

Ethnic Differentiation among the Kurds: Kurmancî, Kizilbash and Zaza

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General

People described as 'Kurds' are generally written about in one of two ways. Western scholars virtually all acknowledge their existence as a distinct, subject nation, whose national territory has been cut into four parts - in the border regions of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria (or five, if one includes the fragment in former Soviet Armenia). On the other hand, political leaders and some scholars in the countries with territory claimed by Kurdish nationalists tend to deprecate the Kurds' national distinctiveness, if not deny their existence out of hand.

Since the mid-1980s, however, a further dimension has been added - or rather restored - to the already complex picture of Kurdish nationalism, and Kurdish national identity. For it is from this time that two closely-related minorities in Anatolia began once again seriously to question even the 'Kurdish' identity which had been thrust upon them by Kurdish nationalists.

This article examines the effect of movements favouring ethnic differentiation from mainstream Kurdish (Kurmancî) nationalism by these two minorities - known as the so called 'Alevi Kurds', 'Dersimlis' or 'Kizilbash' ['K»z»lbaş'] and the so called 'Zaza Kurds'. After examining the historical and cultural roots of what are shown to be ethnically distinct minorities, the paper explores the ethnic dimension of what are generally regarded as 'Kurdish' uprisings in Anatolia from the 1920s up until the present day. It is shown that these uprisings were, in fact, almost all uprisings by these two non-Kurmancî ethnic groups - even if certain circumstances compelled the insurgents in such cases to describe themselves as 'Kurdish' to the outside world. The reasons for such apparent self-denial are discussed and some of the important ramifications for the present-day Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey raised. 'Alevi Kurds' The mere existence of ethnic groups has frequently been a cause of social and political tension in human history. But how does one define such a grouping, in

today's world? Modern sociologists (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1984: 83; Banton in Mann, 1984: 114 and Marshall, 1994: 157) define an 'ethnic group' as a segment of a country's population which clearly comes from a specific culture and which shares common social institutions. Such a group is much broader than, and stands in contrast to, that demarcated merely by its racial characteristics. Persons belonging to a given ethnic group may be identifiable in terms of racial characteristics, however they may also share other cultural features such as language, religion, or politics.¹

In the Turkish part of Kurdistan there are sub-groups of Kurds adhering to Christianity and to various forms of Yazdânism - the ancient Cult of the Angels - such as Yezidiism - derived from Zoroastrianism and sometimes incorrectly considered a form of devil-worship (McDowall, 1992: 14-15 and Izady, 1992: 137).² There are also others generally regarded as Kurds who follow the Alevi religion, which is often asserted to be a branch of Shi'a Islam. Mainstream (Ithna'asheri or Twelver Shi'ite) Kurds are about half the populations of Malâtya, Adiyâman and Kahramanmaraş (Izady, 1992: 133).³ The Alevi religion (Aleviism) is also classified as an offshoot of Yazdânism by some. Small communities of Jewish and Christian Kurds have long lived in various parts of Kurdistan. Most of the former immigrated to Israel during the 1950s, however (McDowall, 1992:7).

Like the mainstream Shi'a, (the Iranian 'Twelver' Shi'a) the Alevis in the Turkish state claim some connection to the power struggle which erupted in early Islam upon the death of the Prophet Muhammad, between two rival leaders, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib and Abu Bakr. The first of these two contenders was initially defeated in his quest for the role of leader. His supporters are called the Shi'a, or 'partisans of 'Ali'.

According to a growing number of scholars, however, the Alevis in the Turkish state are not really Shi'a, but ghulat, or an 'extremist' split from Shi'a Islam, which is heretical in its attribution of divine powers to certain humans: Muslim heresiographers define the ghulat as those Shi'ites who have exaggerated their veneration of the Imams, from 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib (d. AD 661) to Muhammad the Mahdi (believed to have miraculously disappeared in AD 874), by attributing to them qualities belonging to God. The ghulat are those Shi'ites who deify the Imam 'Ali and the rest of the Imams (Moosa, 1987: xxiii).⁴

Unlike the mainstream Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, the ghulat Alevi sects only stand by one of the pillars of Islam - the shahadah or witness, a sort of Islamic credo. The remaining four central practices are ignored by the Alevis: prayer five times daily; annual fasting, during the holy month of Ramadan (Ramazan); pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once during one's lifetime and the payment of the zakat tax. Alevi women are free to participate in all religious ceremonies and not compelled to veil themselves (Trowbridge, 1909: 348 and 351).⁵

Ghulat as well as moderate or orthodox Shi'a believe that the twelve Imams were both infallible and incapable of sin, citing the Holy Qur'an to verify this (Moosa, 1987: xxi and The Holy Qur'an: 33: 33). The majority of contemporary ghulat 'live in an area stretching from Iran to Syria and Turkey. They are of varied ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Because they share many religious beliefs and traditions, some writers confuse one group with another' (Moosa, 1987: xxi).

Briefly, then, the ghulat appear to be an 'extreme' breakaway from Shi'a Islam, who have re-incorporated elements of ancient pre-Islamic religions such as Shamanism, Mithraism and Yazdânism (Izady, 1992: 137-45 and 150-53 and Moosa, 1987: passim). Observers also

frequently comment on the Christian influences on Aleviism, which could have been the result of intermarriage with the Armenians (Hasluck, 1973: 1: 140, 151-52 and 154-58 and Moosa, 1987: passim).

The beliefs and practices of the Alevi are often the cause of friction with Anatolian Sunnis. Ziya Gökalp stated that 'The so called Kizilbash were regarded as the most heretical group of the heterodox Alevi' (Gökalp, 1959: footnote 14, p. 317).

