, I would like to have a house there, I would like to go in particular periods. Even if that does not happen, my child may go to a summer camp there, s/he may somehow come and go. I think about such a relationship for myself. But still there should be a project of return in the community level.”¹⁵⁶

“I think about it in the long run. I do not necessarily plan to spend the whole year there. Maybe I will live six months. It is a phase of transition. Because all my family is living here. I cannot tell them that I am going and they, too, can come; they would not come anyway. ...You do not have to disconnect, why should you disconnect? ...Wherever I am, it will be a part of my life, it will either be part of my research or I will frequently go there. I feel restless in those years within which I do not go to Abkhazia.”¹⁵⁷

“A lot of projects such as my son’s opening of a rock café in Nalchik or Maikop who may be a rocker in the future, producing in Circassian language, or having a mountain house comes to my mind sometimes. But I also care about living multilocational. ...I would like my child or children to learn Circassian if I can manage it. I may think about bringing a nanny. ...I do not know whether it will be my primary place of living. ...But I would very much like that: it can also be on the individual level, it can be as a family; we will go more frequently as a family, that is for sure; but I would like to go there more frequently though not completely.”¹⁵⁸

As most of the activists plan a future that is embedded in the Caucasus in ways that are not based on return *per se*, old ideas of return also find an exceptional place in some narratives. Yet even in these narratives of future plans of return, Circassian activists

¹⁵⁵ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁶ Hakan, interview by author, 3 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁷ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁸ Özer, interview by author, January 2008, İstanbul.

imagine a life that is very related to Turkey and Turkish politics as Neval's future plans on returning to the Caucasus highlight:

“What I would like to realize is returning to the homeland and creating the conditions for that. That task will not remain as undone. For that matter, there is something that I have been waiting for. ...There are a couple of years for that. ...After that, my work will not still be completed. Even if it will be from there, I would like to contribute to the democratic struggle for Circassians who will remain behind. ...During the times that I live here, efforts for the democratization of Turkey should be made. Because this will benefit us. Because of that I have criticized our associations and those people in the associations for years. We lived very enclosed, we should have been more open. We should have told more about ourselves. It would not be called leftism, it would not be called communism. Done carefully and consciously, it would not be dividing the Republic of Turkey. But we should have explained that we should have had some rights and that we had been disappearing. Civil society organizations were the ideal place for that.”¹⁵⁹

Therefore to the extent that the Caucasus is part of the future that they imagine, politics of Turkey and particularly democratization in Turkey are significant in terms of their visions of future. As a diasporic community, they regard themselves as located in two geographies and two countries more when compared to the 1970s and before. Hence - literally- all of the activists demand dual citizenship to fully situate themselves as a diasporic community. Their ideas on future are focused on dual citizenship, dual identities, multiple concerns and multiple locations.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter aims to explore the transformation of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey during the last two decades. Starting from 1990s, the end of Soviet Union and

¹⁵⁹ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

Cold War, globalization processes, liberalization in Turkey, Turkey's relationships with European Union and the rise of various nationalisms in Turkey have all contributed to the transformation of Circassian activists and Circassians in Turkey. Parallel to these developments, it has been argued that the minority strategy that took place in the 1990s as a reaction against the rise of Turkish and other nationalisms is now being substituted by a diasporic identity, which has become the principal strategizing tool of Circassians in Turkey.¹⁶⁰

I argue that rather than an emergence of a diasporic identity anew, Circassian diaspora activists have gained strength in terms of their claims *vis-à-vis* the nation-states. During the last two decades, Circassian diaspora in Turkey have been more visible and active not only on the organizational level but also in terms of their relationships with the homeland, host state, and other ethnic groups. Hence 1990s have acted as one of the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey. However, the processes of diasporization of 1990s have also brought new problems and tensions. When compared to the steady, timid, limited and predictable years of Cold War; Circassian diaspora activists have been dealing with diasporic chaos in terms of their group dynamics and their relationships with the homeland, host state, and other groups for the last two decades.

¹⁶⁰ A. Kaya, "Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey," *Mediterranean Politics*, 9:2 (2004): 221-239, 221.

CHAPTER 6

DIASPORA NATIONALISM AND GENDER

In September 2006, Mustafa Aksu, in his book called “Being a Gypsy in Turkey” gave a list of artists and politicians who were originally Roma and stated that being a Roma in Turkey means hiding the ethnic identity.¹ Among the list that was quickly appropriated by the media was Türkan Şoray, who is considered the Sultana of the Turkish cinema since 1960s and who is claimed to be a typical Turkish woman with certain qualities.² As the artists who were mentioned in the list reacted to the list immediately; in some Turkish nationalist internet groups, the claim about Türkan Şoray was rejected on the basis that she was definitely a Turk. A month later, in an interview, Şoray rejected the claim that she was a Roma and declared that she was a Circassian and that her beauty made her Circassian origins obvious. In the interview, she was asked whether she had ever played the role of a Circassian girl as she had played the role of a gypsy girl several times. Şoray replied that she had never played the role of a Circassian girl.³ Meanwhile as the Sultana was trying to

¹ See “Çingeneler Kitap Sayfalarına Girdi,” *Sabah*, 14 September 2006, <<http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/09/14/gny/gny119-20060914-200.html>> (17 April 2009).

² S. Büker, “The Film Does not End with an Ecstatic Kiss,” in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, eds. D. Kandiyoti and A. Saktanber (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 147-170, 158. Similarly, Atilla Dorsay, the famous cinema critique in Turkey who analyzed the legend of the Sultana in his book called *The Prisoner Woman of the Hyacinth Street [Sümbül Sokağın Tutsak Kadını]* stated that Türkan Şoray is “very much Turkish just like Catherine Deneuve is very much French and Sophia Loren is very much Italian.” Dorsay also states that his own celebration of Sultana as the pure and chaste star with her own rules in cinema indicates that “he, too, is a typical Turkish man.” See “Türk Erkeği Gibi Bakmışım,” *Milliyet*, 26 November 1997, <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1997/11/26/entel/entel.html>> (15 April 2009).

³ In reality, Şoray could have never played the role of a Circassian girl because unlike the gypsy girl character, Circassian girl is not part of the Turkish movies. The invisibility of the Circassian girl in Turkish movies which is different from the gypsy girl is ironic given the different meanings attached to the two

get rid of her place in the list of gypsy artists and politicians without hurting Roma in Turkey, Circassians on the internet were celebrating Sultana's announcement of her ethnic identity: the Sultana of the Turkish cinema who was celebrated as the ideal Turkish woman was a Circassian who was now searching for her ethnic past and family history;⁴ the interview with Sultana was published with the title "An Interview with a Circassian Woman: Türkan Şoray" on some Circassian websites.⁵ The list and Sultana's declaration of her ethnic origins afterwards also triggered some ongoing debates on the internet about Circassians and their claimed Turkish origins: some claimed that Circassians were not a nation *per se* and they were originally Turks while some others claimed that Sultana's declaration was just another instance of minorities' racism *vis-à-vis* "we, the Turks."⁶

I argue that the debates on the ethnic origins of Sultana are instances of the gendered relationships between the Circassian diaspora and host community. It is an instance of how two nationalisms –the dominant one and the diasporic nationalism–struggle through gender. Diaspora nationalism is shaped not only by challenging the nation-state but also by a more subtle web of relations with the host community, homeland and other nationalisms, especially the hegemonic nationalism in the host society. This

identities as exemplified with Şoray's statement. In terms of invisibility, there is an exception. In 1974, when Turkish cinema was dominated by pornographic movies, a movie called *Babayiğit* [*The Virile*] was shot by Behçet Nacar. As the original subject of the movie is "the story of a tough guy and looters who are searching for a treasure" (see <http://kvmgm.kultur.gov.tr/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF404F9755767D76FF56515916B329A1F> ≥ (10 April 2009)), it seems that in the porn movie a girl or some girls were explicitly stated as Circassian. As one of the interviewees told me in his life story, the movie created a great fuss in Düzce. He stated that Circassians in Düzce were gathered in a school yard and they were ready to protest. They later on gave up the protest as the mayor and the governor intervened to resolve the issue. Circassians were told that "Behçet Nacar is not a person like that." and the film was not displayed again. Similarly another Circassian from Düzce, in his presentation in a youth meeting organized by the Caucasus Federation in 2001 criticized the Caucasian organizations in Turkey and mentioned the same event as "the disgrace of the movie *Babayiğit* in history" [*tarihte Babayiğit film rezaleti*] See H. Jan, "Derneklerimizde ve Diğer Kurumlarımızda Örgütlenme İhtiyacı," http://www.kafkasfederasyonu.org/genckaffed/2001/bildiri_hakanjan.htm (6 April 2009). As Behçet Nacar shot 142 movies as the actor or the producer, not all of his movies are available for screening and *Babayiğit* is among them.

⁴ "Çerkes Kızı Olmak Hoşuma Gidiyor," *Vatan*, 28 December 2003, <http://haber.gazetevatan.com/haberdetay.asp?Newsid=19912&Categoryid=1> (30 March 2009).

⁵ "Bir Çerkes Kadını Türkan Şoray'la Bir Söyleşi," <http://zesoga.azbuz.com/readArticle.jsp?objectID=5000000002101903> (17 April 2009).

⁶ For an instance of these online debates in year 2006, see <http://www.frntr.com/genel/608404-turkan-soray-da-cingene-olmadigini-acikladi-2.html> (10 April 2009).

chapter argues that these interconnections are made available to diaspora nationalisms not only by political and technological developments but also by a particular gender regime. These interconnections of diaspora nationalism are significant to understand the terms of survival, resistance and regeneration for diasporas.

The basic hypothesis of this dissertation, that diaspora nationalism is a gendered discourse also implies that the connections of the diasporic community with the homeland and host community are also gendered. Hence, this dissertation deals with the question of how these nationalist constructions link the diasporic community to the host community or simultaneously differentiate it from the host. Circassian diaspora in Turkey defines itself through gender. It proposes that a particular gender discourse has been fundamental for Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey to define and to locate itself *vis-à-vis*/through Turkish nationalism and other ethnic groups in Turkey.

This chapter is an attempt to explore these gendered interconnections, tensions and alliances through the case study of Circassian diaspora nationalism. In particular, it is an analysis of the gendered settings of nationalism in Turkey other than Turkish nationalism.⁷ I argue that studying only the modernist nation-building project of the Republic is not enough to understand the relationship between gender and nationalism in Turkey. Gender studies should pay attention not only to the meanings of all kinds that flow through the images of women⁸ and men but also to the very diversity of the sources of the flows that give meaning to, define, delimit and enable the categories of masculine and feminine. In the case of Turkey, ‘other’ nationalisms which are different from the Turkish nationalism and the Kemalist project of modernity, yet very related to and effected by them are the discourses through which meanings flow through and construct the images of women and men.

⁷For the few analyses that explore the ways in which the ‘other’ nationalisms in Turkey, coexisting with Turkish nationalism are gendered, see S. Mojab, ed., *Devletsiz Ulusun Kadınları: Kürt Kadını Üzerine Araştırmalar* (İstanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2005); L. Yalçın-Heckmann and P. Van Gelder, “‘90’larda Türkiye’de Siyasal Söylemin Dönüşümü Çerçevesinde Kürt Kadınlarının İmajı: Bazı Eleştirel Değerlendirmeler,” in *Vatan, Millet, Kadımlar*, ed. A. G. Altınay (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 325-355.

⁸ Warner quoted in S. Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: the Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4.

Circassian diaspora nationalism, coexisting with Turkish nationalism is one of those 'other' nationalisms within which gendered dimensions of nationalism are constantly narrated, experienced, reformed and recreated. Hence, to explore nationalism of the Circassian diaspora in Turkey that is different from but profoundly interweaved to the Republican project of nation-building will bring us the category of women and men whose very subjectivities, oppressions and resistances are shaped not only by multiple discourses such as Turkish nationalism, Kemalism or modernity but also by multiple nationalisms in Turkey.

Thus, this chapter investigates the roles of the Circassian women in terms of shaping the Circassian national consciousness in Turkey and the Turkish perception of the Circassians. This chapter will first explore the literature on diaspora, nationalism and gender. It will then explore the image of the Circassian Beauty as a historical category which is crucial for diaspora to locate itself *vis-à-vis* homeland, host community and other geographies such as Europe. Finally, this chapter aims to explore the gendered dimensions of diaspora nationalism.

6.1. Gendering the Diaspora Literature

In 1885, in his article “The Laws of Migration” delivered to the Journal of the Statistical Society of London, the pioneer theorist of international migration, E.G. Ravenstein noted that “woman is a greater migrant than man” since females are more migratory than males within the kingdom of their birth, but males more frequently venture beyond.⁹

⁹ E. G. Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 48(2)(1885): 167-235, 196-197.

Despite Ravenstein's argument, until 1970s, research on migration focused exclusively on male migrants and considered women passive companions.¹⁰ "The invisibility of women in international migration scholarship does not correspond to the reality of international migration. Women migrate across international boundaries at approximately the same rate as men."¹¹ Starting from 1970s and 1980s, scholarship on migration has attempted to correct this lack of women in the accounts of migratory flows. During the last decade, the study of the relationships between gender and migration has offered insight into the feminization of migration flows and the establishment of transnational families whose networks expand globally and which are fundamental for the operations of economy and culture in late capitalism.¹² Yet there are still topics that remain under-appreciated, under-researched and under-theorized. For instance, apart from those studies which, following the feminization of labor in the early 1980s, often have stressed the dangers for women from developing countries working in nightlife industries abroad,¹³ migrant women selling sex are claimed to be ignored in migrant and diaspora studies just like male, transsexual and transgender migrants who sell sex.¹⁴ Similarly Pessar and Mahler argues that areas such as the role of the state and social imaginary in gendering transnational processes and experiences are previously neglected and in need of inquiry and understanding.¹⁵

¹⁰ P. R. Pessar, S. Mahler, "Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In," *International Migration Review* 37(3)(2003): 812-846, 814.

¹¹ D. L. DeLaet, "Introduction: The Invisibility of Women in Scholarship on International Migration," in *Gender and Immigration*, eds. G. A. Kelson, D. L. Delaet, (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 1-17, 13.

¹² L. Passerini, D. Lyon, E. Capussotti and I. Laliotou, "Editors' Introduction," in *Women Migrants From East to West: Gender, Mobility and Belonging in Contemporary Europe*, eds. L. Passerini, D. Lyon, E. Capussotti and I. Laliotou, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 1-20, 2.

¹³ A. Hisdon, "Transnationalism and Agency in East Malaysia: Filipina Migrants in the Nightlife Industries," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 18(2) (2007): 172-193, 173.

¹⁴ L. Agustin, "The Disappearing of a Migration Category: Migrants Who Sell Sex," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32(1)(2006): 29-47.

¹⁵ P. R. Pessar, S. Mahler, "Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In," *International Migration Review* 37(3)(2003): 812-846, 812.

Diaspora studies employ and enhance gender as a category of analysis¹⁶ even less when compared to the scholarship on migration. There is a tendency in the theoretical accounts of diaspora to “to talk of travel and displacement in unmarked ways, thus normalizing male experiences”¹⁷ and analyses that focus on the domains of diasporic complexity such as gender and class are mostly lacking.¹⁸ Even for the studies on African diaspora which has virtually exploded in the early 1990s, the use of gender as a category of analysis remains as a challenge.¹⁹

Yet diasporic experiences, formations, histories and narratives are not independent of gender but grounded on gendered meanings, practices, hierarchies, discourses and experiences. Such a perspective considers “gender relations playing an important role in reproducing social capital, reinforcing the cultural norms of the historic ‘homeland’ and negotiating the provision of care.”²⁰ Furthermore, women play a key role in the staging of diasporic origin through the family and complex, dynamic and critical processes that lie at the heart of new understandings of cultural identifications.²¹ Highlighting the need to gender the diaspora literature, Anthias refers to two different levels that diaspora studies should analyze: first level considers the ways in which men and women of the diaspora are inserted into the social relations of the host community, within the diaspora communities and within the transnational networks of the diaspora; second level explores how gendered relations are constitutive of the identities of the groups themselves.²²

The existing studies on diaspora with a focus on gender have revealed that the way the nation and the diaspora are interlocked is shaped by particular gender ideologies,

¹⁶ J. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ J. Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3)(1994): 302-338, 313.

¹⁸ F. Anthias, “Evaluating “Diaspora”: Beyond Ethnicity?” *Sociology* 32(3)(1998): 557-580, J. Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3)(1994): 302-338.

¹⁹ S. Gunning, T. W. Hunter, M. Mitchell, “Introduction: Gender, Sexuality, and African Diasporas,” *Gender and History* 15(3)(2003): 397-408, 398.

²⁰ V. Evergeti, “Living and Caring between Two Cultures,” *Community, Work and Family* 9(3)(2006): 347-266, 347.

²¹ G. Tsolidis, “The Role of the Maternal in Diasporic Cultural Reproduction –Australia, Canada and Greece,” *Social Semiotics* 11(2)(2001): 193-208, 193.

²² F. Anthias, “Evaluating “Diaspora”: Beyond Ethnicity?” *Sociology* 32(3)(1998): 557-580, 572.

constructions and relations: gender ideologies are a fundamental subtext which informs the individual strategies that men and women use to straddle the gap between 'nation' and 'diaspora'.²³ Diasporic identities and belonging are contested, forged, negotiated and reaffirmed through and alongside gender.²⁴

When analyzed from a gender perspective, diasporic communities enhance collective identities that are formed through the patriarchal dominance of male diasporic leaders; the exploitation of diasporic women, women's cultural invocation as objects of male gaze; and the formulation of a particular role imposed on and expected from women.²⁵ The attempt to maintain the connections with the homelands, with kinship networks, and with traditions may renew patriarchal structures.²⁶ While defining diaspora as "potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings", Brah regards diaspora also as conjuring images of violence and trauma where women's lives are shaped by 'articulating relations of power'.²⁷ Mojab and Gorman, in their study of Kurdish women's organizations in Canada, Britain, Sweden and Iraqi Kurdistan, argue that state and patriarchal violence surrounding these women's organizations is erased when their efforts are viewed through the lens of transnationality and diaspora theories.²⁸

Though these accounts are crucial in unmasking gender hierarchies in diaspora communities, they do not pay attention to how diasporic condition and identities may empower the members of the community. Some transnational diasporic organizations built by women allow women to transcend their local identity as 'victims' and gain a professional and personal liberation within the limits set by the diasporic contexts that

²³ B. S. A. Yeoh, and K. Willis, "'Heart' and 'Wing', Nation and Diaspora: Gendered Discourses in Singapore's Regionalization Process," *Gender, Place and Culture* 6(4)(1999): 355-372.

²⁴ L. Siu, "Queen of the Chinese Colony: Gender, Nation, and Belonging in Diaspora," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78(3)(2005), 511-542.

²⁵ Respectively F. Anthias, "Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity?" *Sociology* 32(3)(1998): 557-580; G. Gopinath, "Bombay, UK, Yuba City: Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora," *Diaspora* 4(3)(1995): 303-322; S. Gold, "Gender and Social Capital among Israeli Immigrants in Los Angeles," *Diaspora* 4(3)(1995): 267-301.

²⁶ J. Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3)(1994): 302-338, 313, 314.

²⁷ A. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 1996), 193, 90.

²⁸ S. Mojab, and R. Gorman, "Dispersed Nationalism: War, Diaspora and Kurdish Women's Organizing," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3(1)(2007): 58-85, 60.

assign women the role of the guardian of the national boundaries.²⁹ In addition to that, women in the diaspora may use their educational and employment achievements to renegotiate gender relations.³⁰ From such a perspective, greater economic power may give women a stronger and more authoritative voice as decision makers in family and financial affairs and hence, blur the traditional markers of gender and social status.³¹ Geschwender's findings on the Chinese diaspora in California, British Columbia and Hawaii suggests that the expanded participation of Chinese women in North America strongly suggests, but does not unequivocally demonstrate, that a normative change took place in which the cult of domesticity was rejected or modified.³²

Yet, drawing from interviews with software engineers in Silicon Valley and Bangalore, Radhakrishnan argues that a new discourse of belonging to India is a fundamentally gendered one that relies on the ability of professional women to make delicate balances between an "Indian" home life and a "global" professional life.³³ Furthermore, analyzing the ways in which different classes in India accommodate the diaspora in their imaginations, Moorti underlines that as the presence of the diaspora in popular culture helps produce new subjectivities such as that of the new Indian woman through which diaspora extends the terrain of India beyond the contours of the nation-state, the female body remains a site where a range of anxieties about globalization is encoded and hence, a site shaped by and regulated by 'tradition' and Indian values.³⁴ Hence, it is

²⁹ P. Werbner, "The Place Which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28(1)(2002): 119-133; D. Kostovicova and A. Prestreshi., "Education, Gender and Religion: Identity Transformations among Kosovo Albanians in London," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29(6)(2003): 1079-1096.

