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Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey

compiled and edited

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25. Zazas: Sunni

ular šeyh or pīr. Proscriptions prevent any close contact with Muslims or their prayers. Deviants are ultimately threatened with anathema.

Descent is claimed from Adam alone, giving the Yezidi a position apart from the rest of mankind, held to be descended from Adam and Eve. Membership of the Yezidi is thus by birth alone, and they are bound not to mix with others. Loyalties are to family rather than tribe. Nevertheless there are clearly-defined patrilineal tribal descent groups. Thus in the Midyat region there are two major tribes, the Čelka and the Halta. The Čelka aširet is subdivided into the Daseka, Keleka, and Šemika; these smaller asiret are also divided into gabilet, the Daseka forming the Rebena, Buzera and Binoka. The Halta are the largest tribe in Turkey with their centre in Diyarbakır and Siirt provinces (and a branch in Kars?). The Viransehir region is dominated by the Serkian and the Duna (information from the Yezidi Verein, 1985). Much of the persecution endured has been at the hands of Muslim Kurds, notably at Kovuncuk (Niniveh) in 1832; there is therefore little sense of common interest between them. Polarisation from the orthodox also led to religious coercion by the Otto man government, as recently as 1892 under Ömer Paşa, and the difficulty of obtaining recognition from Sunni officials still endangers the Yezidis' position despite constitutional guarantees. Continuing pressure has led them to claim recently that they represent an original, Zoroastrian, reli gion of the Kurds, apparently so as to effect a rapprochement with the lat ter.

Selected bibliography:

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25. Zazas: Sunni

Designation:

Zazas; Ger. Zaza; Tk. Zaza; Kurd. Zaza, Zaz.

Self-designation:

a. Zaza b. Dimili (not in Erzincan, Kiğı, or Mutki areas).

Numbers:

CENSUS 1965

150,644 declared persons speaking Zaza, total:

ca. 140,000 of these in the Sunni areas.

112,701 persons speaking Zaza as second language.

K. E. E. N.* 1960-70

619 villages total:

465 villages in the Sunni areas.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS 1977: 3 2,000,000 Zaza speakers total.

The general census count is certainly too low as excludes all but 7 (sic!) persons in Tunceli. Confusion arises in these and other lists from the inclusion of Zazas with Kurds in total figures.

Distribution:

in two main groups and several smaller ones. The main Sunni groups

- 1. In the mountains south of the Murad Suyu from Genç to Palu and Lice, and northwards to Bingöl, reaching apparently as far east as Solhan (K. E. E. N. some 345 villages).
- 2. The semi-nomadic Dimilī of the lower-lying areas, living in the hills between Karacadağ in Urfa and Derik in Mardin, apparently extending northward to Çüngüş and Çermik in Diyarbakır (K. E. E. N. some 72 villages).

In addition to these, there are some smaller groups in:

- 3. Mutki (Bitlis), apparently extending to Baykan (Siirt) (K.E.E.N. 11 villages).
- 4. Varto (Muş) (K.E.E.N. 37 villages). Others are reported at:
- 5. Pütürge (Malatya).
- 6. Hinis (Erzurum).

^{*} See survey 1.

26. Zazas: Alevi

- 7. The Census 1965 lists 992 persons speaking Zaza in Kars, but these do not appear in the K.E.E.N. They are known locally as Zaza Türkmen, and are said to live in Selim and Ardahan.
- 8. A further group of 16 villages is reported in Nigde, Aksaray.

Language:

various dialects of Zaza (Zaza, Zazaki or Dimlä), an Iranic language, related to Gorani, but already distinguished from the Kurdish language by O. Mann in 1909. See MacKenzie in this volume. Zaza and Kurdish are not mutually comprehensible.

Religion:

Sunni Muslim: Shafii.

Group identity:

effectively by language, though, as emically seen, by religion which, like that of the Kurds, is generally differentiated from the Hanefi mezheb of the Turkish Sunni majority as the Shafii mezheb, and seen in sharp opposi tion to Kurdish or Zaza Alevilik (23,26). It is noteworthy that the Zaza are not usually distinct in religion from the Kurds in the same region; Vario seems to be an exception. The language is sufficiently different from Kurdish to prevent effective communication between the two groups, except among well educated people. In spite of this, many Zazas now regard themselves as Kurds (see above, 22,23), and have long done so. Tribal organisation is still recognised, and lists are given by Dersimi (1952: 57) for Kiği which apparently extend to many of the Zazas in Bingöl, though no details are given for the more southerly Zaza. Of those listed (Porikan, Maskan, Maksudan, Lertigan, Kureyšan, Bamasuran, Čekan, Čarekan, Gutan) however, some (the Maskan, Kureyšan, Bama suran and Čarekan) are known to be Alevi. Etically some confusion has arisen from, on the one hand, efforts by Kurdish nationalists to swell their numbers by claiming the Zaza as their own, and on the other, semi-official propaganda which treats the Zazas and the Kurds as part of the same "problem" (Başbuğ 1984 a and b; Gülensoy 1983 and 1984b). The Summ Zazas have in the past felt themselves sufficiently distinct from the Alevi Zazas to attack the latter at the behest of the government following the rising in eastern Dersim in 1916; this is characteristic of the complete lack of solidarity between them. Sunni Kurds are aware of a set of cultural and even physical traits which set Sunni Zaza apart from themselves, though not so far as the Alevis. For their Kurdishness see MacKenzie and VAN BRUINESSEN in this volume

Bibliography

Dersimli, M. N. 1952 (Tunceli and surroundings, distribution) Mann, O. 1932 (language, map, designation, areas) Sevgen, N. 1950 (general, all groups)

26. Zazas: Alevi

Designation:

Alevi Zazas, Zaza Alevis; Ger. Alewitische Zazas; Tk. Alevî Zaza(lar); Ali-ilahi.