Some Sunni Muslims still accuse the Alevi of engaging in wild sex orgies, involving incest, pederasty and other scandalous practices, citing the Alevi's secrecy as evidence that the latter have something to hide (Hasluck, 1973: 153-54 and 159; Melikoff, 1969: 146-47 and Yalman, 1969: passim). A section of Sunnis in Turkey have a long history of despising and at times even persecuting Aleviism.⁶ The term 'Kızılbaş' (red heads), once simply a reference to the red bonnets of the first Alevi, is now often a term of abuse in Turkey. The Alevi's secrecy is quite innocently explained, therefore, as necessary to prevent the Sunnis from discovering that an Alevi religious ceremony is underway, lest the Sunnis disrupt it. Although some Western scholars accepted the Sunnis' accusations in the past,⁷ very few do these days (Hasluck, 1973: 153-54 and 159; Moosa, 1987: 136-38 and Yalman 1969: passim).

The most 'extreme' of the ghulat are the Nusayris or Alawites of Syria, who are quite different from the Anatolian Alevi, despite the similarity in name. For the Nusayris: 'Ali is the Almighty God who takes the place of the God of the Bible and the Qur'an. 'Ali is superior to the Prophet Muhammad, whom 'Ali created. To the Nusayris, God appeared seven times in seven cycles, manifesting Himself finally as 'Ali (Moosa, 1987: xxii).⁸

Dailam, Dailamites and Ethnicity:

Anatolia is an excellent example of how complicated identifying ethnic groups can be. The so called 'Alevi Kurds', (Dersimlis or Kizilbaş) of Anatolia are arguably no more Kurdish than are another minority people in Anatolia to whom they are closely related, the so called 'Zaza Kurds'. This highlights a problem which has haunted scholars since ancient times. This is that there is no single, universally agreed-upon meaning for the term 'Kurd'. Discussing what he called the 'vague and indiscriminate use of the term', Vladimir Minorsky underlines the extent of the confusion, by citing remarks by the tenth century Persian historian, Hamza Isfahani: 'The Persians used to call Dailamites "the Kurds of Tabaristan", as they used to call Arabs "the Kurds of Suristan", i.e., of Iraq. Other Arab and Persian authors in the tenth century AD mean by Kurds any Iranian nomads of Western Persia, such as the tent-dwellers of Fars (Minorsky, 1982/1943: 75).

Another contemporary scholar has drawn attention to his own observation, during field research in Kurdish areas, that the word 'Kurd' may simply indicate the language one speaks. Thus: When I asked people in ethnically mixed areas whether they were Kurds of [sic] Turks or Persians I frequently got answers such as 'I am Kurd as well as a Persian and a Turk'. When I insisted and asked what they originally were, some answered 'my father speaks all three languages' (van Bruinessen, 1978, Utrecht: footnote 102: 430).

As Minorsky also remarks, however, there is some discussion, even in ancient times, of the ancient region of Dailam, as a highly mountainous, crescent-shaped area in the north of present day Gilan province, in northern Iran. Dailam was bounded in the north by the Caspian sea (forming its south-west littoral) and in its south by the Alburz mountain range. Minorsky

called this region 'Daylam [Dailam] proper', remarking that the Dailamites also occupied the northern slopes of the Alburz mountains (Minorsky in Lewis, 1965: 190).

Elsewhere, he expands on this geographical definition: In the tenth century, when the Buyids' power was at its apogee, the term Dailam designated all the provinces of the southern coast of the Caspian; and the great geographer Muqaddasi (985 AD) in his zeal to reform geographical terminology, understood, under the rubric 'Dailam', the totality of the territories around the Caspian. However Dailam properly speaking, this true cradle of the Dailamites, was a specific mountainous region, forming a sort of antechamber of Gilan (Minorsky, 1964: 12).⁹ More specifically, he notes that the 'valleys of the Shah-rud [Shah river] and its tributaries' seems to have be 'the cradle' of the Dailamites (Minorsky in Lewis, 1965: 190).

The earliest origins of these people are unknown, although the Dailamites could be the descendants of such ancient peoples as the Delumīoi (Delumioi) and Karduchoi (Kadousioi) mentioned by Ptolemy in 2 AD. Classical historians mention Dailamites, 'Dolomites' or other very similar names repeatedly. Minorsky gives several examples of this (in Lewis, 1965: 190).¹⁰ He adds that, 'According to Procopius, the 'Dolomites' lived in inaccessible mountains' Š (Minorsky in Lewis, 1965: 190). There can be no doubt that we are talking about an ethnically distinct people. The Dailamites clearly came from a specific culture (especially from the linguistic viewpoint) and shared common social institutions. In addition, non-cultural features distinguished them from their neighbours,¹¹ underlining the difference between the Dailamites and other peoples nearby. It seems that they were physically distinct from neighbouring peoples and lived in a geographically unique region.

The language of the Dailamites was distinguished from the Persian language by Istakhri, in the year 205 AD (Sahimi, circa-mid-1960s: 33). All the same, Minorsky concedes: 'We know practically nothing of the dialect which was spoken in the original homes of the Dailamites Š' (Minorsky, 1982/1943: 89). By the time of 'the Muslim epoch', however, most Dailamites had been so 'Iranicised' that they spoke a northern Iranian dialect, distinct from the southern Iranian languages Farsi and Kurmancî (the main Kurdish dialect in Turkey) (MacKenzie, 1961: 68-86; Minorsky, 1964: 13-14 and Izady, 1988: 23). One tenth century scholar reportedly 'established Š that the language of the Dailamites was "different from that of the Arab, the Persian and the Arranians [the people of Arran, in ancient Iran]"' (Minorsky, 1964: 13-14).