³⁰H. Ramji, "Engendering Diasporic Identities," in *South Asian Women in the Diaspora*, ed. N. Puwar (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003), 227-242.

³¹ C. A. Babou, "Migration and Cultural Change: Money, "Caste," Gender, and Social Status among Senegalese Female Hair Braiders in the United States," *AfricaToday* 55(2)(2008): 3-22, 17.

³² J. A. Geschwender, "Ethnicity and Social Construction of Gender in the Chinese Diaspora," *Gender and Society* 6(3)(1992): 480-507, 503.

³³ S. Radhakrishnan, "Examining the "Global" Indian Middle Class: Gender and Culture in the Silicon Valley/Bangalore Circuit," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29(1)(2008): 7-20, 7.

³⁴ S. Moorti, "Uses of the Diaspora: Indian Popular Culture and NRI Dilemma," *South Asian Popular Culture* 3(1)(2005): 49-62, 49.

quite debatable whether this “emancipated but unliberated”³⁵ condition is experienced as empowerment as far as women are concerned. Transnational practices may “not always be celebratory demonstrations of immigrant agency, but can also act as a mode of transmission for the expansion and perpetuation of traditional gendered hierarchies.”³⁶

In short, diaspora studies that focus on women are limited. Yet masculinity in the diasporic contexts remains unexplored as far as social science is concerned. Helmlich, for instance, describes diasporas as masculinist projects of transnational community formation which are characterized by the metaphor of the scattering of seeds and which “refer us to a system of kinship reckoned through men and suggest the questions of legitimacy in paternity that patriarchy generates.”³⁷ Similarly, Siu plays with Benedict’s Anderson’s idea of nation as “a horizontal comradeship” between men within which nation is imagined not as a hierarchical structure but as a structure within which men see each other as equals and argues that diaspora is a “brotherhood of patrilineages” that is “a non-hierarchical relationship among men of the same generation and among their respective generations of ancestors and descendants who reach beyond the temporal and territorial space of the nation.”³⁸ Sorensen, in her study of Dominican migrants in New York argues that while women do not necessarily appear to suffer from some confusion of identity, men seem to face many more difficulties as a result of the conflicting demands embedded in the Dominican concept of machismo.³⁹ Hence, diasporic identities along with migration may create new masculinities and new ideals of manhood while challenging the old ones. This dissertation aims to contribute to diaspora and gender studies through exploring these unexplored fields.

³⁵D. Kandiyoti, “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case,” *Feminist Studies* (1987): 317-338.

³⁶ M. Walton-Roberts, “Transnational Migration Theory in Population Geography: Gendered Practices in Networks Linking Canada and India,” *Population, Space and Place* 10(2004): 361-373, 361.

³⁷ S. Helmrich, “Kinship, Nation and Paul Gilroy’s Concept of Diaspora,” *Diaspora* 2(1991): 243-249, 245.

³⁸ L. Siu, “Queen of the Chinese Colony: Gender, Nation, and Belonging in Diaspora,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78(3)(2005), 511-542, 520.

³⁹ N. N. Sorensen, “Roots, Routes and Transnational Attractions: Dominican Migration, Gender and Cultural Change,” in *Ethnicity, Gender and the Subversion of Nationalism (Special Issue of European Development Research)*, eds. F. Wilson, B. F. Frederiksen (London: Frank Cass, 1995): 104-118, 110.

Given the limitations of the diaspora literature on gender, a gender study of diaspora communities and diaspora nationalism requires to be complemented by gender theories which have underlined and explored the profoundly gendered discourses and spaces of nationalism.⁴⁰ National projects that aim to build the nation, nation-state and the ethnic group are simultaneously gender projects⁴¹ which operate on various levels. Yuval-Davis and Anthias list the five major ways in which women have tended to participate in ethnic and national processes: first, as biological reproducers of members of collectivities; second, as reproducers of the boundaries of the groups; third, as transmitters and carriers of its culture who contribute to the ideological reproduction of the community; fourth, as signifiers of ethnic/national differences; and finally, as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.⁴²

Yuval-Davis and Anthias' list implicitly summarize the feminist approaches to nationalism. Gender studies provide us with the following approaches to nationalism. First group of gender studies analyze nationalism as embedded in nation-state policies. Exploration of state policies regarding education, citizenship and reproduction from a gender perspective reveals that these policies of the nation-state, even the ones that claim to be the most 'benevolent' work for the 'nationalization' of women as part of the

⁴⁰ For the literature on nationalisms and gender in general and in the case of Turkey, see for example, M. Ahiska, "Gender and National Fantasy: Early Turkish Radio Drama," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 22 (2000): 25-60; A. G. Altınay, ed., *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), F. Berktay, "Doğu ile Batı'nın Birleştiği Yer: Kadın İmgesinin Kurgulanışı," in *Modernleşme ve Batıcılık: Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce (Cilt 4)*, ed. U. Kocabaşoğlu (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 275- 284; A. Durakbaşa, *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000); K. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London, New Delhi: Zed Books, 1986); D. Kandiyoti, "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation," in *Nationalism*, eds. J. Hutchinson and A. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1489-1505; D. Kandiyoti, ed., *Women, Islam and the State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); A. McClintock, A. Mufti and E. Shohat, eds., *Dangeorus Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Post-Colonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); M. V. Moghadam, ed., *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (London: Zed Books, 1994), G. L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); A. Saktanber, "Kemalist Kadın Hakları Söylemi," in *Kemalizm: Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce (Cilt 1)*, ed. M. Ö. Alkan (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 323-333; N. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias, eds., *Woman-Nation-State* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989); Y. Zihnioglu, *Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (İstanbul: Metis, 2003).

⁴¹ S. Walby, "Woman and Nation," in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. G. Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 1996), 235-254.

⁴² N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias, "Woman-Nation-State," in *Nationalism*, eds. J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1475-1488.

nationalist projects.⁴³ Nation-state as a national project is not gender neutral but profoundly gendered. Though such an approach is crucial to unmask the claimed neutrality of the nation-state and understand how nation-states as national projects create gender hierarchies, it prioritizes the nation-state which is one among the many sources of patriarchy and oppression and does not take into account the fact that some nationalisms precede or lack nation-states.

Secondly, gender studies focus on women as the direct participators in nationalist struggles and argue that once the nationalist struggle is over, feminist nationalists often become entrapped in a new form of patriarchy.⁴⁴ Hence, nationalism in the form of a national struggle may work for empowerment as far as women are concerned, yet that empowerment has limits drawn by nationalism itself. Such an approach explains the limitations of nationalism in taking women into the 'brotherhood'. However, focusing on particular historical national struggles does not explain how nationalism permeates and genders the tissues of everyday life, beliefs and practices of individuals, groups and nations.

Related to such an argument, a third approach in the feminist scholarship studies nationalism as a project that is sustained by gendered discourses, iconographies and meanings. Multiple images of women are considered to be central elements of the

⁴³ For the 'nationalization' of women through state policies, see for example, A. G. Altınay, "Ordu-Millet-Kadınlar: Dünyanın İlk Savaş Pilotu Sabiha Gökçen," in *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 261-294; Z. Arat, "Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition," in *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East*, eds. S. Göçek and S. Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 95-112; Z. Arat, "Educating the Daughters of the Republic," in *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Women*, ed. Z. Arat (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 157-180; H. Ashrawi, *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel* (California: University of California Press, 2002); I. İlkaracan and P. İlkaracan, "Kuldan Yurttaşa: Kadınlar Neresinde?" in *75 Yılda Tebaa'dan Yurttaşa Doğru* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1998); Y. Arat, "On Gender and Citizenship in Turkey," *Middle East Report* (January-March 1996): 28-31; M. Hatem, "The Pitfalls of the Nationalist Discourses on Citizenship in Egypt," in *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, ed. S. Joseph (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 33-57; L. Kerber, "May All Our Citizens Be Soldiers and All Our Soldiers Citizens: The Ambiguities of Female Citizenship in the New Nation," in *Women, Militarism, and War: Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory*, eds. J. B. Elshtain and S. Tobias (Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), 89-103; S. Şerifsoy, "Aile ve Kemalist Modernizasyon Projesi, 1928-1950," in *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*, ed. A. G. Altınay (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 167-200; R. Tsagarousianou, "'God, Patria and Home': 'Reproductive Politics' and Nationalist (Re)Definitions of Women in East/Central Europe," *Social Identities* 1(2)(1995): 283-296.

⁴⁴ See for example, K. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986); M. Badran, "Dual Liberation: Feminism and Nationalism in Egypt," *Feminist Issues* (Spring 1988):15-34.

nationalist discourse which construct women simultaneously as victims of underdevelopment, as symbols of modernity of the new nation, as the symbols for national honor, as the mothers of the nation, as the subjects who will protect the spiritual sphere of the community and its cultural authenticity, as goddesses and as the preservers of the past.⁴⁵ National historiographies which construct men in battles, governments and politics and women as the icons of national domesticity and morals are markedly gendered.⁴⁶ Defining the “national” man and woman different from the other nations, discourse of nationalism aims to recreate and reproduce its own national essence through these presumed differences in gender relationships and constructions.⁴⁷ Nationalisms are gendered to the extent that they reproduce different and particular discourses, constructions and images of masculinity and femininity: while ‘national’ man is portrayed as “the martyr/protector/soldier/hero” in the nationalist discourse, female is cast as “mother/guardian, the carrier of the tradition and cultural mores”.⁴⁸ In line with this approach, this chapter on gender is essential for this dissertation which aims to explore the formations of diaspora nationalism.

Fourthly, the scholarship on militarism as an ideology that goes hand in hand with nationalism further elaborates the gendered discursive practices of nationalism.⁴⁹ This literature differentiates military as an institution, militarism as an ideology that glorifies the domination of the use of coercive structures and practices, and militarization as a social

⁴⁵ Respectively see D. Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler* (İstanbul: Metis Kadın Araştırmaları, 1997); P. Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question,” *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, eds. Sargari and Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 233-253; P. Chatterjee, “Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India,” *American Ethnologist* 16(4)(1989): 622-633; K. E. Fleming, “Women as Preservers of the Past: Ziya Gökalp and Women’s Reform,” in *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Women*, ed. Z. Arat (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1998), 127-138.

⁴⁶S. Radcliffe and S. Westwood quoted in R. Wilford, “Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: Surveying the Ground” in *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition*, eds. R. Wilford and R. L. Miller (NY: Routledge, 1998), 1-22, 12.

⁴⁷ N. Sirman, “Kadınların Milliyeti” in *Milliyetçilik: Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce (Cilt 4)*, eds. Bora ve Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 226- 244.

⁴⁸ S. Neluka, “‘Mothers, Daughters and ‘Whores’ of the Nation’: Nationalism and Female Stereotypes in Post-Colonial Sri Lankan Drama in English,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 6(3)(1997): 269-277.

⁴⁹ A. Altınay and T. Bora, “Ordu, Militarizm ve Milliyetçilik” in *Milliyetçilik: Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Tarihi Cilt 4*, ed. T. Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002): 140-154.

process that glorifies practices and norms related to militaries.⁵⁰ From such a perspective, the control of women is of greatest significance to guarantee the success of the militarizing enterprise at hand. Hence, ideas about feminine respectability, duty, and sexuality have been the crucial as far as the ideology of militarism and the processes of militarization are concerned.⁵¹ What militarization implies is not just the control of women as human beings, as prostitutes, mothers, wives and workers but also ideas about femininity. The constructions of multiple femininities are at the center of the nationalist project, militarization and militarism as an ideology. The existence of women as the national honor to be protected or conquered, and the control over the images and meanings of femininity normalize the domination of the militaristic values and enterprises that sanctify death over life.⁵² Such a focus on militarism as a crucial element of nationalism extends the debate on gender and nationalism to further include masculinity as a crucial element of the discursive space of nationalism.

Analyses of the relationships (conflicts, alliances and tensions) between nationalism and gender necessitate not only analyses of femininity but also an understanding of masculinity and the ways in which masculinities are reproduced and constructed as parts of the nationalist projects. Nationalism sustains itself not only through women as symbolizers of the community, active participators, reproducers of the national 'stock' etc. but also through a set of masculine images which define multiple masculinities. Nationalism as a culture that emphasizes masculine cultural themes such as honor, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty, and as the path to the nation-state proves to be a significant setting to achieve masculinity.⁵³ The processes of militarization and the

⁵⁰ For such a conceptual differentiation, see for instance, A. M. Chenoy, "Militarization, Conflict, and Women in South Asia," in *The Women and the War Reader*, eds. L. A. Lorentzen and J. Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 101-110; J. Cock, *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991); R. Feinman, *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers and Feminist Antimilitarists* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ C. Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), 294.

⁵² For the processes and mechanisms of normalization of militarism as far as gender is concerned, see *ibid.*

⁵³ J. Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21(2)(1998): 242-269; R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

ideology of militarism do not just need women and ideas about femininity that will support the militarist project. To the extent that these processes and ideologies are masculine projects that prioritize men, they also need particular constructions of masculinity. Such a perspective claims that military institutions generate particular versions of hegemonic masculinity.⁵⁴ Militarism and militarization which are embedded in nationalism define and designate manhood, masculine experiences and masculine values. Militarist practices and institutions such as military service and war making which form the classical bondage to citizenship proves to be crucial for us to understand the broad historical contexts within which militarism, masculinity, nationalism, femininity and citizenship are linked.⁵⁵

I argue that diasporas are embedded in these broad historical contexts and they are the crossroads through which multiple connections between militarism, nationalism, ethnicity, globalization and gender can be explored. Studying diaspora nationalisms is one of the ways to explore these interconnections that are embedded in diasporic discourse. Given the literature on nationalism and gender, one of the major questions is the similarities and differences between diaspora nationalism – which is “a very distinctive, very conspicuous, important sub-species of nationalism”⁵⁶ – and state-linked nationalisms that have either completed their state formation or aimed to form its own state. This chapter argues that when analyzed from a gender perspective, although they are quite similar, diaspora nationalism is different than state-linked nationalisms. Furthermore, diaspora nationalisms are sustained by particular constructions of masculinity and femininity. As women in general have been ignored in the literature on diaspora and migration, this

⁵⁴ E. Sinclair-Webb, “‘Our Bülent is Now a Commando’: Military Service and Manhood in Turkey,” in *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in Modern Middle East*, eds. M. Ghousseub and E. Sinclair-Webb (London: Saqi Books, 2000), 65-91; I. R. Feinman, “Martial Service and Military (Masculine) Citizenship,” in *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers and Feminist Antimilitarists* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 87-110; C. Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000).

⁵⁵ For these social, historical and political connections, see L. Gill, “Creating Citizens, Making Men: The Military and Masculinity in Bolivia,” *Cultural Anthropology* 12(4)(1997): 527-550; I. Kwon, “A Feminist Exploration of Military Conscription: The Gendering of the Connections Between Nationalism, Militarism and Citizenship in South Korea,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3(1)(2001): 26-54; I. R. Feinman, “Martial Service and Military (Masculine) Citizenship,” in *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers and Feminist Antimilitarists* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 87-110.

⁵⁶ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 101.

conflicts and ignores the notion of women as reproducers of the community and the multiple roles attributed to them.

Re-reading the diaspora from a gender perspective will shed light on the centrality of particular types of masculinities and femininities within diaspora nationalism and diasporic communities. This chapter will turn to exploring these gendered dimensions of diaspora nationalism through the case of Circassians in Turkey.

6.2. The Circassian Beauty

The Circassian Beauty is a historical image of idealized feminine aesthetics that is attributed to the women of the Caucasus. Taking the image of Circassian Beauty as a diasporic strategy to straddle the gap between nation and diaspora and as a mechanism through which Circassians in Turkey, as an ethnic group in Turkey, relate to the peoples of Anatolia and other geographies and *vice versa*, this part of the chapter aims to explore the multiple meanings attached to the notion of Circassian Beauty and the ways these meanings are historically transformed. This part will explore the concept of Circassian Beauty on three interrelated levels: first as an Orientalist theme and figure in European literature, art and knowledge production; second as a historical figure that also finds its place in Turkish popular culture and third as an item on the agenda of diaspora nationalists. All these three levels enable us to better understand the Circassian women's role in the construction of diaspora and diaspora nationalism in Turkey.

6.2.1. Circassian Beauty as an Orientalist Figure

The inflow of Circassians into the Ottoman lands took place in the nineteenth century as a result of immigration which Circassian activists in Turkey today calls “Great Exodus” that took place after Crimean War (1853-1856) at the peak of Russian expansionist policy. As there were previous relationships and contacts between the Ottomans and Circassians, during the nineteenth century the initial contacts had been intensified, and individual visits and relations had been replaced by massive inflows by the Circassians into the Ottoman lands. The image of Circassian Beauty is related to these increasing Circassian inflows and the historical fact that throughout 19th century Circassians had been the human stock of Ottoman slave market.⁵⁷ The other related factor that contributed to the formation of the image of the Circassian girl is the existence of a high number of Circassian women in the Ottoman Palace. However the image itself is not limited to Ottoman lands but also has its parallels in the European Orientalist literature in 18th and 19th century.⁵⁸

Orientalism is a discursive space that defines what is West, what is East through binary oppositions. Orientalism, whether as an academic field, whether as the literary one, or whether as the colonial policies that are biased towards West is a power relationship which is “shaped to a great degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do).”⁵⁹ Therefore, one cannot restrict Orientalism to colonial policies solely, but it is a multi-layered discourse that finds its way in science, art, values, norms, culture and politics; “it is, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what

⁵⁷ H. Erdem, *Osmanlı'da Köleliğin Sonu: 1800-1909* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), 80.

⁵⁸ I.C.Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Serüveni* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004).

⁵⁹ W. E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1979), 12.

is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world.”⁶⁰ On one layer of Orientalism, we find the image of the Circassian Beauty.

As the image is found in the novels and theatrical plays of 17th century, the consolidation of the image as the Circassian Beauty pertains to 18th century. Starting from 18th century, due to the perpetual conflicts of Circassians with Czarist Russia, Circassia becomes a geography that became part of European knowledge. In the third edition of *Encyclopedie ou Dictionnaire Raisonne des Sciences, Des Arts et des Metiers* published in 1778, the Enlightenment thinkers Diderot and D’alembert defines Circassia as

“The big Asian country between Volga and Don rivers that is limited with Daghistan, Kingdom of Caret, country of Mingrel and Black Sea. Its inhabitants have a religion that is partly Muslim and partly Christian. Some part of this country is under Russia’s rule, the rest is independent. The primary commercial products of Circassia consist of fur and also women that they sell to Turks and Persians; these women are famous for being more beautiful than all of the other women in Asia.”⁶¹

Similarly in 1911, *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Circassia as inhabited by Circassians who are a peculiar race and who attracted the attention of the other nations of Europe in a high degree as a result of their long-continued struggles with the power of Russia, during a period of nearly forty years. Furthermore, Circassians are defined as “an object of interest to the student of the history of civilization, from the strange mixture which their customs exhibited of chivalrous sentiment with savage customs” most of which “must now be regarded as in great measure things of the past.”⁶² The article states that

“The greatest stain upon the Circassian character was the custom of selling their children, the Circassian father being always willing to part with his daughters, many of whom were bought by Turkish merchants for the harems of Eastern monarchs. But no degradation was implied in this transaction, and the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ M. Didorot and M. D’Alambert, “Circassie,” in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné Des Sciences, Des Arts et des Métiers*, Third Edition, Volume 8 (Geneva: La Société Typographique, 1778), 105.