Self-designation:

a. Alevî. b. Dimilî (not in Erzincan, Kiğı, or Motki). c. Zaza.

Numbers:

CENSUS 1965 150,644 declared persons speaking Zaza:
total of Alevi and Shafii (see 25 above).
ca. 2,506 of these registered in known Alevi areas.

This figure is certainly too low as it excludes all the Alevi Zaza in Tunceli (Dersim) but for 7 persons: the rest have apparently been classed as Kurds.

K. E. E. N.* 1965 619 villages total, Alevi and Shafii Zaza. 160 of these villages in known Alevi areas, but no figures are available for Erzincan, Sivas, or Malatya.

147 villages in Tunceli registered as Zaza, and 214 as Kurdish, with little overlap, out of a total 414, i.e. 35.5% Zaza. The total population of Tunceli in 1965 was 154,175, thus the number of Zaza-speakers should then be 55,000 in Tunceli, all Alevi.

K.E.E. 1964 confirms 373 villages Alevi, 1 Shafii, and 58 Hanefi in total of 414. Some of these Alevi are Kurds (see above, 23).

Distribution:

in two main groups and three extensions:

1. In Tunceli in the sub-provinces of Hozat (35 villages), Nazmiye (13 villages), Ovacık (53 villages), and Pülümür (46 villages), giving a total of 147 villages out of 200 in these sub-provinces (73.5%). The region extends from the Munzur Dağları in the north to the Murad Suyu in

^{*} See survey 1

27. Ossetes

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the south (K.E.E.N.; Sevgen 1950: 411). Some migrate to yaylas in summer.

- 2. Along the right bank of the Euphrates (Fırat) from the Bingöl Dağları to the Malataya plain.
- 3. An extension of this group includes the Zaza element among the Kočgiri (Kočkiri) tribes in Sivas, in the sub-provinces of Zara, İmranlı, Kangal and Divriği (districts of Bulucan, Beypınarı, Kavak, İmranlı Merkez and Karacaören). This comprises the Čarekan and Giniyan tribes (Dersimi 1952: 61-3; Sevgen 1950: 411).
- 4. A further extension into Erzincan and further east into Erzurum includes the Kureyšan tribe in the northeast of Erzincan Merkez subprovince (Merkez and Tanyeri districts), and Çayırlı sub-province (Merkez and Başköy districts) (Dersimi 1952: 67-8).
- 5. A group in Diyarbakır, Hani sub-province (K.E.E.N.).

Language:

as Zaza Sunnis, but Turkish is used by some (not all) groups for religious ceremonial. Now threatened by exodus of population and education of younger generation in Turkish.

Religion:

Alevi Muslims. Cf. Nos. 2, 6, and 23.

Group identity:

through a combination of language, the endogamy inherent in Alevilik, and the closed, esoteric nature of the cult itself. Tribal divisions were still apparent in the 1970s (cf. Dersimi 1952: 43-69; Öztürk 1972: 43 ff., esp. 46), each evoking strong loyalties both to the group and its leader. Tribal land is owned to a large extent by hereditary chiefs (reis) who may control many villages. A further loyalty is traditionally due to cult leaders at three levels, pir, mürsit, and rehber (dede, baba) who formerly visited the towns and villages in a prescribed circuit, and at regular intervals, to direct wor ship, and in return receive donations in cash and kind as an established right, though no more than the expression of respect and spiritual depend ence among their followers. The religious authority of the dede is formal ised through genealogies derived from the Prophet's family (Ehl-i Beyt). through one of the twelve imams. The tribes are consequently divided into those (servid) associated with these genealogies, and those who are not, accepting an inferior standing. As with the Alevi Kurds, reference to descent from the PropheCs family has fulfilled the need for a common tribal

ancestor. The bond between the two levels of tribes is dependent upon the *ikrar bend*, the Alevi confirmation of faith, which is binding for life. Within the *seyyid* tribes are specific families whose long cultural standing enables them to provide most of the *dedes* for both groups. *Dedes* remain responsible for any part of their tribal following which changes location. Group unity is reinforced by the freely-entered bond of *müsahiplik* between individuals.

As an external element, the inaccessibility of Tunceli has both protected these tribes and isolated them, strengthening their identity as a group. It still remains the centre for loyalities among the outlying groups, even though the traditional organisation has been rejected among the younger generation (see Bumke in this volume).

Language appears to be secondary to Alevîlik in identity: a group of Zaza in Sivas, Zara, living among Alevi Kurds now consider themselves Kurdish even though some of the elder members still speak Zaza. Close and cordial relationships are maintained with Alevis in other areas, such as Malatya and Maras, and dedes exchange visits. Some intermarriage occurs, despite the tendency towards tribal endogamy. The usual polarity between. Alevi and Sunni, however, is extended to Shafii Zaza and Kurds.

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Molyneux-Seel, L. 1914 (Tunceli)
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Stygen, 1950 (general all groups)

See BUMKE in this volume.

27. Ossetes

Designation:

Ossetes, Ossetians; Ger. Ossen, Osseten; Tk. Osetin, Asetin, Kuşha(lar).

Self-designation

Iron (s.), Irättä (pl.), Ir (collective); also Digur, Digoron/Diguran, Digor (collective); and Tuallag, Tuallägtä (pl.).