The Arab scholar Muqaddasi reported that Dailam was 'neither too big, nor too beautiful'. The Arab historians wrote that the Dailamites were a very strong and very numerous race, renowned for its extraordinary courage and its great endurance, and whose representatives had a good looking, commanding appearance [une belle prestance] and handsome beards. An Arab source calls the Dailamites ashqar 'a rosy colour'. The long and disordered hair of the Dailamites has at all times produced fresh metaphors of the poets. These last mention a black skull cap just as much.¹²

The Dailamites guarded their independence from Arab Muslim invaders well, despite no less than seventeen expeditions against them from the time of Caliph 'Umar I up to that of Caliph Ma'mun (Minorsky, 1965: 190).¹³ Nor were the Dailamites conquered - at least, 'not in a solid manner' (Minorsky, 1964: 14) - by the ancient Persian dynasties. By the sixth century in the Christian Era, however, the expanding hegemony of the Sassanid dynasty had already encroached seriously upon complete Dailamite independence, as Dailam now increasingly

became more or less dependent on the Sassanids (Minorsky, 1964: 27). Even so, the Dailamites were no mere vassal people. They enlisted of their own accord as mercenaries in the ranks of Persians making war against the latter's principal enemy at the time, the Byzantines (Minorsky, 1964: 14). Greek historians noted their appearance in the ranks of the Persian forces, with one writing that they were barbarians, but that they had never been subject to Persian kings (Minorsky, 1964: footnote 11: 27). Then, a group of imams which supported the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali Ibn Talib, sought refuge in Dailam from persecution by the more mainstream Muslim 'Abbasids. They were welcomed by the Dailamites as potential future allies against this mutual enemy (Minorsky, 1964: 14).¹⁴ The first known such rebel was Yahya bin 'Abd Allah, who sought refuge in Dailam in 791 AD (Minorsky, 1965: 191-92). This simple event was to have many powerful ramifications for the Dailamites. Over a long period of time, the Dailamites became significantly influenced by Zaidi Shi'ism.¹⁵ From mere mercenaries of the Shi'a, they became increasingly sympathetic to Shi'ism itself (Minorsky, 1965: 191-93) - or, more accurately to a ghulat or extremist variant of Shi'ism. The Arab historian Ibn al-Athir exclaimed of the Dailamites: 'The Dailamites were Shi'ites and (in Shi'ism) did not recognise any limit.' (Minorsky, 1964: footnote 63: 30)

From about 864, the imams who had fled to Dailam helped to make their refuge an independent centre for resistance not only to the 'Abbasids, but also to the ambitious dynasties in Khorasan, in north central Iran (Minorsky, 1964: 15).¹⁶ The beginnings of Dailam's emergence as an independent force was itself part of a larger process occurring throughout the Muslim world - the break-up of the 'Abbasid empire into several warring mini-dynasties.

Increasingly imbued with Shi'a ideas, the Dailamites also became aware of their own strength in their military campaigns on behalf of the Shi'a. Together with the Shi'a, the Dailamites began to expand. Already, in 864, the Dailamites had declared Dailam independent of the 'Abbasid caliph, forcing out the latter's governor at the same time (Lapidus, 1989: 132):

In the early tenth century, a local Dailamite ruler named Mardawij Ibn Ziyar conquered most of western Iran. When he was killed in 937, his empire was inherited by the Dailamite mercenaries in his service, led by the Buwayhid brothers, who established their domination in the region (Lapidus, 1989: 132).

The Dailamite Buwayhid (Buyid) dynasty, which arose in 932 AD and controlled the caliphate in Baghdad for 109 years, held large swathes of Persian territory, relying heavily upon Dailamite forces. In the 'shadow' of the Buyids, states Minorsky, 'a great number of local dynasties of Iranian origin (Dailamite and Kurdish) sprang up in the peripheral areas' (Minorsky, 1965: 192-93),

The Dailamites began to disperse over a vast area, much of which they ruled, beginning in about 800 AD (Sykes, 1930: II: 24-26; Lapidus, 1989: 132ff; Minorsky, 1965: 192 and 1964: 16-26). Sometime during this period of great and small Dailamite empires, dynasties and emigrations - that is, sometime between 800 AD and 1000 AD - a westwards exodus into Anatolia apparently occurred by a large group of Dailamites (Hadank, in Mann and Hadank, 1930: II: 18-19; Hadank, in Mann and Hadank, 1932: IV: 4-6; Minorsky, 1928: 91, 105 and MacKenzie in Andrews, 1989: 252). This was not unusual at the time in the southern region, 'and it is possible that whole tribes quitted [sic] their homes [which were then] to be occupied by other groups' (Minorsky, 1982/1943: 89).¹⁷

Minorsky states that the Buyid dynasty Dailamite, 'Adud al-Daula, 'pacified all the country [that is, the Dailamite domain] as far as Amed (Diyarbakır)', in 977 (Minorsky, 1964: 21). Minorsky adds, regarding Anatolia today: 'The so called 'Zaza' living north of Diyarbakır up to Palu and Dersim and still speaking an Iranian language call themselves 'Dimlä', which name F. C. Andreas identified with Dailam' (Minorsky, 1964: 21 and van Bruinessen, 1978, Utrecht: footnote 105: 431). He also cites the ancient historian Agathias, who wrote of Dilimnitai troops who gave their home as 'on the middle course of the Tigris'. This would place the soldiers in the area inhabited by the Zaza today, if no mistake has been made (Minorsky, 1982/1943: 87), thus adding further weight to the proposition that the Zazas - and the 'Alevi Kurds' - are the descendants of ancient Dailamite

migrants to Anatolia.

According to Hasluck, the term 'Kizilbash has been associated from the beginning with both Persian nationality and Persian Shi'a religion, but has no ethnic significance whatsoever' (Hasluck, 1973: 140); Moosa explains, however, that Hasluck is here referring to Persian Safavid Shi'ism. Moosa notes how other peoples, including Turkmen tribes and 'many Kurdish tribes especially in the region of Dersim (Tunceli) Ş became followers of the Safawi [Safavi or Safavid] order and were also known as Kizilbash.' The 'beliefs, rituals and traditions' of the 'Kurdish' Kizilbash and the Turkmen Bektashi (Bektaşî) orders were identical, with the only difference being a political one of leadership (Moosa, 1987: 7).