⁶²Circassia, < <http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Circassia>> (3 April 2009).

young women themselves were generally willing partners in it. Herds of cattle and sheep constituted the chief riches of the inhabitants.”⁶³

Circassia, as a geography was conceptualized as famous for beautiful women that were being sold willingly. Hence, the knowledge on Circassia, from the beginning, was intertwined with the construct of Circassian Beauty as an exclusively feminine characteristic that was associated with female availability.

European literature had been more creative in terms of defining and elaborating on Circassian Beauty. For instance, in the eighteenth century literature, Circassian women were imagined as beautiful and sexually available as it was in 1715 that Montesquieu wrote in *Persian Letters*:

“YESTERDAY some Armenians brought to the seraglio a young Circassian slave whom they wished to sell. I made her enter the secret apartments; I undressed her, I examined her with eyes of a judge; and the more I examined, the more beauties I found. A virginal shame seemed anxious to hide them from my view: I saw how much it cost her to obey: she blushed upon beholding herself naked, even before me, exempt, as I am from the passions which can alarm decency, and entirely delivered from the dominion of the sex—the servant of modesty in the freest actions, looking only with the chastest glance, and capable of inspiring nothing but innocence.

From the moment I judged her worthy of you, I cast down my eyes, and threw over her a scarlet cloak; I placed a ring of gold upon her finger, I prostrated myself at her feet, I adored her as the queen of your heart. I paid the Armenians, and hid her from every eye.”⁶⁴

Voltaire, in 1778, *Letters on English* who also personally knew Aïssé, a Circassian girl in French saloons,⁶⁵ wrote that

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ B. Montesquieu, “Letter 80: The chief black Eunuch to Usbek, at Paris” in *Persian Letters*, <http://web.wm.edu/history/rbsche/plp/letter80.html> (30 March 2009).

⁶⁵ Mademoiselle Aïssé (1694 - 1733) is a French letter-writer. According to her biographies Aïssé was the daughter of a Circassian chief, and was born about 1694. In 1698, when a band of Turkish soldiers returned to Constantinople from a raid in the Caucasus, they brought a child of four years old. She was sold to the Comte de Ferriol, the French ambassador at Constantinople. She was brought up in Paris by Ferriol’s relatives as a member of the family “as fair a flower as ever was transplanted on French soil.” (T. Hall, *Love Affairs of the Courts of Europe* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1912), 221.) Her letters were edited by Voltaire in 1788 as *Lettres de Mademoiselle Aïssé à Madame Calandrini*. Known as la Nymphe De Circassie, Aïssé had been a symbol of Western fantasies on East. (A. Soprani, *Matmazel Ayşe* (Istanbul: Imge Yayınevi, 2007).

“The Circassians are poor, and their daughters are beautiful, and indeed, it is in them they chiefly trade. They furnish with beauties the seraglios of the Turkish Sultan, of the Persian Sophy, and of all those who are wealthy enough to purchase and maintain such precious merchandise. These maidens are very honourably and virtuously instructed to fondle and caress men; are taught dances of a very polite and effeminate kind; and how to heighten by the most voluptuous artifices the pleasures of their disdainful masters for whom they are designed. These unhappy creatures repeat their lesson to their mothers, in the same manner as little girls among us repeat their catechism without understanding one word they say.”⁶⁶

For Lord Byron, in 1813, in *A Fragment of a Turkish Tale*, Circassian Beauty is the Circassia’s daughter:

“Their bloom in blushes ever new;
Her hair in hyacinthine flow,
When left to roll its folds below,
As midst her handmaids in the hall
She stood superior to them all,
Hath swept the marble where her feet
Gleamed whiter than the mountain sleet
Ere from the cloud that gave it birth
It fell, and caught one stain of earth.
The cygnet nobly walks the water;
So moved on earth Circassia’s daughter,
The loveliest bird of Franguestan!”⁶⁷

In 1859 Dickens, in *The Haunted House* mentioned the general perception of Circassian Beauty in Europe:

“Now, Miss Pipson, having curly hair and blue eyes (which was my idea of anything mortal and feminine that was called Fair), I promptly replied that I regarded Miss Pipson in the light of a Fair Circassian.
"And what then?" Miss Bule pensively asked.
I replied that she must be inveigled by a Merchant, brought to me veiled, and purchased as a slave.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Voltaire, “Letter XI: On Inoculation,” in *Letters on English* (1778) (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1778voltaire-lettres.html> (25 March 2009)).

⁶⁷ L. Byron, *The Giaour*, http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/Lord_Byron/16206 (2 April 2009).

The construct of Circassian Beauty similarly found its counterpart in Orientalist art of 18th and 19th centuries. Among the list are the engraving by Richard Austin Artlett called *The Circassian Captive* in 1843, David Wilkie's painting *Circassian Lady* in 1850s, George Baxter's painting *Circassian Lady at Bath*, *Tscherkessische Ware [Circassian Products]* by Johann Heinrich Bamberg in 1799, *Dame Circassienne Voilée* by Jean-Léon Gérôme in 1870s and the engraving called *The Circassian Slave* by Emile Boilvin which was drawn for the 1892 English edition of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*.⁶⁹

Meanwhile the European interest in Circassian Beauty was beyond literature, art and encyclopedias. Circassian Beauty was the image where Orientalism and the theme of whiteness as a racial category intertwined. For instance, in 1865, Blumenbach, the German anthropologist who first used the term Caucasian for white race and whose work is considered to be a turning point in the history of race and science⁷⁰ listed five varieties of mankind: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and Malay; and defined Caucasian as "Colour white, cheeks rosy; hair brown or chestnut-coloured; head subglobular; face oval, straight, its parts moderately defined, forehead smooth, nose narrow, slightly hooked, mouth small. The primary teeth placed perpendicularly to each jaw; the lips ...moderately open, the chin full and rounded."⁷¹ As Blumenbach uses Caucasian as the "kind of appearance which, according to our opinion of symmetry, we consider most handsome and becoming," to which the inhabitants of Europe and those of Eastern Asia, as far as the river Obi, the Caspian Sea and the Ganges; and lastly, those of Northern Africa belongs;⁷² he states that he has "taken the name of this variety from Mount Caucasus, both because its neighbourhood, and especially its southern slope, produces the most beautiful race of men,

⁶⁸ C. Dickens, *The Haunted House*, <http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Charles_Dickens/The_Haunted_House> (8 April 2009).

⁶⁹ See I.C.Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Serüveni* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004).

⁷⁰ R. Bhopal, "The Beautiful Skull and Blumenbach's Errors: The Birth of the Scientific Concept of Race," *BMJ* 335 (2007): 1308-1309.

⁷¹ T. Bendiyshe, ed., *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and the Inaugural Dissertation of John Hunter, M. D. on the Varieties of Man* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1865), 265.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 265.

I mean the Georgian; and because all physiological reasons converge to this, that in that region, if anywhere, it seems we ought with the greatest probability to place the autochthones of mankind.”⁷³ Hence, the idea of whiteness was from the beginning intertwined in the construct of the Circassian Beauty. Yet being part of Orient and yet being “white” made Circassian Beauty an obsession in the European imagination. To that extent Circassian Beauty was both “us” and “them.”⁷⁴

However, it was in 19th century when the interest on Circassian Beauty and Circassia both of which were hard to separate from each other bloomed. In 19th century, a number of travelogues such as Edmund Spencer with *Travels in Circassia*; James Bell with *Journal of a Residence in Circassia During the Years 1837, 1838 and 1839*; David Urquhart, a British diplomat in Constantinople and J.A. Longworth, a Times correspondent with *A Year Among the Circassians* appeared. As the British interest in Circassia *vis-à-vis* an expanding Russia bloomed since 1830s, the travel books and literature on Circassia bloomed.⁷⁵ Similarly British newspapers regularly reported the Circassians' struggles with Russia from the mid 1830s onwards, reaching something of a peak in early 1844.⁷⁶ It was in this period that Bell and Spencer “encouraged the Circassians to resist Russian penetration, promised them British intervention and supplied them with smuggled weapons and ammunition.”⁷⁷ It was Bell who “therefore freely took part in the councils of the natives, and gave them the benefit of such knowledge as our experience and reading had afforded us, I counseling them as to the particular species of warfare which seemed best suited for the troops they could bring into the field.”⁷⁸ As European knowledge and interest

⁷³ Ibid., 269.

⁷⁴ I.C.Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Serüveni* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004), 91-92.

⁷⁵ Among such a literature on Circassia, the poem *The Star of Attéghéi* by Frances Brown written in 1844 as a tragic romance set in nineteenth century Circassia is regarded as “an intriguing expression of nineteenth-century concepts of nationalism, bringing together three nations whose struggles for independence and national identity were well known in the Victorian era: Circassia, Poland, and Ireland.” (T. Mclean, “Arms and the Circassian Woman: Frances Browne’s “The Star of Attéghéi,”” *Victorian Poetry* 41: 2003, 295-318, 295-296.)

⁷⁶ T. Mclean, “Arms and the Circassian Woman: Frances Browne’s “The Star of Attéghéi,”” *Victorian Poetry* 41: 2003, 295-318, 295-296.

⁷⁷ M. Gammer quoted in *ibid.*, 304.

was redefining the Circassia and Circassian struggle *vis-à-vis* Tsarist Russia, the idea of Circassian Beauty was being consolidated.

Edmund Spencer, in *Travels in Circassia in 1837* defined the Circassian countenance as “perfectly classical, exhibiting, in the profile, that exquisite gently curving line, considered by connoisseurs to be the ideal of beauty” and stated that

“Both sexes are passionately fond of dress; and, I assure you a handsome face and a good personal appearance are as much valued among these people, as by the most refined nation in Europe. If to this we add that the one is distinguished for easy deportment, and a natural elegance of manners; and the other for a dignified warlike bearing; it is not much to say that, perhaps no half-civilized people in the world display so pleasing an exterior.”⁷⁹

As Bell, Urquhart, Spencer, and Longworth travelled to Circassia and wrote their books based on these travels, some travel books were written without travelling to Circassia. For instance Favell Lee Mortimer, as the English Evangelical author of educational books for children, in *Far Off* which she wrote in 1849 described Circassia as “there is no country in the world where the people are as kind to strangers as in Circassia”, where women “are not shut up as Hindoo, and Chinese and Turkish ladies are” and where men “must be wild, bold, restless, and ignorant.”⁸⁰ Circassia was, once again, defined through gender constructions on European imagination.

Similarly, in 1851, Maturin Murray Ballou, American novelist, travel writer, editor and publisher in his book *The Circassian Slave* defines Circassia as

“The land of beauty and oppression, whose noble valleys produce such miracles of female loveliness, and whose plains are the vivid scenes of such terrible struggles; where a brave, unconquerable peasantry have, for a very long period, defied the combined powers of the whole of Russia, and whose daughters, though the children of such brave sires, are yet taught and reared from childhood to look forward to a life of slavery in a Turkish harem as the height of their ambition –Circassia, the land of bravery, beauty and romance, is one of the least known, but most interesting spots in all Europe.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ J. S. Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia During the Years 1837, 1838 and 1839* (London, 1840), viii.

⁷⁹ E. Spencer, *Travels in Circassia, &c. Including a Steam Voyage Down the Danube, from Vienna to Constantinople, and Round the Black Sea, in 1836*, Volume 2 (London, 1837), 321-322.

⁸⁰ F. L. Mortimer, *Far Off*, <http://www.fullbooks.com/Far-Off2.html> (10 March 2009)

Hence, the ideas of Circassia and Circassians were never independent of the notion of Circassian Beauty and the practice of slavery. Throughout the 19th century, Circassian slavery had been the theme of many official correspondences as it had been observed by many travelers not just in Circassia but also in the Ottoman Empire. Mark Twain, in *Innocents Abroad* which is a travel book based on an actual expedition, in a retired Civil War ship (the USS Quaker City) with numerous stops along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as a train excursion from Marseilles, France to Paris for the 1867 Paris Expedition, and a side trip through the Black Sea to Odessa, all before the ultimate pilgrimage to the Holy Land wrote:

“Circassian and Georgian girls are still sold in Constantinople by their parents, but not publicly. The great slave marts we have all read so much about -- where tender young girls were stripped for inspection, and criticised and discussed just as if they were horses at an agricultural fair -- no longer exist. The exhibition and the sales are private now. Stocks are up, just at present, partly because of a brisk demand created by the recent return of the Sultan's suite from the courts of Europe.... Under these circumstances, if the American metropolitan newspapers were published here in Constantinople, their next commercial report would read about as follows, I suppose:

SLAVE GIRL MARKET REPORT.

"Best brands Circassians, crop of 1850, £200; 1852, £250; 1854, £300. Best brands Georgian, none in market; second quality, 1851, £180. Nineteen fair to middling Wallachian girls offered at £130 @ 150, but no takers; sixteen prime A 1 sold in small lots to close out -- terms private.

"Sales of one lot Circassians, prime to good, 1852 to 1854, at £240 @ 242 1/2, buyer 30; one forty-niner -- damaged -- at £23, seller ten, no deposit. Several Georgians, fancy brands, 1852, changed hands to fill orders. The Georgians now on hand are mostly last year's crop, which was unusually poor. The new crop is a little backward, but will be coming in shortly..."

I think the above would be about the style of the commercial report. Prices are pretty high now, and holders firm; but, two or three years ago, parents in a starving condition brought their young daughters down here and sold them for even twenty and thirty dollars, when they could do no better, simply to save

⁸¹ M. M. Ballou, *The Circassian Slave: Or, The Sultan's Favorite. A story of Constantinople and the Caucasus* (United Kingdom: Dodo Press), 25.

themselves and the girls from dying of want. It is sad to think of so distressing a thing as this, and I for one am sincerely glad the prices are up again.”⁸²

However, the idea of Circassian Beauty took place on the market not only through slavery but also through commodification processes in 19th century Europe. It was in this century that W. S. Kimball & Co., a cigarette company in USA gave a set of cards entitled “Dancing Women” which featured dancers from around the world in dresses which were assumed to be traditional and which included a card of Circassian woman.⁸³ It was in 19th century that the name Circassian became the brand name that could be seen in the advertisements of a hair dye,⁸⁴ a face ointment, cream and hair oil.⁸⁵

Furthermore, Circassian Beauty took its place in the commercialization of entertainment in the 19th century. Phineas Taylor Barnum, American showman and circus entrepreneur for instance in May 1864 requested one Circassian girl from his former manager to display with the other “oddities and amusements” in his circus and museums:⁸⁶

“My dear G,

I still have faith in a beautiful Circassian girl if you can get one very beautiful. But if they ask \$4000 each, probably one would be better than two, for \$8000 in gold is worth about \$14,500 in U.S. currency. So one of the most beautiful would do, but be sure & get a decent-looking chap of 16 years old or more. If you can also buy a beautiful Circassian woman for \$200 [\$2000?], do so if you think best; or if you can hire one or two at reasonable prices, do so if you think they are pretty and will pass for Circassian slaves. But in any event have one or two of the most beautiful girls you can find, even if they cost \$4000 or \$5000 in gold. Don't fail to have rich-appearing costumes for her and the eunuch, & bring one girl alone with eunuch if you think they will be attractive enough to pay. But of course one or two additional girls will help it if they can be hired

⁸² Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, accessible at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=Twainno.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=34&division=div1> (2 March 2009).

⁸³ I.C.Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Seriüveni* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004), 27.

⁸⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Circassian_hair.jpg (17 April 2009).

⁸⁵ I.C.Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Seriüveni* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004), 36-37.

⁸⁶ For the implications of these museums and popular interest in oddities and amusements in the context of American Civil War and their relationship with the notion of whiteness, see L. Frost, *Never One Nation: Freaks, Savages and Whiteness in U.S. Popular Culture 1850-1877* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

right & are pretty, especially if one can pass for a Grecian. But after looking the thing over, if you don't find one that is beautiful & possesses a striking kind of beauty, why of course she won't draw and you must give it up as a bad job & not get them, for there is nothing in her to attract & fascinate, and the papers would cry her down & it would prove a loss. But if she is beautiful, then she may take in Paris or in London or probably both. But look out that in Paris they don't try the law and set her free. It must be understood she is free. . .

Yours truly,

P. T. Barnum

If you get the woman with horns, let American newspapers & correspondents understand that you had a big race for her with European showmen & that the price paid for her was immense. Remember to find every avenue for publicity of the fact that an agent of Barnum's Museum is in the East seeking curiosities. Also, when you get to Paris you had better advertise that an agent for Barnum's Museum, now in Paris, is anxious to secure novelties for America. You had better write all the French which would be likely to give you any new ideas. Write here to the editors giving items of intelligence, among which name the agency. Also describe any curiosities that you may secure, then give the editors here your address (privately). They will publish your letter because it comes from so far.”⁸⁷

In response to the request of Barnum, a Circassian Beauty was procured for the museum though woman's origin and circumstances in which she was obtained remains as a dispute.⁸⁸ In a brochure that announced the opening of American Museum of Living Curiosities in London by Barnum, a marvelous assemblage of strangest human beings and a world of oddest and most amazing physical exceptions were being promised to the audience: among the last of the mysterious Aztecs; wondrous long-haired women; famous and only skeleton dude; littlest, loveliest ladies of the world; human obelisks; the tiniest and prettiest dwarfs; phantom-like living skeletons; most enormous fat folk; the only full-bearded lady; amazing armless writers were the celebrated beauties of Circassia.⁸⁹

Orientalism, scientific racism, commodification, and the interest in geography as an

⁸⁷ The letter from Barnum to John Greenwood in 1864 is accessible on website <http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/lm/312/> (12 March 2009).

⁸⁸ L. Frost, “The White Gaze, the Spectacle of Slavery, and the Circassian Beauty,” in *Never One Nation: Freaks, Savages and Whiteness in U.S. Popular Culture 1850-1877* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 56-85, 65.

⁸⁹ I.C.Schick, *Çerkes Güzeli: Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Serüveni* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2004), 110.

imperial knowledge production mechanism all contributed to the idea of Circassian Beauty. As the idea of Circassian Beauty is part of European Orientalism and the image is highly related to slave trade, it is also related to the expansion of Russia into the Caucasus and increasing tensions of Circassians with Russia which resulted in increasing Circassian relationships with the European countries. It is not a coincidence that the Circassian Beauty is savage, she is charming, yet she is miserable since Circassian Beauty is the European reflection on Circassia and Circassians *vis-à-vis* Czarist Russia. Yet her existence and status in literature, knowledge production and art is similar to Kuchuk Hanem, a famed beauty and Egyptian dancer who became a key figure in Flaubert's Orientalist accounts of the East. Edward Said defines how Flaubert's accounts depict her encounter with the Western man:

“She never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was “typically Oriental.””⁹⁰

In the case of Circassian Beauty, she was the reflection of Circassia in European imagination; savage and beautiful, Eastern and Western, resistant and doomed to fail *vis-à-vis* Russia. This European image of Circassian Beauty is significant not only to explore the power formations of 19th century imperialism between the West and the East but also to understand how multiple identities have been constructed as a result of these historical encounters.

⁹⁰ W. E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1979), 6.

6.2.2. Circassian Beauty as a Historical and Popular Image in Turkey

O. Patterson in his study on slavery lists eight means of enslavement: capture in warfare, kidnapping, tribute and tax payment, debt, punishment for crimes, abandonment and sale of children, self-enslavement and birth.⁹¹ According to Hakan Erdem, the last three means of enslavement were more dominant in terms of the acquisition of the Circassian slaves during the Ottoman Empire.⁹² A combination of different factors contributed to the Circassian enslavement; the existence of a hereditary slave caste among the Circassians: loss of control by the chiefs/slave-owners; poverty; the desire of parents to secure a better life for their children and themselves; and willingness on the part of the slaves themselves to live better lives.⁹³ As social conditions and cultural attitudes produced a clear hierarchy among Ottoman slaves which was expressed in price, employment and social standing, at the top were Circassian and Georgian slaves.⁹⁴ Circassians were traditionally regarded as the most-preferred slaves by the ruling elite.⁹⁵ A preference for white women prevailed among male members of the Ottoman imperial elite in the 19th century and even before which led the agents for the imperial harem and agents of leading households to recruit young women among the Circassian and Georgian populations of the Caucasus⁹⁶ and later of the Ottoman Empire after the mass deportation of Circassians into Ottoman territories. Towards the end of 19th century the recruitment declined as a result of Ottoman policies and yet it did not vanish.