Safavids and Kizilbash

It was under the leadership of Sheikh Haidar Ibn Junaid - a politically ambitious Safavid Sufi leader of apparently mixed Turkic and Persian background, with a substantial following in Anatolia (Moosa, 1987: 21ff and Petrushevsky, 1985: 315) - that the Sufi order he led began to be transformed into a vibrant political movement. Junaid was succeeded by his son, Haidar, who completed his work of forging it into a real political force, 'whose rallying point was Ithna'asheri [Twelver] Shi'ism' (Moosa, 1987: 32).

At the time, the term 'Kizilbaş' applied to both Bektashis and followers of the Persian Safavid Sufi order (Moosa, 1987: 33-35 and 36). Within a few generations of their establishment the Kizilbaş Ş spread all over Turkey, but were mainly concentrated in the north-eastern part of the country, especially in the provinces of Sivas, Erzurum, Diyarbakır, and Harput. Ş Among these Kizilbaş were Kurds, known as the 'western Kurdish Kizilbaş', who spoke a distinct Kurdish-Turkish dialect called Zaza, and who are thought to have a strong admixture of Armenian blood (Moosa, 1987: 36). Impelled by several factors, including a severe economic crisis at the time, Alevi forces flocked into the 'Qizilbaş' [Kizilbaş] army of the Iranian monarch, Isma'il I. The sultan's response was to launch a fierce campaign of repression - 'the first campaign of repression of Qizilbaş in Anatolia' (Moosa, 1987: 36). Then, in 1511, resentment. at this repression boiled over into an Alevi uprising. The wide-ranging revolt (Moosa, 1987: 36) involved 'hordes of rebellious Turkmen', but it would surely be inexplicable if their co-religionists the 'Alevi Kurds' were not involved as well (Madelung, in Jackson and Lockhart, 1987: 5, 6: 220).¹⁸

The new Ottoman sultan who ascended the throne in 1512, Selim I, resolved to deal with the Alevi threat. He instigated an 'Inquisition' against the Kizilbaş, putting Yunus Pasha in charge of this bloody festival of torture and execution directed at 'those who professed Shi'ism'. This is the background of events culminating in the Battle of Chaldiran two years

later. Moosa adds: 'It is even reported that Sultan Selim I had already killed forty-thousand followers of the Safawis [i.e., Kizilbash] during his march eastward to meet Shah Isma'il at Chaldiran' (Moosa, 1987: 45 and Shaw, 1976: I: 67-68).

The Ottoman victory at Chaldiran placed the Alevis in an extremely uncomfortable - if not dangerous - situation. After Chaldiran, the Anatolian Kizilbash were powerless to undo their formal status as Ottoman subjects. As their Ottoman overlords had already discovered, however, there can be a world of difference between formal authority and actual subjugation. Kizilbash rebellions continued into the following century. While the Kurmancî Kurds were more or less pacified by the Ottoman military, 'no attempt was made to enter the mountain fastnesses of Dersim, and its tribes remained wholly independent, paying no taxes or tribute and recognising in no way the Ottoman authority' (Molyneux-Seel, 1914: 51).

Until the mid-1930s, the people of Dersim lived in a situation of unrecognised independence. Each tribe had its own assembly (meclis). Altogether, those assemblies made up Dersim's general assembly (Dersim Genel Meclisi). All the Kurdish tribes and armed units had to accept this general assembly's decisions (Hasretyan, 1995: 261). The Dersimlis had not submitted even when Dersim was named a kaza (district) by the Ottomans in 1848 (Molyneux-Seel: 1914: 67). Determined to put an end to this state of affairs, in 1874-75 the Turks despatched a military expedition to Dersim. The troops failed completely to subjugate the tribesmen and suffered heavily, although Ottoman forts were built on the outskirts of the region, and the Dersimlis continued to defy the government. 'They paid no taxes, contributed no soldiers, and plundered and pillaged as they liked', Molyneux-Seel claims (Molyneux-Seel: 1914: 67).

It took a second expedition, in 1908, to subjugate the country. Once again, however, the Turks had to play a bloody toll. 'The troops penetrated into the mountains simultaneously from Khozat [Hozat], Palumor [Palamur], and Kezel Kilisé [Kizil Kilise]. The Dersimlis, though they offered a stout resistance Ş were in the end reduced to complete submission'. The price of this resistance was also heavy for the Dersimlis. According to Molyneux-Seel: 'Their villages were destroyed, their flocks seized, and they were left in a state of wretched poverty' (Molyneux-Seel: 1914: 67).

Kemalism and the Alevis

Alevis, including the 'Alevi Kurds', actively supported Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in his rise to power. A new dimension was opened with the onset of Atatürk's secularisation campaign in the mid-1920s. Under Atatürk's law number 677 of 30 November 1925, only ultra-zealous Alevis and Sunnis were seriously repressed. Thus, mystical movements of either variety were prohibited; the tekkes (lodge houses of mystical Alevi orders) and zaviyes (Sunni mystical orders' meeting places) were both closed, for instance - although these managed to survive underground. However, while the Sunni mosque (cami) was allowed to continue functioning, the Alevi devotional meeting, the cem, was outlawed (Meydan Larosse, 'Tekke', 1973, 12: 20).

As Bayart notes, Atatürk's secularisation campaign did not benefit the Alevis, because it was directed at public religious manifestations, whereas the Alevis had always conducted their religious ceremonies in private. On the other hand, different Kemalist reforms such as measures to emancipate women, language reform and the promotion of 'an Anatolian and specifically "Turkish" culture' were generally regarded by most Alevis as meshing in well

with 'some aspects of the Alevi social system' and favouring 'their strategy of insertion in national society'. For this reason even 'Alevi Kurds' looked favourably on Atatürk's Turkish nationalism initially, to a certain extent (Bayart, in Carré, 1982: 111-12).

The Dersim Kizilbaş ('Dersimlis') soon felt alienated from the new Turkish state. They rebelled many times in the pursuit of ethnic demands from the 1920s up to the late 1930s - as will be shown below, shortly. There were literally dozens of Kizilbaş uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s, led by Seyt Rıza. For their part, the Zazas rebelled once, led by Sheikh Said in 1925. Both the Kizilbaş and (to a lesser degree) the Zazas, have become increasingly re-energised over ethnic and even national demands since the mid-1980s. Specifically, these questions were first seriously and clearly raised by Seyfî Cengiz, when Kurdish nationalists attempted to deny that the Kurmanc and Zaza were distinct from Turkish Kurds. Due in large part to Cengiz's pioneering work, the Kurmanc and Zaza questions have had a noticeable effect on politics throughout Anatolia of the past few years (White, May 1992).

Cengiz heads a movement today known as the Kürdistan Komünist Hareketi/Dersim Komünist Hareketi, which was formally established in January 1990, as the result of a split in a Kurdish organisation called Têkoşîn (variously translated as 'Struggle' and 'Armed Struggle'). Têkoşîn had led the Kurdish guerilla warfare against the Turkish military administration, until 1983.

However, a split from Têkoşîn occurred in 1984, led by its General Secretary, Seyfî Cengiz. All those leaving Têkoşîn to found the new tendency had previously been the leaders of Têkoşîn. Seyfî Cengiz is today the leader of the newer tendency, known as the Kurdistan Communist Movement (KCM). The KCM has published a magazine in Turkish, Kürdistanli Marksist and, since late 1991, a magazine called Desmala Sure (Red Flag). This is the journal of the Zaza and Kurmanc or Kizilbaş section of the same political tendency, which goes under the simple umbrella name of the Komünist Hareketi (Communist Movement) (White, Paul May 1992).

Like the Kurmancî Kurdish national movement, the Kizilbaş and Zaza ethno-political movements have been the result of the conjuncture between a number of forces, especially the radical political upsurge of the late 1960s, the rise of working class militancy and a reborn sense of ethnic differentiation. Kizilbaş activism in recent decades has also been the consequence of a dynamic interaction with combative Alevi religio-political traditions.¹⁹

Kurds, Kizilbaş and Zazas

The overuse of the term 'Kurd' has already been noted. A further caution should also be made, at this point:

Ethnic terms generally tend to be applied imprecisely in Turkey; people often combine elements of religious and linguistic identification in assessments of ethnic identity (Nyrop et al, 1973: 99).

The Kizilbaş are not to be confused with ethnically Turkic Alevi sects, like the Bektashi [Bektaşî] and Taktajî [Tahtacı]). Likewise, the Zazas are not Kurds, but ethnically distinct, related to the Kizilbaş. Kurdish nationalists generally regard the Kizilbaş and Zazas as part of the Kurdish nation. However, as has already been indicated above, they both may well have had a common ancestor, in the Dailamites.²⁰ For reasons unknown, however - but possibly connected to their differing

religious beliefs - the Dailamites divided in two, some time after moving to Anatolia. The Kizilbaş are adherents of the Alevi religion, while the Zazas are mostly orthodox Sunni Muslims, of the Shafi'i school of Islamic law.

The heartland of the Kizilbaş is the Dersim region, north-west of Lake Van - which covers the main city of the region, Tunceli (formerly also known as Dersim), Mazkirt and Nazmiye. In other words, they live primarily in the area between two rivers, the Murat and the Karasu, which are the main branches of the Firat (Euphrates) river. The Zaza call their dialect Zazaki. They live mainly north of Diyarbakır and Urfa, as far as Elazığ - in and around towns like Dicle, Çermik, and Siverek. People from Dersim with a sense of a sense of distinct Kizilbaş ethnicity generally describe themselves as Kirmanc, or by their language. Both peoples speak dialects of the same language, Dimli (literally 'of Dailam') (Hadank, in Mann and Hadank, 1930: II: 18-19; Hadank, in Mann and Hadank, 1932: IV: 4-6; Minorsky, 1928: 91, 105 and van Bruinessen, 1992, Zed: footnote 115: 130). The Kizilbaş dialect of Dimli is known as Kirmancî or Kirmanci (not Kurmancî, which is the main Kurdish dialect) (White, May 1992).

Seyfi Cengiz, a former Kurdish guerilla leader, relates an interesting personal experience, while trying to convince villagers in this region that they were Kurds. According to him, he was repeatedly told by them: 'We are Kirmanc. You are saying we are Kurdish. We are not Kurdish' (White, May 1992). The bluntly expressed distinctions between Kurds, Kizilbaş and Zazas is of extreme importance for clearly understanding the nature of the contemporary Kurdish national movement. These two minorities examined in this paper cannot, in fact, be seriously categorised as ethnically Kurdish. But that is not the end of the matter. For these minorities have also demonstrated a willingness and an ability this century to 'Kurdify' themselves, when political expedience demands it.

For one important fact was left out, when the Zaza rebellion of 1925 and the Kizilbaş rebellions of 1920-38 were briefly referred to above. This is that all of these rebellions called for an independent Kurdistan, in some way. This is hardly surprising, since with one exception, all the 'Kurdish' nationalist uprisings this century in Turkey are actually better described as Kizilbaş or Zaza uprisings which were compelled by circumstances to fight for Kurdish nationalist goals. The one exception to this, the 1927 Agri uprising, was a Kurmancî uprising. This will become clear, if the history of 'Kurdish' uprisings in Turkey this century is briefly surveyed.

The Koçkiri Rebellion

The 1920 Koçkiri rebellion in the overwhelmingly Kizilbaş Dersim region, while waged by the Kizilbaş Koçkiri tribe, was masterminded by members of an organisation known as the Kürdistan Taâlî Cemiyeti (KTC) (van Bruinessen, Utrecht, 1978: footnote 35: 446 and Olson, 1989: 26-33). This particular rebellion failed for several reasons, most of which have something to do with its Kizilbaş character. The fact was that many Dersim tribal chiefs at this point still supported the Kemalists - regarding Mustafa Kemal as their 'protector' against the excesses of Sunni religious zealots, some of whom were Kurmancî Kurds. To most Kurmancî Kurds at the time, the uprising appeared to be merely an Alevi uprising - and thus not in their own interests (van Bruinessen, 1978, Utrecht: 374-75).