⁹¹ O. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Massachusetts: Cambridge, 1982).

⁹² H. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire : Macmillan Press ; New York : St. Martin's Press, 1996).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹⁴ E. R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1998), 13.

⁹⁵ H. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire : Macmillan Press ; New York : St. Martin's Press, 1996), 61.

⁹⁶ E. R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 12-13.

Starting from the 19th century, Circassian Beauty had been a character of not only Ottoman elite households but also of literature. *Sergüzeşt* by Sami Paşazade Sezai tells the miserable story of a Circassian girl who was deported from the Caucasus and worked in elite households as a female servant.⁹⁷ Nezihe Muhittin, in 1929 in *Benliğim benimdir* similarly tells the story of Zeynep, another Circassian girl who has been sold by her parents.⁹⁸

Although the practice of Circassian slavery and involuntary marriage decreased in theory since the end of 19th century and in practice since the second half 20th century, the idea of Circassian Beauty is still alive. As the notion of Circassian Beauty is currently emancipated from its history of slavery and forced marriage, the image of Circassian Beauty is historically related to the practice of slavery and this relationship with slavery and forced marriage is the ghostly part of the image of Circassian Beauty. For instance, for Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Turkish politician and intellectual, the status of Circassians in Turkey and the construct of Circassian Beauty are inseparable:

“Turkey received Caucasian immigrants well. ...In their new homelands, these protected their presence by conserving their tribal organizations with their languages and own traditions. Furthermore, they established a domination on the local people which is almost based on force. The fact that Circassians who were a graceful and beautiful race gave the palace and elite household’s of Istanbul girls, ladies or even Sultanas provided their relationships with the palace and Istanbul. It provided them with some benefits.”⁹⁹

Any investigation on Imperial Harem as an historical institution of the Ottoman Empire contributes to the revival of the relationship. This is why Circassian community in Turkey and particularly in İstanbul is regarded as a source of information by the producers of the movie *Harem Suare* by Ferzan Özpetek.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the memoirs of the last Circassian concubines in the Ottoman palace and similar works on the women of the

⁹⁷ S. P. Sezai, *Sergüzeşt* (Istanbul: Sis Yayınları, 2008).

⁹⁸ N. Muhittin, *Nezihe Muhittin Bütün Eserleri Vol. 1* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, Mor Kitaplık, 2008).

⁹⁹ Ş. S. Aydemir, *Tek Adam Vol. 2* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 1975), 323.

¹⁰⁰ *Harem Suare*, DVD Video Recording, directed by F. Özpetek, 1999 (Istanbul: Palermo, 2004).

Imperial Harem also revives the idea that Ottoman harem were composed of Circassian women who were sold to the Palace.

Apart from these historical connotations, Circassian woman has been the theme of several poems and songs. As there are some Turkish classical songs on Circassian Beauty, the image appeared other musical genres. For instance in year 2001, a Turkish pop-rock singer had a song titled Circassian girl with lyrics such as

“In my unfinished songs,
You were missing like a whole
You, the Circassian girl of the far aways
You aged my consolations.”¹⁰¹

In 2005, Ahmed Ahmedov, a singer from Azerbaijan produced an album called Circassian Beauty with a song with the same title:

“It is as if you came from a fairy tale,
It is as if you are a goddess.
Where does this beauty, charm come from?
It is as if you are not from this world.

Dance Circassian Beauty, Take me to my dreams.
Take me to my country.”¹⁰²

Meanwhile, starting from the mid 1990s, many Turkish models declared that they had Circassian origins. In that context, being a Circassian is equated with being beautiful and charming. Ayşe Güneş-Ayata, in her research on Circassian women living in the shanty areas of Ankara states that Circassian women are known for being beautiful, respectful, obedient and good housewives with talents in houseworks and hence, being a Circassian becomes an asset, a symbol of status and an advantage for women in urban areas.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ H. Levent, “Çerkez Kızı,” in *Kral Çıplak*, audio CD (Istanbul: Prestij, 2001).

¹⁰² A. Ahmedov, *Çerkez Güzeli*, Audio CD (Yaşam Müzik, 2005).

In 1999, Songul Aktürk, known as Sultana and also known as the first woman MC¹⁰⁴ in Turkish Rap Music produced an album called Circassian Girl. Within the album of Sultana who has also Circassian origins, the song *Kuşu Kalkmaz [Your Bird Can't Fly]* was the first rap song that was prohibited by RTÜK. The song is basically about a man who cheats on her wife, batters her and leads a night life etc.:

“I am kick it
For my girl while
You ask how
Cause people in the world are living so foul
I manifest a tune about this eye
“Kuşu kalkmaz” means
Your bird can't fly
While your wife and kids are locked up at home
And you are at the strip club headed
For the zone
Brizzle and ice sucked up all your stones
By the time you get back home
Your baby done grown
Cause you were stuck at the spot line a fool to rasclat
Trying to get at what the new girl got not conscios of the
family
Not acting like a father
When you've seen her in the light,
Man that's your daughter”¹⁰⁵

I argue that it is ironic that this banned song is being sung by a Circassian woman using the name of Sultana just like Türkan Şoray. It is an instance how products of popular culture can be mechanisms of resistance:¹⁰⁶ through Sultana, Circassian Beauty who is constantly defined by the Orientalist gaze and contemporary popular culture artifacts gains a voice.

¹⁰³ A. Güneş-Ayata, “Etnik Kimlik ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet: Ankara’da Çerkes Kadınlar,” in *20. Yüzyılın Sonunda Kadınlar ve Gelecek Konferansı 19-21 Kasım 1997*, ed. O. Çitçi (Ankara: TODAİE İnsan Hakları Araştırma ve Derleme Merkezi Yayını, 1998), 71-80.

¹⁰⁴ MC means master of ceremony in rap music. An MC uses rhyming verses, whether pre-written or freestyled to introduce and praise the DJ he or she works with, to hype up the crowd, to pay homage to his own stature, or to comment on society.

¹⁰⁵ Sultana, “Kuşu Kalkmaz,” in *Çerkez Kızı*, Audio CD (Istanbul: Doublemoon, 2000), 9.

¹⁰⁶ O. Tekelioğlu, “Popüler Kültürün Türkiye’deki Yüzleri,” *Pop Yazılar: Varoştan Merkeze Yürüyen Halk Zevki* (Istanbul: Telos, 2006), 19-34.

On such a ground, *Kuşu Kalkmaz* and Sultana is one of the infrequent instances within which the common discourse on Circassian Beauty is challenged, transformed and reversed.

6.2.3. Circassian Beauty on the Agenda of Diaspora Nationalists

The times when Circassian Beauty was celebrated and commodified in Europe and Ottoman Empire pertains to the times when the Caucasus had been the target of an expanding Tsarist Russia. Hence, from the start, the image of Circassian Beauty is interrelated to the project of nation-building and hence, it has always been on the nationalist agenda in diaspora with the idea that the fall of the nation pertained to the fall of its women from the beginning.

As the trade in Circassian slaves had been reduced considerably by the end of the 19th century as a result of Ottoman policies, the demand by the harems of imperial family and the households of the well-to-do elites remained.¹⁰⁷ It was in 1908 with the Second Constitutional Period that the emancipation of Circassian women in the imperial harem was put on the political agenda. Committee of Union and Progress hand in hand with Circassian Committee of Union and Progress urged the Sultan “to rescue the hundreds of Circassian girls who were in the palace and to send them away to their villages.”¹⁰⁸ Hakan Erdem states that the emancipation of the Circassian women in the palace was a result of the CUP’s desire to win the goodwill of the Circassians, some of whom loathed the employment of their kin as slaves.¹⁰⁹ Aksoy and Özgürel underline the significance of Circassian attempts in terms of the emancipation of Circassian women in the imperial

¹⁰⁷ E. R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1998), 12.

¹⁰⁸ H. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire : Macmillan Press ; New York : St. Martin's Press, 1996), 147.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

harem: for Aksoy, it is Circassian Committee of Union and Progress who demanded help from Çerkez Deli Fuat Pasha¹¹⁰ whereas for Özgürel it is the Circassian youth that visited Pasha and demanded his intercession for the emancipation of women in the Palace which they regarded as a matter of honour since all Circassian women were treated as odalisque because of Circassian existence in the Palace.¹¹¹ As the exact chronology and actors of the events are not well known, it is obvious that Circassians on individual basis or in terms of organizations were part of the process. After the deposition of the Sultan Abdulhamid in 1909, the dispersal of the Imperial Harem started: the CUP government sent telegrams to the Circassian settlements in Anatolia notifying the Circassians that their relatives were free and they could collect them.¹¹² Towards the end of 1909, the Council of Ministers deliberated a report on the “prohibition of selling and buying of male and female Circassian and other [white] slaves.”¹¹³ Whether officially abolished by the 1908 revolution or only later, by the Turkish Republic, “Ottoman slavery died piecemeal, not abruptly, with the end of empire.”¹¹⁴ As there had been many attempts by the Western states in terms of abolishing white slavery, it is not a coincidence that Circassian slavery had been problematized after the establishment of the Circassian Committee of Union and Progress: the Committee saw it, not only as misery on the side of slaves, but also a national matter as far as Circassians were concerned. What we saw at the end of 19th century *vis-à-vis* slavery is a reaction of first generation Circassian nationalists who did not separate the idea of being Ottoman from being Circassian.

In 1914, a member of the same generation, Mehmet Fetgeri Şoenü (1890-1931), a Circassian intellectual among the founders of BJK Sports Club wrote an article called “Circassian Women in Ottoman Social Life.”¹¹⁵ This article, he claimed, was written to

¹¹⁰ Z. Aksoy, “Çerkes Teavün Cemiyeti,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 33 (1992): 20-23.

¹¹¹ A. Özgürel, “Cariyeliğin Bittiği Günler,” *Radikal*, 22 June 2003.

¹¹² H. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire : Macmillan Press ; New York : St. Martin's Press, 1996), 148.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹¹⁴ E. R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1998), 12.

reply Celal Nuri who, as Fetgeri claimed, regarded Circassian women as one of the reasons of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Fetgeri, in his article, did not write the book or article of Celal Nuri which he was referring. He just stated that “those severe sentences which hurt his feelings and national pride” could be seen “with short but bitter sentences in a work of Celal Nuri.”¹¹⁶ Celal Nuri (1882-1938), an Ottoman intellectual in favor of Westernization and a member of parliament in the new Turkish state for 26 years, wrote approximately 2400 articles on newspapers and periodicals and 50 books and most of these books are not translated into Turkish. As Celal Nuri, in *Kadınlarımız [Our Women]* published in 1915, stated that “Caliphate can abolish the use of odalisques. Because, first of all, it is beyond morality. ...In the Caucasus, Aziziye, Adapazarı there are “human stock farms” [*insan haraları*] as our friend Cenab Bey¹¹⁷ says. These breed and sell odalisques. Fathers sell their daughters. Beys, using the girls of their groups give them to others in exchange of money.”¹¹⁸ As the book *Kadınlarımız* cannot be the book that Fetgeri referred to, it is highly probable that he refers to *Tarih-i Tedenniyat-ı Osmaniye Mukadderat-ı Tarihiye* published in 1914 within which Celal Nuri discussed the reasons of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. As the book is not translated to Turkish, in the book he grouped the reasons of Ottoman decline in eight headings: internal, compositional, administrative, economic, religious, intellectual, particular and internal reasons. Among the particular reasons, he stated that the incapability of the family unit in society, the lack of women’s status in social life, the moral degeneration as a result of despotism, protocols and flattery affected the state negatively.¹¹⁹ It is probable that under the particular reasons Celal Nuri mentioned the existence of Circassian women in the Palace.

¹¹⁵ M. F. Şoenü, “Osmanlı Sosyal Yaşamında Çerkes Kadınları,” *Tüm Eserleriyle Mehmet Fetgeri Şoenü* (Ankara: Kafdav Yayıncılık, 2007), 9-28.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹⁷ Cenab bey is probably Cenap Şahabettin to whom this book is dedicated because of his literary talent and because of his works in the problem as Celal Nuri states.

¹¹⁸ C. Nuri, *Kadınlarımız*, (Eskişehir: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı), 95.

¹¹⁹ N. Uyanık, “Batıcı Bir Aydın Olarak Celal Nuri İleri ve Yenileşme Sürecinde Fikir Hareketlerine Bakışı,” *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15 (2004): 227-274, <<http://www.turkiyat.selcuk.edu.tr/pdfdergi/s15/uyanik.pdf>> (13 March 2009).

Fetgeri elaborated on the current image of Circassian women in the Ottoman Empire: “When you say Circassian, still the noble but fallen children of the past who are responsible for breeding girls to satisfy the demands and the lust of some people who appear as the girl merchants and many pleasure-seekers come to mind.”¹²⁰ After mentioning the Hattian origins of Circassians with reference to the “*Caucasian History*” of Met Çınotiko İzzet,¹²¹ another Circassian intellectual; Fetgeri argued that Circassian women had not been harmful for the Turks as Celal Nuri claimed. Fetgeri explored the existence of Circassian women in Turkish society on the side of “the Turks:”

“How can Turks who marry and become relatives with the girls of a breed who are attached to their high and elite morality in such a loyal and high degree say “out of nobility and dignity came defeatism, I am damaged?” How can such a statement be accepted? ...I wonder if the girls of this high nation have become only the tools of entertainment for the Turks. ...[I wonder if] They caused social disintegration of the Turks. ...Never... It is probable that Turks took these girls as a tool of entertainment, but they fulfilled their educational duties –maybe unconsciously; thus they ensured the beautification of the spiritual purity and physical appearance of the Turks. ...Circassian girls did not harm the Turks in terms of civilization and development; on the opposite, they changed their nation towards beauty and maturity. ...[Even if that is not true], who is responsible for that? For that, one should not look at Circassianhood, Circassian women but at Turkish social life and Turkishness.”¹²²

As Fetgeri reversed the power relationship between the slave and owner, the Circassian and the Turk, he also explored the contemporary situation and criticizes Circassians harshly for

¹²⁰ M. F. Şoenü, “Osmanlı Sosyal Yaşamında Çerkes Kadınları,” *Tüm Eserleriyle Mehmet Fetgeri Şoenü* (Ankara: Kafdav Yayıncılık, 2007), 9-28, 13.

¹²¹ Met Çınatuko Yusuf İzzet (1876-1922) is another Circassian intellectual. Met Çınatuko was among the founders and members of Circassian organizations that were established after the Second Constitutional Revolution in 1908. As a soldier, he had been the commandor of the army corps in Caucasus during the World War I and after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, he had been given authority by the Ottoman government to work in support of the short-lived North Caucasian Republic. After the War of Independence, he became a member of parliament in the first assembly of the Turkish Grand National Assembly In addition to several articles, for some of his works, see for instance *Tarih-ül Kafkas [Kafkasya Tarihi]* (Istanbul, 1914); *Kadim Kafkasya ve Kafkas Bosforu (Bosfor Kimmerien) Hükümeti ve Abhazya* (Istanbul, 1918); *Kadim Trakya'da Serake, Nam-ı Diğer Çerkes* (Istanbul, 1918); *Evrika'larım Yani Bulduklarım-Kafkas Tarihi'ne Zeyl* (1915-1918). For a more detailed biography of Circassian intellectuals, see for instance S. E. Berzeg, *Kafkas Diasporası'nda Edebiyatçılar ve Yazarlar Sözlüğü* (Samsun: Nart Yayıncılık, 1995).

¹²² M. F. Şoenü, “Osmanlı Sosyal Yaşamında Çerkes Kadınları,” *Tüm Eserleriyle Mehmet Fetgeri Şoenü* (Ankara: Kafdav Yayıncılık, 2007), 9-28, 17-18.

the still ongoing practice of selling their girls and discusses the reasons of such an act. According to him, the act of selling the girls was being done to reverse the national humiliation that Circassians survived after the immigration to Ottoman Empire:

“Really today there are no slave markets, slave merchants like the older times. But still there are hidden sales.. Female trade that went on in private places before is now available in all saloons and meeting places. This is a reason of grief for our nation. ...the fallen goddess of today, Circassian women who are an old part of womanhood and a big nation that is insulted every day as a result of the bad conditions within which they found themselves come to my imagination with all its humiliation. ...Where are those thinkers who state that Circassian girls are the tools of destruction for the Ottoman Empire? ...Desperate for leaving their homeland, worried for not making their nobility recognized and spending their wealth, poor Circassians were encouraged in several ways. ...Especially there was an encouragement which was applied by the government of those times before and became apparent in these days; that, more than anything, effected the weakened souls of Circassians. That was the silver threads, ornaments, swords which were worn to the fathers whose girls went to the palace of the sultan. It was as if the honour of Circassians which was destructed in the Caucasus was being regained by these. ...I claim that this is a stain, shame. ...Ottoman Turks are as responsible of this stain as Circassians.”¹²³

The shame that Fetgeri mentioned pertained to the nation as a totality. It was not the misery of individuals but it was a national matter since it stained the national history and traditions. On such a ground, the existence of Circassian girls in the Palace or the practice of selling/buying girls harmed not the Turks of the Empire but for Fetgeri it was the Circassian nation that was harmed by these practices:

“What is harmed because of this is not Turkishness but it is Circassianhood. Circassian girls who leave their home this way most of the time cannot return their homes, in the places that they go they most of the time marry a miserable man or spend their lives as odalisques or concubines. ...This is how Circassians waste their Circassianhood. With each girl that is separated from them, from home Circassian social life does not lose one person but a chain of families reaching to the future.”¹²⁴

¹²³ Ibid., 19, 21, 22, 26, 27.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 28.

Hence, the problem of slavery and the practice of human sale, from the beginning, were seen as national issues as far as Circassian diaspora was concerned. Fetgeri was not the last person to focus on the issue as a source of national humiliation. Whenever Circassian diaspora nationalism was on the rise, the image of Circassian Beauty was being explored and problematized. In 1970s, when the second generation of diaspora nationalists was on the peak of activism, they explored the practices of forced marriage and the implications of Circassian Beauty in nationalist terms. It was in December 1975 that Karden D., a Circassian woman writing in *Yamçı* stated that “The times when Circassian woman who has an elite status in the world with her beauty, respect, virtue will be emancipated from her appearance as a commodity and a product that is being sold with the maximum price and will enhance her rights and national rights are not far.”¹²⁵ Kanuko Cemil’s poem published in the same magazine in February 1976 is an instance of much employed themes of forced marriage and human sale in the magazines of 1970s which were published by diaspora nationalists:

“Far away... In the East
Maybe in Ahlat, Otluyazı
Circassian girl is in the arm of the foreigner
Circassian girl, the mother of the future
The father of her child should be Circassian
In the spring of her life
Circassian girl was 19 years old
When she was sold shamefully
The foreigner took the girl, he was sixty years old
Another signature of dissolution
It is sad but its reflection is true
...The master is on the mirror of shame.”¹²⁶

Hence, the problem of slavery and involuntary marriage in exchange of money is not only a problem of human rights; it is rather a national problem since it is seen as a source of assimilation and the way Circassian community is mixed with “the foreigners” who are generally summarized as “the Turks” like Fetgeri uses the term almost 60 years ago.

¹²⁵ D. Karden, “Kadınlar Yılında,” *Yamçı* 2 (December 1975), 9.

¹²⁶ C. Kanuko, “Utanç Aynası” [Mirror of Shame], *Yamçı* 4 (February 1976), 38.

The current perspectives of Circassian diaspora nationalists have the remnants of Fetgeri's argument but Circassian Beauty is a construct that has two facets for them: it is an image that makes them simultaneously proud and ashamed. Included in the construct of Circassian Beauty as narrated by Circassians is the story of Circassian diaspora nationalism: Russian expansion, loss of the homeland, immigration, assimilation, encounters with the so-called "Turks," intergroup marriages, assimilation and nationalist concerns on dissolution.

Circassian Beauty is a mechanism through which diaspora nationalism relates with the host community and other groups. The image is celebrated as the difference from the other ethnic groups in Turkey as İzzet explained:

"But despite all, Circassian girl as a spouse is different. Whoever that is, the understanding of moral responsibility of the Circassian girl is still different today; despite the degeneration produced by urbanization, it is still different. Especially when we look at the society within which we live. ...The general structure of Circassian girl, her sense of responsibility in the family, her support of her husband, her ability in forming a family... With these qualities, she is not similar to any of the ethnic groups, there are 25-26 ethnic groups in Turkey, she is different."¹²⁷

The difference of the Circassian women is measured not only in terms of traditional female roles but also on the basis of the project of modernization. According to Yasemin, Circassian women were exactly what the founding fathers of the Turkish nation-state and other early modernizers of the Ottoman Empire constructed as "the modern woman":

"It is very visible; even today when you go to the street and bring a thousand people, you will still notice that Circassian girl, at least physically. Still you will notice her kindness. Still we are not dead in the fullest sense. [*Daha tam anlamıyla ölmedik.*] ...Atatürk, in order to better this society, organized republican balls, women had worn evening dresses. A woman was uncovered, she put a rose here and opened her two legs like this; she sat just like this. Well my sister, you ought to know how to sit, too; the work is not finished at the clothes. [*Kardeşim oturmasını da bileceksin, giyinmekle bitmiyor iş.*]"¹²⁸

¹²⁷ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

¹²⁸ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

The difference of the Circassian woman is also employed by diaspora nationalists to explain the image of Circassian Beauty. On such a ground, Circassian Beauty is a legend that is based on the Circassian social life and it is the encounter with “the Turks”, “the others” of diaspora nationalists that produced the image of the Circassian Beauty as Cezmi states:

“Given the physical appearance, structure of the Avshar woman and given her neglect of herself; suddenly there comes a character which is very slender in beautiful clothes. Oh my god, she is like a fairy. It starts from there. Also when Circassian girls’ attitudes, their behaviors in accordance with *xabze*,¹²⁹ their dances were so opposite with the Anatolian woman or even the Thracian woman, all Ottoman aristocracy ran after the Circassians.”¹³⁰

The argument on the difference of Circassian women also rests on the idea of necessity of in-group marriage as exemplified by Gürtuğ who states the qualities attributed to the Circassian woman:

“Politeness, grace, honesty, the necessity of having good attitudes, protecting the personality, the tradition of not making herself oppressed but I do not mean not making herself oppressed in a quarrelsome manner [*cavcav bir şekilde kendini ezdirmemekten bahsetmiyorum.*] When raising their daughters, Circassian families -men do not tell that, of course- used to raise them by warning them to protect the honor of the family, not to make them ashamed, not to be quarrelsome. A couple of days ago I read somewhere, somebody took a foreign bride and they say that in 10 minutes they [foreign brides] say what our brides used to say in a year.”¹³¹

Through the arguments on the difference of Circassian woman, diaspora nationalists highlight their difference from the so-called Turks. As the basic qualities attributed to the Circassian women and totalized under the rubric of Circassian Beauty are often beauty, grace, and well manners; several times highlighted in the interviews is the idea that Circassian women serve well to their husbands and families. It is “the prototype of loyal

¹²⁹ *Xabze* that is referred here means tradition.

¹³⁰ Cezmi, interview by author, 7 February 2008, Ankara.

¹³¹ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

Circassian woman who serves.” [*“hizmet eden sadık Çerkes kadın tiplemesi.”*]¹³² Hicran, for instance explores the implications of such an image: “Well they are there with the notion of beauty. I think that the basic quality is beauty and their loyalty, they show full respect, they serve well, they become good mothers and wives etc. That is a good thing but there is a Circassian identity similar to servant, for sure that is not agreeable.”¹³³

However, the image of Circassian Beauty is more than an ideal type of beauty and femininity but in the context of Circassians in Turkey, it is a construct through which Circassians situate themselves in the host community. With the idea of Circassian Beauty, we can indeed explore diasporic relationships with the host community as mentioned in some of the interviews. As Şener states, the idea of Circassian Beauty plays a significant role for the Circassians in Turkey: “I think that the appearance of Circassians as in good terms with the establishment and the state that we find in the popular culture is partly due to Circassian girls. But when we think about it, it is not much of a pride according to me. [*Çok da yüz ağartıcı bir şey değil bence.*]”¹³⁴ Furthermore, through the construct of Circassian Beauty, Circassian diaspora nationalists situate their nation in the Ottoman history. On such a ground, they become part of the Ottoman history as actors as Taner speculates on the implications of such an existence and displays his ambivalence in terms of such an existence:

“But the Circassian domination in the Ottoman dynasty has been a source of pride for us. ...In the historical process, that is obvious, when we look at the contemporary reflections of history, it is obvious. It is a dominant theme in the books. Well, then it is being said: “You, Circassians [*ulan siz Çerkesler yok musunuz*], you were like that in the palace, you are in the *MİT* (National Intelligence Organization), you are in the armed forces.” It is a feeling that range between assault and envy, this is what the other side feels. That makes me a little proud. Though it makes me proud, when you say Circassian, if somebody says “Circassian girls are very beautiful”, then sorry but ...[he swears]. I say whether there is nothing else about Circassianhood that remains in his mind. Then I get angry. Well it is also our mistake.”¹³⁵

¹³² Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹³³ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

¹³⁴ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

¹³⁵ Taner, interview by author, 15 August 2007, İstanbul.

As the mistake that Taner mentioned concerned the inability of diaspora to explain itself, the construct of Circassian Beauty is generally narrated in terms of a national mistake, a national problem by the diaspora activists. Especially those who are over 60 years old and born in Anatolia explore the mistake and their own reactions of the time. İzzet, for instance tells his experience of what Circassian Beauty means in the 1950s:

“Those were the mistakes of our elders of that time. They really sold them. They really did not understand their value. They gave their daughters to men who were at the age of their fathers. I lived these. It was because of the mentalities of the elders before 1965, it was because they did not see them as something. ...I survived them in the two daughters of my uncle. ...I also know that an older girl in Tokat was given to a man who was at her father’s age and she was consumed like a maid.”¹³⁶

Similarly, Turgay highlights that in 1960s there raised a reaction *vis-à-vis* these forms of marriages in exchange of money:

“Well, when we look at the Circassian women, they are raised in a self-confident manner in the society, they become good mothers, good housewives and they have a protective side. Well, in our childhood rich people, rich people of the towns used to compete with each other to take the most beautiful girls of the villages. There had been many Circassian girls who had become brides in this way. Why? Because they know housework, raising children. ...we saw that there had been many struggles on that, that young people had tried to prevent them from giving the girl but finally we saw many of our girls marrying because of the material and better opportunities.”¹³⁷

Nezih further explains his experience of Circassian Beauty at the end of 1950s:

“Between 1950 and 1963, our Circassians survived a full drama of selling their daughters. I personally know 12-13 girls in ...[his neighborhood] who were sold in this manner. I even have a very interesting memory on that. 7 or 8 people, some religious people were gathered at our house and they were discussing the issue. My uncle was a good imam there and he told that “who will marry whom is written on the receipt. Saying that I gave [my daughter] to the Turk or else is against Islam.” And the others there supported that. ...It

¹³⁶ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

¹³⁷ Turgay, interview by author, 4 February 2008, Ankara.

was 1958 or 1959. I said whether I could ask a question, I was bringing tea to the table, I was waiting there, and they permitted me. I asked whether God was a Turk; that was the question. ...I told them that there were at least 20 Circassian girls in this village and no bride who was Turkish. Secondly, I told that among these 20 Circassian girls there was not anyone who married a bachelor. They were all second wives, *kuma*. I told that among these 20 girls there was not anyone who was married legally. All of them were religiously married. The price was 3000 liras back then, it was the price of the girls. They were all given in exchange of 3000 liras. Fourthly, I told that among these 20-25 girls, there was none who was not raped by the sons of her husband. I asked them whether God was acting so partially. [*Allah bu kadar mı yanlış davranıyor dedim.*] This was my rebellion in 1958 or 59. ...There were so many examples of that. Someone told that he went [to his daughter's house] and that his groom did not greet him. Then he told his daughter that he was not greeted and asked whether there was a problem, the girl said "Father, it was not him that you sold me. Now they are bringing my husband, I will show you him." His hands were tied, he did not have one of his legs, the other leg was half disabled and the girl said "Here is the man to whom you gave me." ...The price was 3500 liras, the negotiator took the 500 liras, the owner of the girl took 3000, and the imam took 250 liras. ...This is a naked truth, and we survived that as a very degenerated and a very dirty reality. This did not get erased easily. This is why the Turks have stigmatized us that Circassians are selling their girls. Well, it is true."¹³⁸

Starting from the mid 1960s, diaspora nationalists regarded the construct of Circassian Beauty as a national problem. It was regarded as national humiliation *vis-à-vis* the Turks. As involuntary marriages in exchange of money was not a particularly Circassian problem but a nationwide practice in Turkey; the ways Circassian girls were put on sale and the general demand for Circassian girls in Anatolia were regarded by the Circassian diaspora nationalists as a national problem which was the result of the fall of the nation. Hence, second generation Circassian nationalism just like the first generation among whom Fetgeri was included resented the idea of involuntary forced marriages as a symbol for the fall and failure of the nation. Therefore, whenever Circassian diaspora nationalism is on rise, the image of the Circassian Beauty is regarded as a national humiliation or it is revised as the difference from other ethnic groups.

The diaspora nationalist discourse on Circassian Beauty also reverses the image of Circassian Beauty as Köksal exemplifies: "Circassian girl is found in these novels as a

¹³⁸ Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

symbol of pride, nobility, beauty and elegance. There had never been a negative image in the novels, literary products. There is not a bit of that; there is nothing that symbolizes immorality, disgust, unchastity. This is why it is a basic theme in the songs, folk songs and this is a privilege.”¹³⁹ For the diaspora nationalists, the exotic and available Circassian Beauty turns into an asexual construction as Zekeriya, aged 88, as a Circassian elder unexpectedly mentions the lack of sexuality in the image of Circassian Beauty: “As a necessity of tradition, most of the Circassian women are educated in a way that leads to a high level of maturity. Their clothes are beautiful but they do not provoke sex.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, Circassian Beauty is a contested image through which the idea and the strength of the nation can be claimed, reclaimed and constructed.

6.3. Gendering Diaspora Nationalism

The primary question of this chapter is indeed rooted in my early childhood; the times when I used to accompany my father going to the conferences, congresses, and events that the Circassian community in Turkey organized. From those days, I remember that it was always Circassian men doing the political talk. Women – if there were any – used to sit in their respectful and dignified manners. As an adult woman in the following years, I have watched Circassian women in their respectful and silent manners in several Circassian meetings within which there was no female voice. Ironically, Circassians have always been proud of the way they behaved towards women: “Circassians do not beat their wives,”¹⁴¹ “Circassian women are freer when compared to the other women in [Turkish]

¹³⁹ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴⁰ Zekeriya, interview by author, 28 February 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁴¹ I thank Alice Horner not only for her thorough editing of some parts of this chapter but also for making me realize that the frequently used statement of Circassians that “Circassians do not beat their wives” automatically associates Circassian with the male.

society,” “They are the most respected group in Circassian society.” That contradiction of my community has produced the initial spark that motivated this work: How could a culture that is so proud of the high status of women in society and its respect for women can have so many silent women? Starting from a personal curiosity, this part of the chapter aims to explore the diasporic constructions of femininity and to some extent masculinity among the Circassians in Turkey. It aims to ask the questions of how diaspora nationalisms construct masculinities and femininities and what role these constructions play in creating a “common we”,¹⁴² a diasporic identity. This study argues that diaspora nationalism is a gendered discourse on several levels. It is these levels that the remaining part of this chapter aims to explore.

6.3.1. Roles and Missions

Discourse of diaspora nationalism is gendered to the extent that it has provided men and women of the diaspora with different constructions, missions and roles. In the nationalist discourse of Circassians in Turkey women are designated as the members responsible for the reproduction of the ethnic community and protection of the ethnic boundaries of the community.¹⁴³ On that ground it is a feminine responsibility to protect the cultural heritage of the community as Gürtuğ explains the failure of Circassian women in terms of this national responsibility:

“In every family, there were two or three swords and wedges. What else would they bring? They had armors. In Uzunyayla, women had cut them and made [other things out of them.] What make a nation are their women. If they are conscious, then human communities become nations. ...What transform human communities into nations are women with all their existence. If they

¹⁴²A. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁴³N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias, “Woman-Nation-State,” in *Nationalism*, eds. J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1475-1488.

gave the wealth of the nation to the salesmen [*çerçi*] for plastic bowls, if they threw those saddles to the trash... and this is how it happened.”¹⁴⁴

Femininity is the site where differences are supposed to be displayed and protected *vis-à-vis* the assumed threats of assimilation and ‘loss of the Circassian culture’.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is the women’s duty to highlight men as Metin narrates on the role of Circassian women. In such an account, women are the invisible actors in terms of supporting men and their tasks:

“You bear the name, we have the theme of Seteney Guashe. This is the woman of wisdom but usually Circassian woman has wisdom, Seteney Guashe is just an example, it is a prototype. ...Well, we can say that there are so many examples of this wise woman now. She knows that man should appear superior to her, this is why she always puts him forward. By putting him forward, she remains behind. Actually, in a way, it is women who inspire, direct, impose him and his actions. But this is not so in appearance, it is how it is in the background. So our society is matriarchal in the background, patriarchal in appearance. There is a difference like that because in our society women do not compete with men. Man is man, woman is woman; she thinks that if I make him superior, I will be superior. But women have such qualities of wisdom that men cannot do anything without asking her, he always consults with her.”¹⁴⁶

While women form the group responsible for the ethnic and cultural reproduction of the community, men are immune from this reproductive role or mission. Furthermore, it is the men and their masculine affairs (such as war making, politics, diplomacy) hand in hand with militarism that claim to ‘earn’ the citizenship in the host country.¹⁴⁷ Both constructions serve for the ‘survival’ of the diaspora. Yet the service is gendered. The discourse of Circassian diaspora nationalism is gendered to the extent that it has provided men and women of the diaspora with different constructions, missions and roles.

¹⁴⁴ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁴⁵For the details and implications of quite similar nationalist gender constructions in colonial contexts, see P.Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and The Colonial World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); P. Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question,” in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, eds. K. Sangari and S. Vaid (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

¹⁴⁶ Metin, interview by author, 5 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁴⁷Such a difference in terms of ‘earning’ citizenship implies that for the Circassians in Turkey not only diaspora nationalism but also citizenship pertain to gendered constructions.

Within the nationalist discourse of Circassians in Turkey, 'in-betweenness' is portrayed as a tenet of both the masculine and feminine identities. Yet, while the 'inbetweenness' of the Circassian man locates him as the actor in two geographies, the 'inbetweenness' of the Circassian woman works to locate her as the protector and reproducer of the cultural and ethnic identity between two geographies. Hence, not only diaspora nationalism but also its discourse on 'inbetweenness' has different and gendered implications for men and women of the diaspora.

6.3.2. Connecting with and Differentiating from the Host Community

What makes diaspora nationalism different from other nationalisms is their ability to deal with dual territorialization and dual locations that encompass both the so-called homelands and host societies.¹⁴⁸ When asked about difference, identity, the meanings and implications of being a Circassian, most of the interviewees highlighted the importance of gender in terms of Circassian identity. What makes Circassians in Turkey different from other ethnic groups is narrated in terms of gender as Meral explains:

“I think that the relationships between women and men are very different for instance. Still today, when compared to a Turkish family in Turkish society, there is a significant difference. Well, it starts from the way the child is raised, the ways s/he relates with the parents, her relationship with her social circle when she becomes a young woman. In our associations, for instance; well it also gets degenerated with assimilation but when I look at my own youth, I can see that. For instance, when a Circassian boy comes at your house and rings your bell, he can be trusted and bring the girl [of that house] to association, to events and after that he can deliver the girl to her house. I think that this is very different from other groups.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ S. J. Tambiah, “Transnational Movements, Diaspora and Multiple Identities,” *Daedalus: Journal of Arts and Sciences* 129 (1)(2000): 163- 194, 170.

¹⁴⁹ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

For most of the Circassian diaspora nationalists, gender relationships are what make Circassians different in Turkey. Similarly, Hasan regards gender relations as one of the basic differences between the Circassians and other groups, especially “the Turks”:

“I think that the relationship between man and woman is different than the Turks. At least the relationships that we have witnessed. I realized that in high school. I was a boarding student. When you are boarding student in high school, you have so much information on their family lives, you live together. Your friend comes to you, he is sad, he went home, he tells you this and that happened. In all of these I was shocked at how these could happen. For instance, he tells you that his father swore. Swear! ...I never heard my father swearing. ...I never witnessed a quarrel like that.”¹⁵⁰

Circassian nationalists consider Circassian women ‘different’ from other women in Turkey: they are much better housewives; they are chaste, well-educated and respectful. Interestingly, the concept and the image of “Circassian girl” are also very well known in Turkey among non-Circassian groups. Although Circassians complain about being known in the Turkish public for their girls and foods, they indeed agree that Circassian women are different in terms of chastity, beauty and manners. For the Circassian activists, the relationships between men and women, the status of women in the society are all factors that defined Circassians and their difference. On such a level, Circassian society is considered a more modern and advanced social form when compared to the so-called Turks. Köksal and Cavit, respectively employ the word advanced for the Circassians in Turkey:

“The status of women in Circassian society is far more advanced than other societies. I look at other societies, if the divorce rate among Turks is 10 percent, it is 1 percent among Circassians. ...Well, whether that is because of love or social pressure, it is very hard to have a statistic on that.”¹⁵¹

“Let’s say I went to a social gathering [*düğün*] with my sister. ...When we came to the place of gathering, we just got separated. My sister would never be with me. Why? To let her talk to her male friends easily. Can you think of such a mentality? If you say that today in Turkish society, what would they

¹⁵⁰ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

¹⁵¹ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

think? So that my sister could talk to her male friends easily, that she could make *alaf*,¹⁵² talk about marriage etc. This is not seen in Turkish society, it is rascality, isn't it? This is a situation which Turkish society can reach in 50 years, not today."¹⁵³

Yet, gender is significant for diaspora not only to differentiate itself from the host community but also relating to it. In the historical accounts or life stories, gender becomes an important factor through which diaspora nationalists relate with the host and these relations are not always narrated as positive encounters. For Rüstem, the Circassian riots in Marmara region during the War of Independence can be understood in terms of gender based tensions and alliances between multiple groups:

“If you look at it, months before a newspaper in Bolu wrote that “we will exile those rascal Circassians, we will make their wives concubines, we will make their daughters etc.”, it is written on paper. ...On the other hand, there is the Sultan, he is their Sultan since they gave 3-5 girls. He publishes something stating that these people of the National Forces [*Kuva-i Milliyeci'ler*] are totally infidel. So what are you going to say? ...What will the average Circassian peasant do?”¹⁵⁴

In the life history of Nezh, the early encounters with the Turkish state were gendered encounters between the Circassians and “the others.” In Nezh's narrative, the state's oppression on the ethnic community coincides with a national humiliation as far as Circassians are concerned:

“I remember, the head of the district [*kaymakam*] and others used to come. The village girls were gathered with commend, they were made dance gatherings [*düğün*]. For once my father did not send my sister, they would almost whip my father. Well, it happened. They did not understand Circassian culture. They made their girls courtesans and that thing of man and woman... This is new in Turkish folklore, otherwise in Turkish culture there was no such dancing within which men and women are together. ...Now they are owners of everything. [*Şimdi herşeyin sahibi kendileri mübarek.*]”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² *Alaf* means a kind of flirt in Abkhazian. In Adyge language, it is *psetlukh*.

¹⁵³ Cahit, interview by author, 23 May 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁴ Rüstem, interview by author, 8 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁵⁵ Nezh, interview by author, 17-18 August 2007, İstanbul.