In the aftermath of the Koçkiri rebellion there was talk in the new Turkish Republic's Grand National Assembly of some very limited forms of 'Autonomous Administration' by the Kurds in a Kurdish region centred on Kurdistan. All this disappeared in the 1923 Treaty of

Lausanne, however. Bitterly disappointed, the Kurds turned again to armed struggle in 1925 - this time led by the Zaza cleric Sheikh Said, but organised by another, newer, Kurdish nationalist organisation, Azadî (Olson, 1989: 39-41).²¹

The Azadî was dominated by officers from the former Hamidiye, a Kurdish tribal militia established under the Ottomans to deal with the Armenians and sometimes even to keep the Kizilbaş under control. According to British intelligence reports, the Azadî officers had eleven grievances. Apart from inevitable Kurdish cultural demands and complaints of Turkish maltreatment, this list also detailed fears of imminent mass deportations of Kurds. They also registered annoyance that the name 'Kurdistan' did not appear on maps, at restrictions on the Kurdish language and on Kurdish education and objections to alleged Turkish economic exploitation of Kurdish areas, at the expense of Kurds (Olson, 1989: 44 and van Bruinessen, 1978, Utrecht: 447).

Most interesting of all, however, it decried the Turkish policy of setting one Kurdish tribe continually against another to prevent racial unity and consequent power of resistance to government exactions (Olson, 1989: 44). This attitude is arguably indicative of 'pure' nationalism, reflecting as it does a clear understanding on the part of those advancing it of the necessity of a national - as opposed to tribal - vision. It was Sheikh Said, reportedly, who convinced Hamidiye commanders to support a fight for Kurdish independence. According to Olson, the Kurdish officers expressed their objectives in November 1924 as being: to deliver the Kurds from Turkish oppression; to give Kurds freedom and opportunity to develop their country; and to obtain British assistance, realising that Kurdistan could not stand alone (Olson, 1989: 45).

Sheikh Said appealed to all the Kurdish tribes to join in the rebellion being planned. The tribes which actually participated were mostly Zaza (Dimli) speaking Kurds. His call to jihad was unsuccessful in achieving the agreement of the 'Kurdish Alevi' Xormak and Lolan tribes to forgo their longtime hostility to the Cîbran tribe, which spoke Kurmancî, and had dominated the Hamidiye militia (van Bruinessen, 1978, Utrecht: 384). Nor was this a passive opposition; the Xormak and Lolan were the most active and effective opponents of this rebellion. Mindful of the depredations of the Hamidiye against them (especially the Hamidiye commanded by Xalid Beg Cîbran), other Alevi tribes also refused to join the rebellion, considering themselves 'better off in a secular Turkey, nominally Sunni, than in a self-declared Sunni Kurdistan in which the Nakşibendî (Sunni) tarikat [mystical order] would assume a major role. The Alevi rejection of his [Sheikh Said's] overture greatly limited the potential area of the rebellion' (Olson, 1989: 94).

Once again, the same factors of tribalism and religious sectarianism helped to limit the extent and success of a Kurdish rebellion. It cannot be stressed enough how complicated this matter is; we should not jump to the conclusion that those joining the rebellion were all fully-formed nationalists: Motivations for joining the revolt other than nationalism included the tendency of many of the tribesmen simply to follow their chiefs, sheikhs or a'as when ordered to do so. Some of the chiefs wanted to use the opportunity to settle old scores against other tribes and against government representatives (Olson, 1989: 97).

The main part of the uprising was over by the end of March, as the Turkish authorities crushed the rebellion with continual aerial bombardments and a massive concentration of forces (van Bruinessen, 1978, Utrecht: 389 and 391). The rebellion had been partly religious - or at least anti-secular. But it was clearly Kurdish nationalist, as well, for all that. This was

quite clear at the trial of Said and other leaders of the rising. The president of the military tribunal which sentenced the rebels declared, on 28 June 1925:

Certain among you have taken as a pretext for revolt the abuse by the governmental administration, some others have invoked the defence of the Caliphate, but you are all united on one point: to create an independent Kurdistan (Viennot, 1974: 108).

The next revolt in the name of Kurdish nationalism was based around the only part of Turkey not yet under Ankara's control. This was the area around Mount Ararat [Mount Agri, or A'ır» Da']. On 11 June 1930 armed hostilities were initiated by the Turkish military against the A'ır» Da' insurgents (Jwaideh, 1960: 622) Xoybûn, the Kurmancî Kurdish nationalist organisation co-ordinating this rebellion, urgently appealed for help from Kurds throughout Kurdistan, stating: 'Kurdish Brothers, you are worthy of becoming a great nation' (Türkischer Post, 29 July 1930, cited by Viennot, 1974: 109). This was a Kurdish rebellion by mostly Kurmancî Kurds. The Kurmancî Kurds far outnumbered the K»z»lbaşş - who were, moreover, concentrated in only one region, Dersim. This is why, much to the Turks' dismay, Xoybûn's appeal was answered on a wide front, by 'a counter-offensive at Tendruk, Igd»r, Erdjiş, Sipan Da', Ka's»mat, Şatak, Van, and Bitlis', forcing the Turks to temporarily abandon their offensive against A'ır» Da' (Jwaideh, 1960: 622). All this support notwithstanding, however, the rebels were gradually crushed by the superior numbers of the Turkish military (Jwaideh, 1960: 623).