In the nationalist discourse of Circassian diaspora in Turkey, while femininity is constructed *vis-à-vis* the threat of assimilation, hegemonic masculinity is highly militarized. Constructions of masculinity that are intertwined with militarism and military experience in the form of war-making are central to sustaining the links of diaspora nationalism with the host community and dominant nationalism. Although Circassians have joined other wars before and after the War of Independence, one of the contemporary research areas in Circassian diaspora in Turkey is the role of Circassians in the War of Independence which is historically considered to be the constitutive war of the Turkish Republic.¹⁵⁶ While differences are displayed and sustained through the constructions of femininity, claims to equality and citizenship rights are formulated through a particular masculine experience of war-making that is shared with the host community. The links with the Republic of Turkey are discursively formed through shared experiences of militarism which are exclusively masculine.

These nationalist constructions link the diasporic community to the host community or simultaneously differentiate it from the host. This analysis proposes that a particular gender discourse has been fundamental for Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey to define and to locate itself *vis-à-vis* the host community and other ethnic groups in Turkey.

6.3.3. Connecting with and Differentiating from the Homeland

While differences from the host community are displayed through constructions, duties and missions that supposedly pertain to women, such nationalist constructions and expectations also link the diasporic community to an essence, to “home”. Diasporic communities may as well relate to the homeland through the gender constructions.

¹⁵⁶See for instance, U. Tavkul, “Milli Mücadele Dönemine Ait Önemli Bir Belge: Çerkes Milletinin Düvel-i Muazzama ve Alem-i İnsaniyet ve Medeniyete Umumi Beyanname,” accessed August 2005, accessible at http://www.bkd.org.tr/tarih/umumi_beyanname.asp; M. Ünal, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Çerkeslerin Rolü* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1996).

Yet such gendered connections with the homeland are prone to change and transformation. In the case of Circassians, encounters with the homeland after the collapse of Soviet Union have produced silences in the diaspora as far as written documents at hand are concerned. Homeland which has become accessible after 1990s was different than it was imagined by the diaspora nationalists. It was regarded as different from the diaspora in terms of traditions, morals, and values. Köksal narrates on such an encounter with the Circassians of the homeland which had been disappointing for him in 1990s:

“It was the years 1992 or 1993. When the doors was opened, when there was so much moral degeneration, when there was the Natasha mentality, a hotel in Fındıkzade was making advertisements stating that Circassian girls were being marketed there. This was the discourse, it underlined Circassianhood as a quality and stated that Circassian girls were beautiful and there were Circassian girls in that hotel. We heard about the advertisement, we sent a group of 10 young people to the hotel and they, including the owner of the hotel, were beaten the hell out of them. But in our investigation there, it turned out that there were 1 or 2 workers with Circassian origins. There were really 2 of them. We made them return to the Caucasus... Then I thought and realized that what we made was ignorant, it was wrong. Each society has its vices, thieves etc. Same things can come out of the Caucasian society.”¹⁵⁷

Yet, the claimed differences between the homeland and diaspora in terms of values and 'the protection of the heritage' have been crucial in the reinforcement of gender constructions in the diaspora. Diaspora nationalists have started to consider diaspora the “real” site of the community that has protected traditional values and culture much better than the homeland. Köksal and Cahit narrate on the difference of the status of women in diaspora and homeland:

“I can tell that the status of woman in the Caucasus is lower than it is here because the misery and the hardship of 80 years of communism have brought people to that point.”¹⁵⁸

“For instance, here we have developed a culture within which our woman does not work. In the Caucasus, it is the exact opposite, socialist culture imposed that woman should work. And the men used this as an advantage.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Cahit, interview by author, 23 May 2007, İstanbul.

Such a discursive move has implied additional and increased emphasis on the significance of women's role in terms of preventing assimilation and protecting the boundaries of the ethnic and cultural group. Since 1990s, in the discourse of diaspora nationalism, constructions of femininity differentiate Circassian diaspora in Turkey not only from the people of Turkey but also from the homeland. Hicran, who went to the Caucasus for some time "on her own", for instance, tells about the hardships of being a woman from diaspora in the homeland:

"Afterwards when I told that I would be living alone, people invited me to live at their houses and stated that it was unnecessary for me to rent a house. They were afraid that something might have happened and this would have been a very bad example. For instance, some people might break into your house, does not that happen in Turkey too? ...Well, they told me that Abkhazian girls did not stay alone like that, I told them that I had been living alone in Turkey for the last 20 years and I could do the same thing there. I told them that it would not be as dangerous as it was in Istanbul. Single and Abkhazian girl."¹⁶⁰

While increasing relationships with the homeland have forfeited the gendered roles of women, 1990s also had been a time when the idea of return could be put into practice. Yet, most of the returnists were unsuccessful in terms of returning to the homeland not only because of economic reasons but also because their wives and families mostly did not follow them or refused to "stay there" after return. For the Circassian diaspora nationalists, the idea of return which prioritizes the idea of homeland has been a masculine project starting from mid 1960s as Şener highlights the gendered dynamics of the notion of return and repatriation:

"But women are always more sensitive, picky, they care more about details. For them, the school of the children, their futures, the moral values of the society within which one settles are very important. Return, until today, has been a system thought dominated by men. What mattered in terms of return have been the ambitions of men, the discourses of men, the passions of men. Women's sensitivities have never been on the agenda."¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶¹ Şener, interview by author, 18 June 2008, İstanbul.

Most stories of return included instances of unfitting wives who rejected the idea or the practice of return. Hence, since 1990s, the masculine dynamics of the idea of return has become obvious. This is why most of the male diaspora nationalists now envisage return on the individual basis, not on the familial basis.

Furthermore, starting from 1990s, Circassian masculinity has been redefined through participation into the wars of the homeland¹⁶² either as voluntary soldiers or as aid donors. From a nationalist framework, such militaristic enterprises have been considered the fulfillment of diasporic duty to the homeland and hence, the affirmation of the survival of the diasporic identity. While the claims to equality and equal rights in the host country are based on the shared military experience with the people of the Turkish Republic, modern diasporic discourse and diaspora nationalism are connected to the homeland through participation into the wars of the homeland. Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey since 1990s has been linked to the once-imagined homeland through the shared experiences of militarism which are once again exclusively masculine affairs. Since 1990s militarized nationalist constructions of masculinity connect the Circassian diaspora in Turkey not only to the Turkish Republic and Turkish historiography but also to the homeland.

6.3.4. Gendered Projects of Diaspora Nationalism

For the Circassian diaspora nationalists, gender is also important for the projects of diaspora nationalism. In terms of the survival of diaspora and its relationship with the homeland, gender becomes an item on the agenda. For instance Gürsoy mentions the importance of reproduction for the Circassians and explains his very loose project on population:

¹⁶²Since 1989 the Caucasus has witnessed five wars: Nagorno-Karabagh (Armenia - Azerbaijan) (1989-1995), South Ossetian - Georgian (1991-1992); Abkhazian - Georgian (1992-1993); North Ossetian - Ingush (1992); Chechen - Russian (1994 - 1996).

“The problem of population. ...We had a project like that, to support marriages and births there. ...You have not been able to bring 1000 people from here to there. If you make 1000 families have one additional child for 10 or 15 years, if you give each of them 100 dollars per month and per child, if each of them has one child, then here are 1000 people. Then if these people have 2 children...”¹⁶³

However, reproduction for the survival of the community is regarded as significant not only for the homeland but also for diaspora. For most of the diaspora nationalists interviewed for this study, marriage is a national matter. Hakan explains highlighting the importance marriage as a mission as far as Circassian intellectuals are concerned. He regards marriage as a standing *vis-à-vis* the policies of the Turkish nation-state:

“As a result of these, s/he should be Circassian. It is not only about me; a social campaign on that should be started. Well, this is not based on protecting the race for sure. Because I encountered that a lot at my Turkish friends’ talks. Those who have a Circassian friend in university or elsewhere regarded their friends’ desire to marry a Circassian as fanaticism or extreme nationalism. Of course, this perception is normal given the general patterns of thought in Turkey. ...I insist on not regarding this as nationalism. Indeed it can be considered a standing against nationalism. ...Because what is desired in Turkey is the mixing of ethnic groups into Turkish society. This is why there were so many projects in the party programs of RPP in 1950s. This is already something that is encouraged. Well, it already goes that way unless the intellectuals or the society itself intervene which should be the case.”¹⁶⁴

In line with this statement, throughout 1960s and 1970s, the issue of marriage and spousal preference had always been on the agenda of diaspora nationalists. Hasan remembers their reactions to marriages with non-Circassian people in 1970s: “In those times, there was a very strong idea in the neighborhood and in the association that s/he should be Circassian. This is why we used to not to go to his/her marriage when someone married a non-Circassian. We sulked with a very close friend of ours since he married like that.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶⁴ Hakan, interview by author, 3 July 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁶⁵ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

Parallel to these reactions, throughout 1960s and 70s, diaspora nationalists arranged their marriages accordingly. The marriage proposal of Neval further highlights how marriage, family life and reproduction are regarded as part of a nationalist project:

“I would like to tell you what he told me before marriage. It is not a very private thing indeed. He told me “I am a person who carries the responsibility of my people. I will work for the survival of my people in diaspora and homeland, I will work for them not to get vanished during all my life. If you are able to be in a work like that and if you are able to bear such a life, if you are able to climb a hill with me, I can marry. I see such a potential in you.” My answer was that I was as Circassian as he was and that I, too, could see the disappearance of the Circassian people under the circumstances that they were living. I told him that I would be in the struggle with him to prevent the perishing of our people. ...After we married, we dedicated our lives to the survival of our people under these hard circumstances. But meanwhile we tried to lead our family lives. ...We told that the more Circassian children there were, the better it would be. We told that if we could give birth to Circassian people to substitute those people who were vanishing, if we could raise them as Circassians, if we could give that to them, if we could make them speak Circassian, that would be fine. Indeed, that was a social responsibility for us.”¹⁶⁶

As most of the diaspora nationalists underlined the significance of marriage as a national strategy to overcome and slow down assimilation, there are also alternative perspectives that also regard marriage as a national strategy. Köksal, based on real examples in Turkey and in Europe, sees marriage as creating hinterlands for Circassians:

“I would think that marrying a random stranger would produce degeneration in our culture, in our people who are already in small numbers. But I would also encourage the marriage of a Circassian with a foreigner when that is necessary. Because these marriages give people a lot. Is it bad that George Hewitt’s wife in England is Abkhazian?¹⁶⁷ It gives us something in England, it

¹⁶⁶ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁶⁷ George Hewitt is a professor of Caucasian languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. In addition to his work in Georgian, for his works on Abkhazia and Abkhazian culture, see for instance B. Hewitt, *Abkhazian Folklore (with Grammatical Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Vocabulary)* (Lincom, 2005); G. Hewitt, *Abkhazian Folktales (with Grammatical Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Vocabulary)* (München: Lincom, 2005); B. Hewitt, and Z. Khiba, “A Selection of the Abkhaz Corpus – 10 Stories Translated from the Nart Epic,” in *John Colarusso's Nart Sagas from the Caucasus*, ed. J. Colarusso (USA: Princeton University Press, 2002), 321-379; G. Hewitt, “North West Caucasian,” *Lingua* 115(1-2) (2005): 91-145; B. Hewitt, *The Languages of the Caucasus: Scope for Study and Survival* (SOAS, 1998). Furthermore, with the scholarly and political support he has given to Abkhazia, he is considered a part of the

gives us an opening, it gives a hinterland. Is it bad that Bülent Arınç's wife is Circassian? Is it bad that Cemil Çiçek's wife is Circassian?¹⁶⁸ It enables us to move in every sphere."¹⁶⁹

Marriage –whether within the ethnic group or outside the group- is regarded as a national strategy for the diaspora. To the extent that assimilation and protection of the ethnic identity is important for a nation, connecting with the host community and other communities is crucial for diaspora. Marriage is on the agenda of Circassian nationalists as a diasporic strategy which can work in both ways and which can still advantage diaspora.

6.3.5. Diasporic Patriarchy

Finally, I will deal with the implications of these constructions as far as Circassian diaspora nationalism is concerned. The basic question is whether diaspora means emancipation and deconstruction of the so-called traditional roles and patriarchy or whether diasporic communities, especially when coupled with nationalism produce new patriarchies.

In December 1975, in *Yamçı*, Karden D. wrote that Circassian society had had its own century-old traditions in terms of its respect to women and women's perspective had been significant in discussing and solving social problems.¹⁷⁰ In year 2004, in a panel organized for the March 8th, Women's Day in Caucasian Association in Ankara, the panelist Fahri Huvaj highlighted the respectable status of women in Circassian society and

Abkhazian struggle *vis-à-vis* Georgia. He is one of the most respected scholars as far as Circassians are concerned. He is married to an Abkhazian woman that he met in Tiflis, he has two children named Amra and Gunda, Abkhazian names. Hence, it is no coincidence that an interview made with him and published on the website of a Circassian organization is titled as the "Abkhazian Traces in Yorkshire." See F. Taştekin and Z. A. Besleney, "Yorkshire'daki Abhaz İzi: George Hewitt'in Hikayesi ve Abhazya'nın Güncel Sorunları," *Ajans Kafkas*, 9 May 2002, http://www.kafkas.org.tr/ajans/2002/temmuz/George_Hewitt1.htm (April 2009).

¹⁶⁸ Bülent Arınç and Cemil Çiçek are the contemporary politicians who have worked as ministers at the governments of the Justice and Development Party.

¹⁶⁹ Köksal, interview by author, 28 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁷⁰ D. Karden, "Kadınlar Yılında," *Yamçı* 2 (December 1975), 9.

stated that Circassian culture was based on a perspective that regarded women as sensitive, honorable, and active.¹⁷¹ In the preface of a law book titled “The Development of Woman Rights and Problems Since Creation,” the author, Hayri Domanıç, a law professor wrote that in Circassian community within which he was raised, he remembered that since 1925s there was a particular respect towards married or single women and that women were also very respectful towards men, especially elder men.¹⁷² According to his account, in Circassian society polygamy was infrequent and there was no separation based on gender [kaç göç].¹⁷³ In May 2009, in a television program on Abkhazian culture, the head of KAFFED repeated the argument that within Circassian society, the respect towards women is very high and based on that, Circassian society could be considered almost a matriarchal society.¹⁷⁴

Similar arguments on the special character of Circassian society in terms of women’s status have also been made by Circassian diaspora nationalists who are interviewed for this study. For İzzet, what differentiates Circassians is the unlimited freedom that they give to their women:

“Circassian society, in the villages, used to give their girls an unlimited freedom more than any society in the world. It was like that when we were young; I believe that it is still so though there are less people who have stayed there. And none of the girls misused that freedom given to them, they never acted irresponsibly thinking that her parents set her free.”¹⁷⁵

Gürtüğ further elaborates on the notion of freedom that is “given” to the women and its conditions:

¹⁷¹ For the notice of the panel on the bulletin of Caucasian Association in Ankara, see “Dünya Kadınlar Günü Paneli,” *Ğuaze* 2 (April 2004), 15.

¹⁷² E. H. Domanıç, *Yaradılıştan Bu Yana Kadın Haklarının Gelişimi ve Sorunları; Kadın Haklarını Savunan ve Koruyan Anayasalar, Yasalar ve Milletlerarası Sözleşmelerden Örnekler ile; Kadın Hakları ve Sorunları Konusundan Basımdan Örnekler* (Istanbul: Arıkan Basım Yayım, 2007), VI.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ *İmar Dosyası*, TV Program (Ankara: Kanal B, May 2, 2009).

¹⁷⁵ İzzet, interview by author, 10 February 2008, Ankara.

“Circassian woman obliges people to respect her. You meet such a creature that she does not provoke men, she does not insult, she does not raise her voice. She does not do this and that. Wherever she goes, she comes out in the purest [*tertemiz*] way. She does not need control, she is the foundation of the family, she builds the family, she is everything.”¹⁷⁶

Hence, the idea of female freedom is conditional on the constant protection of purity and chastity by the women themselves. The Circassian woman who is celebrated by the diaspora nationalists as the free woman liberated by the community itself is indeed heavily responsible for earning that freedom. Meral further explores the high status attributed to women among Circassians: “For instance there are not many people who beat their wives among us. It is wrong to say there are none but it is really a few because that woman is not a woman on her own; she is the daughter of a family, this is why she is important. Well, there is something between that family and the other family.”¹⁷⁷ What Meral highlights is that women is secondary in such an account, it is the communitarian and familial ties that protect women. Therefore the high status of women that is mentioned by the diaspora nationalists is valid for the women acting in accordance with these ties.

However, apart from the arguments on the high status of women in Circassian society, there are other accounts that may help us to understand the gendered sites of Circassian diaspora in Turkey. For instance, Hasan remembers how he, as a child, did not know his mother’s name:

“For example, when I went to the primary school, on the first day of school the teacher was asking the name of our fathers and mothers. That was the time when I realized that I did not know my mother’s name. I was 6 years old; I realized that my mother should have a name, a Turkish name. Of course, at home we never address her with her name. My father did not address her with her name. All our relatives used to call her as “Kup” if I remember correctly. Among Circassians, there are names like that. It seems that we did not have much communication with the non-Circassians; we did not hear from there, too. ...I remember that I came home that day and asked my mother’s name. It is good that the teacher did not ask me that day, if s/he did, I would just be stunned.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Gürtuğ, interview by author, 3 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁷⁷ Meral, interview by author, 7 June 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁷⁸ Hasan, interview by author, October 2007, Abkhazia.

As Hasan's account has some reference to Circassian traditions, it is remarkable that he knew his father's name. Who was left invisible and anonymous 'in accordance with the traditions' was the mother/bride figure. Hence, despite the claims of "high status" of women, this high status does not correspond to a visibility in social sphere as far as women are concerned.

Gürsoy explores and criticizes the claims of equality in terms of division of labor in the urban context:

"Well, in Circassian society women are oppressed with responsibilities. Well, equality etc.... I think that that equality works for the benefit of men. Now my wife works too. ...she goes home, she goes into the kitchen. I have no such concern; I would rather sleep hungry rather than do that. ...Which Circassian man is doing the opposite of that, are there any? I do not think so. ...Is there anything like that in this culture? No. ...This is exactly the prototype of Circassian in the society; it is someone who is under the command, who looks at her husband's eye to serve."¹⁷⁹

Furthermore, in the accounts of diaspora nationalists, silence is portrayed as an asset of Circassian woman. Circassian woman is expected to be silent and respectful. In a magazine published in 1978 by the Circassians, a research on Circassian wedding ceremonies was translated from a magazine published in the Caucasus in 1960s. In the text, it is mentioned that in the traditional wedding ceremony a prayer was being done by a folk artist. The words of the prayer [*huaho*] is:

"The bride of this family
Shall be silent like the sheep
Soft-spoken like the lamb
Reproductive like the chicken
As loyal as the purebred dog
Famous like the purebred horse
Pleasant voiced like a bird
She shall twitter.
She shall use the broom
She shall not overrun the family decisions.
She shall have lots of dresses,
Courageous children.

¹⁷⁹ Gürsoy, interview by author, 23 July 2007, İstanbul.

She shall not lose the ones that she gave birth to.
What she sewed shall not become unstitched.”¹⁸⁰

As the prayer was translated from a magazine published in the Caucasus in 1968, the expectations from the Circassian women highlighted in the prayer were reproduced by the diaspora nationalists in Turkey through translation and publication. These expectations on female silence are also observed in the narratives of the diaspora activists in Turkey. Nurhan for instance narrates on female silence and how it is being sustained socially:

“But when compared to a Turkish family, woman is valued, she is respected but in a way, she is oppressed through traditions. Avshar women are much freer. Circassian woman is terrified that it is going to be a shame. If the husband of the Avshar woman swears, then she swears too. This is not so for Circassians. It is not only woman who does that but man also does that. ...There was no such thing like beating woman among Circassians, I do not know how it is now but it almost did not exist. But why should she be beaten if the poor woman is telling nothing?”¹⁸¹

I do not consider silence as an automatic expression of female oppression but rather as a contradiction with the Circassian discourse on the freedom of Circassian woman. I

¹⁸⁰ T. Şıkh, “Adige Evlenme Töreni,” *Yamçı* 7-16 (May 1977- February 1978): 376-387, 384. The Turkish translation of the prayer, as published in the magazine with the original text in cyrillic alphabet, is

“Bu ailenin gelini
Koyun gibi sessiz
Kuzu gibi tatlı sözlü
Tavul gibi bol yavrulu
Cins köpek kadar sadık
Cins at gibi ünlü
Kuş gibi tatlı sesli olsun
Cıvıl cıvıl cıvıldasın
Süpürgeyi sürüsün
Ailenin kararlarını aşmasın.
Elbisesi bol
Çocukları yiğit olsun
Doğurdukları yitmesin.
Diktiği sökülmesin
Fidan boylu, şık görünümlü
İpek dudaklı
Gür, çatal saçlı
Kuğu gibi ak boyunlu
Otururken kumru
Uzandığında aslan olsun...”

¹⁸¹ Nurhan, interview by author, 23 March 2007, İstanbul.

argue that this discourse on freedom and voluntary female silence coupled with female invisibility in the public sphere itself works as the formations of diaspora nationalism of Circassians in Turkey. Esat further explores the notion of female silence and also narrates on patriarchal means of emancipation, patriarchal bargains as Kandiyoti refers:¹⁸²

“There is really a patriarchal model. I witnessed that woman is less significant than she is even in the average Turkish families since it is [*kaşer*] shameful that woman speaks too much or intervenes. Well, in this sense, a Kurdish woman may yell at something, she can get angry, she can tell a man something nearby her husband. Though we don’t like to say it, this is a space of freedom when you think about it. ...For example, I had much age difference with my father. ...He used to tell me very old stories. For example, the people he celebrated the most were women who *quote en quote* did not betray their families and did not marry and who drove back from everything and stood by their families. This was the sublime woman for him. Those days, maybe, he did not explain that with these words but that was what he told and celebrated. It was like the ideal and best woman. That was seen as the best in that clan system. This was so because women could gain their status only by rejecting their sexual identities but they could not have done that as a bride.”¹⁸³

As forms of patriarchal bargains are available for women, most of the women diaspora activists interviewed for this study shared their experiences of being a Circassian woman in Turkey. To the extent that they employed the concepts of respect, high status, freedom; they shared their gendered experiences of Circassian diasporic identity. Yasemin for instance mentioned the limitations imposed on her as a Circassian woman:

“For instance, we have some limitations as a Circassian woman. For example I never raised my hands and danced like that. [meaning oriental dance]...Of course I wanted to do that when everybody was dancing. ...But this was how I happened to be. I would like to do debaucheries, I would like to hold somebody’s hand or I would like to kiss someone. We married without kissing once in our lives, think about it. We did nothing, I feel pity for ourselves. If you have not done it, you shall do it. Do not leave it in the name of Circassianhood.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² D. Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” *Gender and Society* 2(3)(1988): 274-289.

¹⁸³ Esat, interview by author, 10 August 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁸⁴ Yasemin, interview by author, 16 August 2007, İstanbul.

For Nurhan, gender responsibilities, roles and expectations are getting heavier in diaspora with the impact and pressure of “others”:

“This pressure is the social pressure, it is the pressure of a more backward society. Today in villages, they begin to not dance *wuig*.¹⁸⁵ Circassians used to have not many marriages. This place has been a heaven for men. Polygamy, oppression of women, headscarf... Neglecting women, music, art...”¹⁸⁶

Hicran similarly explores the experience of being a Circassian woman:

“Though we say that women are very valued etc., I think that women are very much oppressed in Circassian society. Well, I have not been personally oppressed but you are being oppressed with your identity as a woman. For example, in our region, women do not have the right to inheritance. Okey, it is not a very rich region, it becomes a problem when land is divided etc. but when you claim inheritance, you become awful, you become like a thief, shameless. ...When you look at other groups that are living around, our women are more social, they can enter into each kind of society, they are not close but there are so many responsibilities; when you do not obey them, you can immediately be ignored. ...I am individually very independent but as a Circassian woman I do not consider myself independent, because I am not.”¹⁸⁷

Hicran further explores her experience of being a Circassian woman in Turkey:

“...But they did not gossip about me. It is also about personality. That mission... You look like a Circassian girl, you cannot be very comfortable. You cannot hold your boy friend’s hand and bring him to the neighborhood because you have an image and you cannot spoil it. This was how I was raised so you lose in some sense but this is how it is.”¹⁸⁸

Neval, with her own experience highlights how the discourse on “the value of woman” may turn into limitations of her movement:

“I have never seen a Circassian woman working in the fields. ...Well, when their women worked very hard, our women used to be protected carefully, they

¹⁸⁵ *Wuig* is a Circassian dance which can be considered a walk of couples composed of men and women.

¹⁸⁶ Nurhan, interview by author, 23 March 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁸⁷ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

¹⁸⁸ Hicran, interview by author, September 2007, İstanbul.

would not be worked in heavy tasks, and they worked in particular places. ...I won a university in Istanbul. When I was sent to Istanbul, they asked “how can you send your daughter, Furthermore, a Circassian girl to a big city?” Presumably, Circassian girls needed to be protected more.”¹⁸⁹

I argue that the frequently employed arguments of Circassian diaspora nationalists in Turkey on the freedom of Circassian woman is part of a myth which is formed *vis-à-vis* other ethnic communities in Turkey. I further argue that it is through this freedom myth that Circassian society differentiates itself from the host community and other ethnic groups in Turkey.

In terms of findings, my research on gendered dimensions of Circassian diaspora nationalism is, in some respects, parallel to the three works that aim to analyze the notion of gender in Circassian society. Ayşe Güneş-Ayata, in her research done in the shanty towns of Ankara states that for the Circassian women, their ethnic identity works as an asset and based on this women act as the willing reproducers and protectors of the *status-quo* and the traditional patriarchy.¹⁹⁰ Seteney Shami in her analysis of feminine identity and ethnic identity among the Circassians in Jordan states that gender is the contested domain through which ethnic majority and minority differentiation is maintained.¹⁹¹ Shami further argues that patriarchy is maintained through a constant reference to “the other”, the Arabs in the Jordanian context, which “serves to control female behavior without directly confronting elements central to Circassian culture including the relative freedom of mobility for married women and the lack of sexual segregation.”¹⁹² Gönül Ertem, in her analysis of the relationship between Circassian women and feminism in Turkey that is based on her research done in Eskişehir, states that gender relations which are claimed to be “already modern”, “non-segregated” with the elevated position and freedom of Circassian

¹⁸⁹ Neval, interview by author, 6 February 2008, Ankara.

¹⁹⁰ A. Güneş-Ayata, “Etnik Kimlik ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet: Ankara’da Çerkes Kadınlar,” in *20. Yüzyılın Sonunda Kadınlar ve Gelecek Konferansı 19-21 Kasım 1997*, ed. O. Çitçi (Ankara: TODAİE İnsan Hakları Araştırma ve Derleme Merkezi Yayını, 1998), 71-80, 79.

¹⁹¹ S. Shami, “Feminine Identity and Ethnic Identity: The Circassians in Jordan,” in *Who’s Afraid of Femininity? Questions of Femininity*, eds. M. Brüggemann, S. Heebing, D. Long and M. Michielsens (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1993), 147-155, 153.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 151.

women by the Circassians provides a firm discursive ground for the Circassians “to subvert relations of power embedded in ethnically diverse but ideologically homogenous national contexts such as Turkey.”¹⁹³

I argue that patriarchy in the Circassian society which coexists with the myths of the high status and freedom of women is constantly being reproduced in the diasporic context and I further argue that diaspora nationalism has a significant role in the reproduction of patriarchy and the formation of modern patriarchal dynamics.

This study proposes that when analyzed from a gender perspective, though they are quite similar, diaspora nationalism is different than nationalism in general. Diasporic groups are subjected to two sets of gender relations, those of the dominant society and those internal to the group.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, there is also the homeland dimension which is not necessarily in harmony with the diasporic communities in terms of gender relations. Hence, the sources, the rivals, the loyalties and the 'threats' that diaspora nationalisms interact with are multiple. This study proposes that diaspora nationalism is far more complicated than state nationalisms in terms of their relationships with gender. Women in the diasporic communities are “subject-ed by a double articulation of discourses of cultural difference and patriarchy”¹⁹⁵ which takes place among the relationships of the diaspora with the homeland, host community and transnational network. Though literature on diaspora and gender emphasize the possibilities of limited emancipation and though diaspora nationalism has no state power, I argue that diaspora nationalism, however fragmented or chaotic it is, locates itself in a constant 'state of emergency' and hence, has the ability to constantly renew and recreate patriarchy in its modern forms. Furthermore, diasporic patriarchy is one of the crucial formations of diaspora nationalism through which diasporic identity, history and boundaries are maintained and recreated. Constructions of femininity and masculinity that are supported by diasporic patriarchy work for the formation and maintenance of diaspora nationalism.

¹⁹³ G. Ertem, “Off the Feminist Platform in Turkey: Cherkess Gender Relations,” in *Feminist Fields: Ethnographic Insights*, eds. R. Bridgman, S. Cole and H. Howard-Bobiwash (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999), 173-195, 175.

¹⁹⁴F. Anthias, “Evaluating “Diaspora”: Beyond Ethnicity?” *Sociology* 32(3)(1998): 557-580, 573-574.

¹⁹⁵K. Ganguly, “Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood,” *Cultural Studies* 6(1) (1992): 27-49, 38.

6.4. Conclusion

The constructions of femininity that are embraced by Circassian nationalists have been a significant part of the fragile stance that the Circassian community in Turkey has pursued *vis-à-vis* and through “the Others” which may be European Orientalists, “the Turks”, other ethnic groups or even the homeland. Moreover, these constructions – which are subject to change and reconstruction – have worked to cope with the international developments regarding the post-Soviet conjuncture, which has implied new understandings of the notions of homeland, identity and diasporic experience for the Circassian community in Turkey. To that extent, the image of the Circassian woman symbolizes the limits and the boundaries of the Circassian community; and hence, the ethnic identity. Therefore, particular gender constructions have worked as formations of diaspora nationalism which locates itself not only *vis-à-vis* / through host community but also within the politics of the so-called homeland. Within diaspora nationalism, the discourse on the 'inbetweenness' of diasporas, connections with the homeland and host community, and diasporic condition are formed, recreated and reinvented through gender constructions. Diasporas which are celebrated as the emblems and global carriers of hybridity and transnationalism may also create and recreate less visible forms of patriarchy through nationalism. Exploring such gendered dimensions of diaspora nationalism allows us to rethink not only diasporas but also nationalism, ethnicity and globalization, within which diasporas are embedded.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation aims to explore and understand formations of diaspora nationalism through the case study of Circassians in Turkey; a relatively underresearched ethnic group who came to Ottoman lands as a result of immigration which Circassian activists in Turkey today calls “Great Exodus” that took place after Crimean War (1853-1856) at the peak of Russian expansionist policy.

Based on semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with Circassian diaspora activists and intellectuals who were selected from the decision-making groups (from associations, foundations, platforms and youth committees) in Ankara and Istanbul, this dissertation explores the processes and structures of diaspora nationalism. Regarding interview as a site of the production and construction of knowledge, the interviewees as co-producers of knowledge and the interview responses as actively constructed ‘narratives’ rather than direct access to ‘experience’; the interviews conducted for this research aim to understand how diasporic subjectivities in terms of experiences, life histories, conflicts, and discontents; and the relationships with the state apparatus, homeland and current debates in Turkey are constructed by the Circassian activists and intellectuals. During the fieldwork for this dissertation which aims to explore these questions, my position as an insider who was studying her own community had some advantages and disadvantages. Despite some complications in terms of negotiations during the interviews, such an insider position, I believe, created an additional space for this research and provided me with almost unlimited access, trust and details in the field.

Employing the notion of diaspora first, as a choice which is manifested as a voice at the political level; second, as composed of multiple actors who participate in several networks of relationships with the homeland, host community, international community;

and third, as the crossroads where nationalism, ethnicity and globalization meet and cross each other; this dissertation takes diaspora as a heuristic device through which the dynamic terrains of nationalism, ethnicity and globalization can be explored. In that exploration, diaspora nationalism is regarded as a channel through which diasporic communities enhance claims of identity, politics; and relate to homelands and host communities and nation-states.

To explore the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism, there are four interrelated axes upon which this dissertation is based. Each of these axes is significant in the formation and as the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey.

The first axis takes diaspora nationalism as a historical phenomenon with its ebbs and flows, and diasporic subjects as actors that are capable of negotiating, acting, reacting, resisting and narrating within the constantly changing limits set by the politics of homeland, host community and international relations. On that level, Circassian nationalists are regarded as actors who interact with and articulate multiple discourses on nation, nationalism, diaspora and Turkish nationalism. Within this multiplicity of discourses and interactions, Circassian diaspora nationalism is not a homogenous block but composed of multiple lines of thought and different historical forms.

Furthermore, the various ways diaspora nationalisms deal with nationalisms are complicated. Concerning the hegemonic nationalism, encounters between hegemonic nationalism and diaspora shape the way diaspora narrates about itself, locates and transforms its identity. Through state policies in education, armed service, justice etc. and a rising Turkish nationalism which is based on multiple and simultaneous tides of assimilation and exclusion, Circassian diasporic identity is constantly constructed and positioned *vis-à-vis* and through Turkish nationalism. Most of the Circassians interviewed for this study have highlighted the multiplicity of the discourses of Turkish nationalism on Circassians while they also regard the inclusion of Circassians into Turkish nationalist groups as conditional. Hence, despite the existence of a group of Circassians among the Turkish nationalist movement, the positions between friend and foe, support and opposition are easy to travel for Circassians in the discourse of Turkish nationalism. In such instances of travel, Turkish nationalism regards Circassians as a potential threat which should be observed and kept under constant surveillance as a result of which some Circassian activists

criticize Turkish nationalism on the basis that it is oppressive, assimilating and unrespectful to differences. Moreover, the relationships with Turkish nationalism are not just based on rejection or criticism but also acknowledgement of the successful implementation of the Turkish nationalist project. Through these discourses, diaspora nationalism simultaneously rejects, imitates, flirts, cooperates and challenges hegemonic nationalism. Thus, the relationship between diaspora nationalism and hegemonic nationalism is far from being an exact opposition but rather includes strategies and maneuvers that are open to rapid change and transformation.

Maneuvering and strategizing within multiple nationalisms, Circassian activists demand and claim the public sphere; reverse official historiography by their attempts to overcome the stigmatizing identification of Çerkes Ethem and appropriate new roles for themselves within the official historiography through the claims of extensive participation into the wars of the Republic and Ottoman Empire; claim historical roots in Anatolia to locate themselves beyond the narratives of rootlessness, inbetweenness, inability to belong, diasporic loneliness; employ the discourse of military nation which defines Circassian history with reference to wars; and highlight the necessity to create a national discourse and employ the nationalist symbols and rituals. This dissertation argues that diaspora nationalisms, within these maneuvers, are embedded in a basic dilemma which owes its existence to the uneasy alliance of diaspora and nationalism: that is the dilemma of simultaneously challenging and criticizing the national order of things on one level and reclaiming diasporic and still national identities on the other.

Studying Circassian diaspora nationalism not as a phenomenon that takes place in isolation but through profound and continuous interactions on multiple levels, this dissertation's second axis regards the relationships of the diaspora with the host community, host state and the hegemonic nationalism of the host community. On this level, this dissertation studies an ethnic group in Turkey whose relations with the Turkish state and society are more complicated than the oversimplified dualities such as oppressor versus oppressed, assimilator versus assimilator etc. This dissertation highlights that the common idea that Circassians is an advantaged group in Turkey in terms of their relations with the Turkish state is quite misleading as far as Circassian activists are concerned. The other common idea that Circassians are pro-state or embedded in Turkish

state is also oversimplified. Circassian relationships with the Turkish state are far from being homogenous, and they range between neglect, inclusion, exclusion, trust, gratitude and harmony. The myth of *MİT* and the critiques of Circassian activists on education are instances of these dynamic and multifaceted relationships with the Turkish state.

While Circassian activists defined Circassian diaspora in Turkey as politically and organizationally incompetent, restless, inbetween, fearful, grateful, trustworthy and loyal; I argue that these characteristics that they have attributed to Circassian diaspora in Turkey are also reflections of their experiences in Turkey as a non-Turkish Muslim ethnic group. They feel incompetence in terms of politics and organizations, solitude and inbetweenness, fear and loyalty, simultaneously. In terms of their image in Turkey and “others” perceptions, the trilogy of Circassian Ethem, Circassian Girls/Beauty and Circassian chicken is a usual reference point in the narratives of Circassian activists.

I argue that such a wide range of relationships with the Turkish state and society on the side of Circassians in Turkey and in their narratives is a diasporic feature within which Circassian activists in Turkey employ an undecidable position. Such a position constantly shifts between the migrant, the citizen, the founders and constitutive elements of the nation-state, lonely and rootless strangers, and historical guests who may be called as undesired elements at any moment while their narratives on the relationships with the state vary between neglect, assimilation, hostility, harmony, tension, and alliance. I argue that this undecidability in terms of defining the community and relating with the host state and host community is one of the basic formations of Circassian diaspora in Turkey.

Furthermore, this dissertation argues that this undecidability has its origins in the undecidability of Turkish nationalism in its various forms and currents since the end of 19th century. The inclusion of non-Turkish Muslim groups in the nation building project has been highly conditional and ambiguous. As an almost total rejection of non-Muslims can be observed, non-Turkish groups have not been exempt from the means of othering and exclusion but very close to be called as “the Others”. Indeed, what differentiates “the others” from “us” has not been religion *per se* but rather loyalty attributed to the particular group as Yeğen underlines.¹ Hence, inclusion of the Circassians into nation-building project and Turkish nationalism had been ambiguous, conditional and fragile. Yet, the

¹ M. Yeğen, “Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(6)(2004): 51-66, 66.

conditions of inclusion have become more blurred with the formation of a nation-state and the emergence of multiple strands of Turkish nationalism.

The third axis that this dissertation studies as formations of diaspora nationalism considers homeland, the Caucasus in the Circassians' case and it defines "homeland" as a dynamic construction that attains meaning not only through the political developments but also through memories, discourses and narratives of individuals on "home", and "homeland." Exploring these narratives on "home" and "homeland" and situating them in national and international politics, I argue that Circassian diaspora nationalists constantly reconstruct the idea of homeland. Especially the 1990s, the end of Soviet Union and Cold War, globalization processes, liberalization in Turkey, Turkey's relationships with European Union and the rise of various nationalisms in Turkey have all contributed to the transformation of Circassian activists and Circassians in Turkey. This transformation of Circassian diaspora in the 1990s meant new encounters and relations with the homeland while it also changed the relations with the host community, state and other ethnic groups in Turkey. For the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, these encounters with the people, politics and problems of the homeland had been multidimensional. Experiencing commonality and difference; enthusiasm and disappointment simultaneously; Circassians, in the 1990s became part of a real diasporic homeland with which real and systematic relations should be established. The concerns, politics and geography of the "homeland" had also become accessible for the Circassian diaspora while these encounters with the homeland coupled with the political events in the Caucasus and Turkey led to the formation of new fault lines for the Circassian diaspora in Turkey.

Furthermore Circassian activists, since the 1990s, have been redefining their relationships with the Turkish state. I argue that since the 1990s, Circassians in Turkey have been trying to develop new relationships with the Turkish state based on multicultural citizenship policies and search for new relations with the Turkish state through the redefinition of the notion of citizenship. In line with these developments, Circassian community's boundaries of knowledge, constructions of its past and future have also been continuously transformed. For the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, the post-1990s also has meant the formation of new "others" as a result of new dynamics of Turkish politics. As Turkey has been in a position to deal with the rise of Kurdish nationalism and the

problematization of the Armenian deportation in 1915; Circassian diaspora, as an ethnic group in Turkey, also has been in a position to situate itself *vis-à-vis* these questions and claims.