The Dersim Rebellion

The most important rebellion in the wake of all these defeats was in 1937-38, based around the K»z»lbaşş heartland of Dersim, which was itself part of a region marked for total evacuation by Ankara (Kendal in Chaliand, 1980: 67 and Beşikçi, 1991: passim). This situation had a lengthy background. As already mentioned, even the Ottomans had been unable to make the Dersimlis pay taxes or recognise any authority other than their own. Atatürk and the new Turkish Republic was determined to solve this problem. As early as 1926, a report was made to the Turkish Parliament on behalf of the Interior Ministry. This said: 'Dersim is an abscess on the Turkish Republic and it must be removed, for the sake of the country's well-being' (Beşikçi, 1991: 29). The report said it would be useless to try and win the allegiance of Dersimlis by building hospitals, factories and so forth in Dersim. Only stern measures would suffice (Beşikçi, 1991: 29).

Some ten years later, Atatürk's speech at the opening of the Turkish Parliament on 1 November 1936, showed that the problem had only worsened, in the eyes of Turkey's lawmakers. Atatürk said: Our most important interior problem is the Dersim problem. No matter what cost, we have to remove this abscess at its roots. To deal with this problem, we will give wider powers to the government (Hasretyan, 1995: 262).

The parliament resolved to be rid of this problem for good, and drafted a new law, containing extreme measures to achieve this goal. When this law (the Munzur Vilâyeti Teşkilat ve Ğdaresi Hakk»nda Kanun) was being introduced to the parliament, the Interior Minister, Şukru Kaya, complained that the troublesome province had its own civil law and jurisprudence system, and its own criminal code. It was even administering its own punishments itself (Beşikçi, 1991: 11-12). In different times in the past, there had been eleven military actions - but no lasting success. In his view, this was because the people were in poverty and they had guns. Instead of military action being a short-term solution, it had to

finish this problem at once, and bring the Dersimlis under the law of the Turkish Republic (Beşikçi, 1991: 11-12).

Perhaps significantly, when debating the legislation to make this extraordinary military campaign possible, the Turkish parliament always referred to the proposed law as the 'Tunceli Law' - even before the new province of Tunceli was created on 4 January 1936. This, Beşikçi argues, shows the government's intention to destroy Dersim all along - even new military positions were created for this new, 'imaginary' province (Beşikçi, 1991: 23). (Certainly, not every single man, woman and child in the region was either butchered or forcibly evacuated out of the region. However, there is evidence that very large numbers of Dersimlis were forcibly shipped out of the region. In fact, as will be shown below, this is the least damning interpretation of the government's intentions.) Convinced by these events that the Kemalist government was preparing to at least deport them - if not massacre them - the Dersimlis unleashed what they considered to be a defensive revolt. The 1937-38 Dersim uprising can be seen as actually two separate uprisings, separated by a particularly hard winter. The first war went from late March 1937 to November 1937, while the second war began in April 1938 and lasted until December 1938. The Dersim rebellion was led by the local traditional Kizilbaş elites, at the head of whom stood Seyt Rıza, chief of the Abbasuşa tribe (Bozarslan, 1986: 104 and Kendal in Chaliand, 1980: 67). Local intellectual cadres also played a role in the rising's leadership, according to one source. The Alevi inhabitants of this region had not been part of the Hamidiye and had not been part of Sheikh Said's rebellion (Franz, 1986: 141; Pelletiere, 1984: 83 and Kendal in Chaliand, 1980: 67) In contrast, important Kurmancî Kurdish nationalist dynasties such as the Bedirxans played no part in the Dersim revolt (Bozarslan, 1986: 106).

Seyt Rıza, Nûrî Dersimi and other Dersimli leaders had already drawn up a list of demands, including: orders for the arrest of the assassin of Seyt Rıza's son;²² a halt to the massing of the Turkish military guard in the region; a halt to the construction of bridges and of the creation of new districts; a halt to the collection of arms by Turkish authorities, and of the continuation of the payment of taxes on merchandise to Dersimlis (Bozarslan, 1986: 240-41 and *Le Temps*, 18 August 1937).

A letter sent by Dersim's tribal chiefs to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations in November 1937 details what it claimed were measures taken by Turkish authorities to: deprive Kurdish children even of a basic education in Turkish language schools; to prevent Kurds becoming officers in the Turkish army or becoming employed in civil posts 'in the Kurdish region'; to eliminate all references to 'Kurd' or 'Kurdistan' from scientific works; to force Kurds into slave labour in construction projects; to deport and disperse 'another part of the Kurds'; to 'uproot young Kurdish women and girls from their families and place them in illegal concubinage' and, 'Finally, to Turkify a part of the Kurdish nation and to exterminate the other part, through different means' (Dersimi, 1988: 299-303).

The heart-wrenching alleged 'tyrannies of the Turkish government against human rights', aside, what is notable here is the definition, in a letter by traditional Dersim tribal chieftains, to the plight of Dersim's inhabitants being a 'a part of the Kurdish nation'. The same sentiment is repeated more than once throughout the letter, in fact. This is a prime example of a Kurdish identity being assumed by members of these non-Kurmancî, (K»z»lbaş and Zaza) minorities, when dealing with the outside world, which was ignorant of their existence as distinct ethnic identities on the one hand, but which had gone on record in favour of Kurdish self-determination, on the other. (Attempts by modern Kurmancî-Kurdish nationalists to

arbitrarily thrust a Kurdish ethnic identity upon the K»z»Ibaşş and Zaza will be discussed shortly.)