In terms of their visions of future, while the Caucasus is part of the future that Circassian diaspora nationalists imagine, politics of Turkey and particularly democratization in Turkey are also regarded as very significant. As a diasporic community, they regard themselves as located in two geographies and two countries more when compared to the 1970s and before. Hence -literally- all of the activists demand dual citizenship to fully situate themselves as a diasporic community. Their ideas on future are focused on dual citizenship, dual identities, multiple concerns and multiple locations.

However, the processes of diasporization of the 1990s have also brought new problems and tensions. When compared to the steady, timid, limited and predictable years of Cold War; Circassian diaspora activists have been dealing with a new diasporic chaos in terms of their group dynamics and their relationships with the homeland, host state, and other groups for the last two decades.

The fourth axis that this dissertation studies concerns the gendered dimensions of diaspora in general and diaspora nationalism in particular. This dissertation argues that web of relations with the host community, homeland and other nationalisms, especially the hegemonic nationalism in the host society which constantly shapes diaspora nationalisms are made available to diaspora nationalisms not only by political and technological developments but also by a particular gender regime.

On this level, this dissertation studies the well-known construct of Circassian Beauty, a historical image of idealized feminine aesthetics that has been attributed to the women of the Caucasus for centuries as a heuristic tool to explore the gendered relationships between the Circassian diaspora in Turkey, host community and other geographies. It explores the concept of Circassian Beauty on three interrelated levels: first as an Orientalist theme and figure in European literature, art and knowledge production; second as a historical figure that also finds its place in Turkish popular culture and third as an item on the agenda of Circassian diaspora nationalists. As Orientalism, scientific racism, commodification, and the interest in geography as an imperial knowledge production mechanism all contributed to the idea of Circassian Beauty in European

imagination; in the Turkish context, it is a construct through which Circassians situate themselves in the host community. I argue that the image of Circassian Beauty is a contested image through which Circassians in Turkey, as an ethnic group in Turkey, relate to the peoples of Anatolia and other geographies and *vice versa*. It is a historical category which is crucial for diaspora to locate itself *vis-à-vis* and through the homeland, host community and other geographies such as Europe.

Furthermore the gendered dimensions of diaspora and diaspora nationalism go beyond the single image of Circassian Beauty. Discourse of diaspora nationalism is gendered to the extent that it has provided men and women of the diaspora with different constructions, missions and roles. Particular constructions of masculinity and femininity have worked as formations of diaspora nationalism which locates itself not only *vis-à-vis* / through host community but also within the politics of the so-called homeland. In addition, these constructions – which are subject to constant change and reconstruction – have worked to cope with the international developments regarding the post-Soviet conjuncture, which has implied new understandings of the notions of homeland, identity and diasporic experience for the Circassian community in Turkey. Furthermore for the Circassian diaspora nationalists, gender proves to be significant for the projects of diaspora nationalism. In terms of the survival of diaspora and its relationship with the homeland, gender becomes an item on the agenda.

Within diaspora nationalism, the discourse on the 'inbetweenness' of diasporas, connections with the homeland and host community, and diasporic condition are formed, recreated and reinvented through gender constructions. As a result of a gendered reading of Circassian diaspora and diaspora nationalism in Turkey, I argue that diasporas which are celebrated as the emblems and global carriers of hybridity and transnationalism may also create and recreate less visible forms of patriarchy through nationalism which this dissertation calls diasporic patriarchy. Exploring such gendered dimensions of diaspora nationalism allows us to rethink not only diasporas but also nationalism, ethnicity and globalization, within which diasporas are embedded.

By exploring these four axes of diaspora nationalism through the case of Circassians in Turkey, this dissertation contributes to diaspora literature. Most of the diaspora studies explain their focus on diaspora in terms of the tensions between the nation-

states and the diasporic communities. Yet, diasporas are living communities and political groups. From such a perspective, diasporas should be analyzed not just as a particular kind of politics that locates itself *vis-à-vis* the nation-states but also as political bodies that are formed through the interplays of several discourses, such as nationalism, ethnicity, gender, citizenship and militarism. Thus, understanding and exploring the particular discourses and strategies that make such a politics possible and ‘meaningful’ is crucial. Studying diaspora as an actor with its own voice, politics and visions, this dissertation contributes to diaspora theory by transforming diaspora from a “*vis-à-vis* the nation state” position to the crossroads where multiple discourses on gender, nationalism, ethnicity and globalization form the diasporic sites.

Moreover, it locates diaspora not only in global and hybrid settings which are defined through mobility and displacement beyond national boundaries but also in nationalisms of multiple groups including nationalism of the group, hegemonic nationalism and other nationalisms. From such a perspective, diasporas are not only globally mobile actors who, by their very existence and politics, deconstruct nation-states’ claimed monopolies over the construction of national identities but they are also nationalist actors dealing with nationalism on several grounds and levels. Hence, this study contributes to diaspora literature by situating diaspora in nationalisms of various kinds. I argue that diasporic consciousness, identities, histories and politics can only be understood in such a dynamism, multiplicity and complexity.

To that extent, this dissertation also contributes to our understanding of nationalisms without nation-states by exploring the question of how the nation is imagined in the absence of a nation-state but in the presence of a claimed and imagined homeland. Analyses of the ways in which diasporas are imagined through nationalist frameworks is crucial for social science to understand the notion of diaspora and diaspora politics in particular and nationalism in general.

This dissertation also contributes to literature on ethnic groups in Turkey. Circassian community is one of the least studied ethnic groups in Turkey despite the existence of common beliefs on Circassians which pertain to their roles in Turkish and Ottoman history, their relationships with the state and their characteristics. Social science in Turkey mostly studies other ethnic groups whose nationalisms are more visible; whose

problems, claims and relations with the state are shaped by explicit opposition. However, to understand the sites and meanings of ethnicity in Turkey and the relationships between ethnic groups and nation-state, one should think about not only Kurds or Lausanne minorities but also Circassians in Turkey. I argue that a better understanding of ethnicity and nationalism in Turkey should include analyses of the other ethnic groups whose histories and experiences may not be shaped by explicit oppression, assimilation or conflict but by a more subtle set of relationships, tensions, flirts with official historiography and Turkish nationalism. This dissertation studies these sites of ethnicity in Turkey within their historical and political complexities, and to that extent, it expands the scope of the studies on ethnic groups in Turkey.

Furthermore, this dissertation contributes to Turkish politics on other grounds. To the extent that it explores the narratives on identity, memory and politics of Circassians in Turkey, it simultaneously discusses their interactions with Turkish identity, Turkish nationalism and nation-state's policies. Therefore it aims to contribute to the literature on Turkish nationalism, state and its relationships with minorities, not only legal minorities who are recognized by the Treaty of Lausanne but especially cultural minorities, Muslim non-Turkish groups. From such a point of view, mechanisms and discourses of inclusion and exclusion which functioned simultaneously as far as non-Turkish groups are concerned are significant to understand not only Turkish identity as constructed and imagined by Turkish nationalism but also the ways multiple ethnic identities in Turkey are constructed. Exploring the mechanisms, strategies and discourses of Turkish nationalism on non-Turkish Muslims will further our understanding of Turkish nationalism by understanding it as a multilayered ideology rather than an ideological homogenous block. On that level, this dissertation sheds light into the formations of not only Circassian diasporic identity but also Turkish identity both of which are constructed in close and complicated relations with each other. In addition, an analysis of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey will contribute to our understanding of how ethnic groups in Turkey locate themselves *vis-à-vis* and through Turkish nationalism and historiography as a political discourse that creates ethnic hegemony through legitimizing a particular historical approach.

Finally, this dissertation is a contribution to gender studies. As most studies of diasporic communities ignore gender as a category of analysis, this dissertation rereads

diaspora and interrogates diasporic identity, politics and history through gender lenses. In terms of gender studies in Turkey, it aims to go beyond women's studies in Turkey which, since 1990s, have re-read nationalism, Kemalism and modernism from a gender perspective and questioned the Kemalist project of modernity and nation-building as a profoundly gendered project that has created a new form of patriarchy. However, I argue that there are other nationalisms which construct the discourses and experiences of manhood and womanhood in Turkey. This dissertation studies one of those 'other' nationalisms that coexist with, that are related to but different from Turkish nationalism. Such a perspective does not only deconstruct and re-read the 'other' nationalisms from gender lenses but it will also give gender studies in Turkey a more complicated historical diversity.

With these contributions, this dissertation on the formations of Circassian diaspora nationalism in Turkey aims to be a part of the "discovery of multiple selves"² as far as studies on gender, diaspora, nationalism and Turkish nationalism are concerned.

² S. M. Okin and J. Mansbridge, 'Introduction,' in *Feminism (Vol.1)*, eds. S. M. Okin and J. Mansbridge (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), ix-xvii, xii.

APPENDIX I

Interview and Interviewee Details

Name	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Duration of Interview (Hours)	Date of Birth	Profession	Tribal Association	Place of Birth
Zekeriya	28 February, 2007	Office, Istanbul	1:10:55	1921	Lawyer	Kabardian	Kayseri
Nurhan	23 March, 2007	Home, İstanbul	App. 2:30	1935	Lawyer	Kabardian	Kayseri
Nesibe	18 May, 2007	Association, Istanbul	2:33:52	1950	Manager in a Circassian organization	Abzakh	İstanbul
Cahit	23 May, 2007	Cafe	4:06:32	1959	Engineer	Abkhaz	Akçakoca
Meral	7 June, 2007	Office, Istanbul	2:23:47	1957	Businesswoman	Kabardian	İstanbul
Kaya	7 June, 2007	Office, Istanbul	3:02:02	1959	Businessman	Abkhaz	Adapazarı
Mert	12 June, 2007	Office, Istanbul	3:05:05	1960	Architect	Kabardian	Kayseri
Hakan	3 July, 2007	Cafe, Istanbul	3:03:19	1962	Language Instructor	Kabardian	Eskişehir
Gürsoy	23 July, 2007	Office, Istanbul	2:36:06	1961	Lawyer	Chechen	Çanakkale
Esat	10 August, 2007	Office, Istanbul	2:38:04	1970	Lawyer	Abkhaz	Bilecik
Taner	15 August, 2007	Restaurant, Istanbul	1:44:57	1956	Journalist	Shapsug	Samsun
Yasemin	16 August,	Office,	3:07:55	1949	Retired state	Abkhaz	Bilecik

	2007	Istanbul			official		
Nezih	17-18 August, 2007	Office, Istanbul	5:35:01	1941	Lawyer	Kabardian	Maraş
Kenan	20 August, 2007	Cafe, Istanbul	3:25	1959	Engineer	Chemguy	Düzce
Timuçin	25 August, 2007	Home, Çanakkale	3:05	1946	Engineer	Kabardian	Kayseri
Köksal	28 August, 2007	Association, Istanbul	3:55	1954	Teacher	Shapsug	İzmit
Hicran	September, 2007	Home, Istanbul	2:35	1965	Finance expert	Abkhaz	Sivas
Hasan	October, 2007	During the flight	2:27	1960	Academician	Shapsug	Ankara
Özer	January, 2008	Cafe, Istanbul	1:34	1975	Businessman	Beslenei	İstanbul
Gürtuğ	3 February, 2008	Association, Ankara	4:13	1946	Engineer, craftsman	Beslenei	Düzce
Turgay	4 February, 2008	Office, Ankara	2:15	1948	Engineer	Shapsug	Amasya
Metin	5 February, 2008	Office, Ankara	2:10	1946	Lawyer	Abzakh	Antalya
Neval	6 February, 2008	Office, Ankara	2:01	1950	Retired state official	Kabardian	Sivas,
Cezmi	7 February, 2008	Association, Ankara	4:13	1943	Lawyer	Abkhaz	Kayseri
Rüstem	8 February, 2008	Association, Ankara	4:04	1943	Retired lawyer	Ubykh	Samsun
Okan	9 February, 2008	Association, Ankara	2:24	1944	Retired state official	Kabardian	Adana
İzzet	10 February, 2008	Home, Ankara	2:27	1946	Retired state official	Abkhaz	Kayseri,
Şener	18 June, 2008	Association, Istanbul	3:04	1963	Businessman	Kabardian	Istanbul

APPENDIX II

Magazines Published by Circassian Activists in Turkey¹

<i>NAME</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>ASSOCIATION</i>	<i>THEMES & AIMS</i>	<i>OWNERS & AUTHORS²</i>
Kafkasya Dergisi	January 1953-December 1953	Caucasian Cultural Association of Istanbul	Geography of Caucasia, immigration of Caucasians, Caucasian surnames, trade history of Caucasia	Şeref Terim, Dr. Vasfi Güsar, Ahmet Canbek, Habjoka, Seyin Time, Mehmet Ketey, A. Meker, İsmail Ziya Bersis, İnal Şahaplı
Kafkas Mecmuası	April 1954-May 1956	Caucasian Cultural Association of Istanbul	Russian Imperialism, liberation of the homeland, Caucasian history and culture	Şeref Terim, Turhan Yavuz Marşan, Mehmet Ketey, Alaattin Kutlu, İnal Şahaplı
Yeni Kafkasya Dergisi	1957-1962		History and social structure of Caucasia, integration to the host state and society	Vasfi Güsar, Mehmet Ketey, Seyin Time, Dr. Hilmi Tuğuş, Uğur Dipşov, M. Zahide Güsar, Ahmet Bedevi Atalay, Refik Hıznel, Aytek Namitok
Kafkasya	1964-1977	Published in Ankara	Caucasian culture and folklore, history and geography of Caucasia, observations from trips to Caucasia	Vasfi Güsar, İsmet Kalgay, Alhas Fiderok, Kadir Natho, B. Batırhan, Seteney, Mahmut Kusko, Yıldız Okay Tılfij, Ömer Beygua, Hapi C. Afeşij Emin, Dr. M. Ali Pçihaluk

¹ This list of magazines published by the Circassian activists in Turkey is a selection. It excludes those magazines published in the Ottoman Era, in multiple localities such as Samsun, Kayseri, Düzce etc. Therefore it is a selective list that aims to give a general idea on the characteristics of these magazines.

² Some of the names of the authors and owners of these magazines are semi-pseudo names. They are pseudo because they are not the legal names of those people. However, they include the Circassian family names which were appropriated by the authors and owners in the magazines.

<i>NAME</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>ASSOCIATION</i>	<i>THEMES & AIMS</i>	<i>OWNERS & AUTHORS²</i>
Birleşik Kafkasya Dergisi	1964-1967		The need to publicize the Caucasian national will, Caucasian traditions, folklore and history	Yılmaz Nevruz, Mustafa Beştoy, Barasbi Baytugan, Ahmet Janbek Habjoka, M. Zihni Hızal, Alhas Fidarok, Rezzan Dinçer Zübeyde Şaplı, Kadircan Kafılı, Osman Çelik
Kamçı Gazetesi	1970s		Political solutions to the problems of Circassians, self-determination for Circassians, return	Ali Ekrem, Yaşar Kemal Aksoy, Bahri Özen (owners)
Yamçı	1975-1978		The aim to be a society that determines its fate in its homeland, observations from trips to Caucasia, alphabets of Caucasian languages, sample texts in Caucasian	Fahri Huvaj, Nart Savsur, Hatam N., Yısmeyl Ö., Kardan D., Dzıbe N., Nihat Bidanul, Cureyko A., Yenemıko M., Yabgeko A., Hatko Huşan, Khesevko, Açmız Nihat, Aşamba Mümtaz
Nartların Sesi	1978-1980	North Caucasian People's Culture Association of Ankara	Caucasian history, developing relations with the homeland, the ideal of self-determination in homeland	Fahri Huvaj, Nihat Berzeg (owners)
Kafdağı	1987	North Caucasian Culture Association	Protecting and improving the Circassian culture	Aslan Arı, Nahit Erus, Mansur Ulutaşlı, Süleyman Yançatoral, Özdemir Özbay, Fahri Huvaj
Marje	1991	Lina Organization	Presenting the Circassian culture in national and global spheres, news from the homeland and other Circassian communities, solution of the problems in democratic ways	Sönmez Baykan, Mustafa Aziz Özbek, Cihan İşbaşı (owners)

<i>NAME</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>ASSOCIATION</i>	<i>THEMES & AIMS</i>	<i>OWNERS & AUTHORS²</i>
Nart	1997-...	Caucasian Association	News about the Circassian organizations in Turkey, protection of cultural values in the process of assimilation	Muhittin Ünal, Özdemir Özbay, Erol Taymaz,

APPENDIX III

Selected e-Mail Discussion Groups of the Circassians in Turkey

- MARJE, 2443 members, established on September 1999, 30314 messages.¹

Description: “The “MARJE” is an interactive communication platform which provides a free environment for those whose consciousness of being North Caucasian is developed, who are sensible for the events taking place in that part of the world and who do not have the opportunity to share their ideas because of geographical and physical distance.”

(“MARJE, Kuzey Kafkasyalilik bilinci gelismis ve bu konuda cesitli duyarliliklari olan fakat cografya, ideoloji ve yas gibi sebeplerle ayni ortamda bulunma sansi olmayan insanlarimizin bilgilerini aktarip, fikir alisverisinde bulunduklari interaktif bir iletisim platformudur.”)

- cerkes sohbeti, 428 members, established on April 2000, 3042 messages.

Description: “The “cerkes sohbeti” aims at affording an efficient share of ideas, feelings and views about any subject among Circassians.”

(“Guzel, faydali ve seviyeli paylasimlara vesile olmasi dilegiyle, tum cerkesler davetlidir...”)

- cerkesplatformu, 146 members, established on August 2002, 3770 messages.

Description: “The “Cerkesplatformu” is a discussion group that aims at establishing a communication platform among Circassian intellectuals who are residing in distant countries and willing to exchange ideas and discuss their projects.”

(“Türkiye’de ve Dünyanın çeşitli ülkelerinde yaşayan Çerkes aydınlarının birbiriyle haberleşme görüş alışverişinde bulunma ve

¹ The numbers of mails and members, dates of establishment and group descriptions of these e-mail discussion groups are taken from groups’ web sites on May 10, 2009, in Yahoo Groups accessible at <http://www.yahogroups.com>. The groups are listed in terms of their dates of establishment.

projelerini paylaşımlarına aracı olmayı amaçlayan bir iletişim grubudur.”)

- cerkesler, 701 members, established on January 2003, 1653 messages.

Description: “The mailgroup “Cerkesler” is established in order to enhance communication among circassians, provide a discussion platform where problems of common interest are addressed with solidarity. Our mailgroup is expecting from each and every circassian to take all endeavors for protecting our identity and culture.”

(“Çerkesler arası iletişimi güçlendirmek, bilgi alışverişinde bulunmak, sorunlarımızı tespit edip çözüm aramak, birlikteliği sağlayarak dayanışma içerisinde olmak için kurulan çerkesler mail grubu kültürümüzü ve benliğimizi korumak adına herkesin elden geldiğince çaba sarf etmesini beklemektedir.”)

- Nart Kultur, 183 members, established on January 2004, 2481 messages.

Description: “The “Nart Kultur” is a group that aims at developing concrete projects in order to promote and perpetuate Caucasian culture while enhancing communication among its members.”

(“Nart Kultur mail grubu Kafkas Kulturunun yasatılması, tanıtılması ve korunması anlamında somut projeler geliştirmek ve uyeleri arasındaki iletişimi güçlendirmek amacıyla kurulmuş bir gruptur.”)

- Adige, 136 members, established on February 2004, 492 messages.

Description: “The “Adige” is a mail group that is open for all of the ideas, point of views and evaluations about North Caucasia.”

(“Kuzey Kafkasya ile ilgili her türlü görüş, bilgi ve fikir alışverişinin sağlanabileceği bu gruba bütün soydaşlarımızı bekliyoruz.”)

- Zekoşnıĝ (‘brotherhood’ in English), 93 members, established on June 2004, 695 messages.

Description: “The Zekoşnıĝ is a communication platform that aims at providing a free debate environment for the news about the autochthon nation of Caucasia, the Circassians and on their political and social problems.”

(“Zekoşniđ; Kuzey Kafkasya otoktonu erkes Halklarının ulusal, toplumsal ve siyasal sorunlarıyla ilgili haber, bilgi ve duişinice alışverişi sađlamak amacıyla kurulmuş bir iletişim platformudur.”)

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