Despite the clear sense of difference between the Alevi Dimli-speaking Dersimlis and the Kurmancî and Turkish speaking Sunni Kurds, the former were apparently prepared to discount this, in the face of two very tangible facts. Firstly, the Dersimlis believed by this point (20 November 1937, when the chiefs' letter was written) that they faced complete extermination from the Turkish state, the common enemy of both themselves and the 'Kurmancî Kurds'. And, secondly, while the cause of the Dersim or so called 'Alevi Kurds' was nowhere recognised, let alone championed outside of Turkey, the cause of the 'Kurmancî Kurds' had at least been recognised by the Treaty of Sèvres imposed on defeated Ottoman Turkey by the victorious Allies in 1920 - even if this treaty's practical measures had been superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne, three years later. It must have been with such considerations in mind that the desperate Dersim chieftains pleaded with the League of Nations:

These tyrannies of the Turkish government against human rights and the Kurdish nation, of which the ethnic and national existence has been recognised by diplomatic conferences and by international conventions, are incompatible with the inner meaning and entirety of the sublime and liberating principles of your organisation, and we have great faith that this organisation will not remain indifferent before tyranny. In order that the League of Nations is able to take some proper measures to prevent the continuation of these tyrannies and the total extermination of the Kurdish nation, it needs, one would perhaps say, to penetrate the exactness of these tragedies. To that we will reply: it suffices to send onto our soil an international commission of inquiry.²³

But the Dersimlis were never to receive any outside assistance against the Kemalists' determined military onslaught. Finally, a top secret 4 May 1938 decision of the Turkish Cabinet resolved that Turkish military forces which had previously been massed in the area would attack Naz»miye, Keçiğezek (Aş'a'» bar) Sin and Karao'lan very strongly, and: This time all the people in the area will be collected and deported out of the area and this collection operation will attack the villages without warning and collect the people. To do this, we will collect the people as well as the arms they have. At the moment, we are ready to deport 2,000 people (Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar: 491, Appendix 4, in Beşikçi, 1991: 80-81).

It was also resolved in this same decision to respond to any armed resistance by rendering such opposition 'incapable of movement on the spot and until the end', to destroy the houses of such resisters, and to deport the remainder of their families. Beşikçi asks why the decision does not read as an instruction to the military to simply deport all such rebel families. He concludes that this is because it is clear that the true meaning of the euphemism rendering the rebels 'incapable of movement' was to kill them. (Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar: 491, Appendix 4, in Beşikçi, 1991: 80-81 and Beşikçi, 1991: 81).

The uprising is generally considered to have ended in 1938, but some scholars have pointed out that fighting continued into the following year.²⁴ The whole of Dersim was not occupied by the Kemalist military until the end of 1938. According to a document of the Turkish army, Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar, no less than 7,954 Dersimlis were killed in only 17 days, during the second war - that is, between April and December 1938 (Beşikçi, 1991: 83).

The Turkish authorities made extensive use of warplanes, to bomb and strafe Dersimli targets. According to an Alevi participant in the uprising, after aircraft bombed villages, villagers ran out of the villages and were then frequently cut down by the Turkish military. One of many examples given by this source occurred in the Kozluca area, in mid-1937. The wife and extended family of Seyt R»za were included in this group of mostly women and children fleeing Turkish warplanes. The soldiers surrounded the villagers and began putting them to death. About 1,000 defenceless villagers were killed (Dersimi, 1988: 287).

Another mass killing technique used against Dersimli civilians reported in the same Turkish army account cited earlier, was to throw dynamite in caves where villagers had fled. Beşikçi reports one such incident, in Demenan, where 216 Dersimlis were killed in this manner (Beşikçi, 1991: 83).

Seyt R»za was himself captured by the Kemalists on 5 September 1937 and was hanged, together with ten of his lieutenants, on 18 November 25 (Franz, 1986: 142). Immediately before his death, Seyt Riza made a speech, in Zazaki (Dimli): 'I am 75 years old, I am becoming a martyr, I am joining the Kurdistan martyrs. Kurdish youth will get revenge. Down with oppressors! Down with the fickle and liars!' (Dersimi, 1988: 299-303). Then, defiant to the end, Seyt Riza put the noose on his own neck, pushed the executioner out of the way and executed himself.²⁶

This was the most devastating political defeat until that point for the Turkish Kurmancî Kurds - as well as for the ethnically different Zazas and Kizilbaş. The resistance movement of the latter was shattered for the next three decades. Retribution by Turkish forces claimed at least 40,000 Dersimlis, who were deported and massacred following this defeat (Rambout, 1947: 39; Kinnane, 1964: 31 ; Khalil, 1990: 27; Kendal in Chaliand, 1980: 68 and Pelletiere, 1984: 83).²⁷ So great was the burden of opposition carried by these 'Kurds of convenience' that their military and political smashing meant that all particularist opposition to the Kemalist Turkish state was impossible without at least the beginning of the reconstitution of a Kizilbaş or

Zaza reorganisation. It is not accidental that the first opposition journals which began appearing from the 1960s onwards evoked powerful Zaza/K»z»lbaş symbols (such as the publication Dicle-F»rat (Tigris-Euphrates) or, later on, were even printed in both dialects of Dimli (Zaza and K»rmanci), as well as in Turkish, such as Roja Nû (New Day), Rizgarî (Liberation) and Özgürlük Yolu (Freedom Road).

Conclusion:

Our brief survey of the major 'Kurdish nationalist' uprisings this century is now concluded. In each case, despite the clearly Kizilbaş identity of the insurgents - with the sole exception of the already Kurmancî Kurdish insurgents in the Agri Dag uprising - the rebels felt compelled to take on a Kurdish identity, when faced with defeat - if not extermination. Immediate events intruded repeatedly, to impose a different stamp on an ethnic movement than might otherwise be expected, had reality been less life-threatening. Faced with the terrible efficiency of Ankara's regular forces, both K»z»lbaş and Zaza insurgents were forced to take drastic political steps, in order to broaden their appeal. In other words, K»z»lbaş and Zaza rebels felt obliged to brand themselves as Kurdish, in order to secure both broader support within Anatolia, not to mention from the great powers. Then, as now, the K»z»lbaş and Zaza identities were little known outside of eastern Anatolia. It can plausibly be surmised that the

Kurdish identity was the only one both known and accorded some weight in eastern Anatolia by the great powers, who had agreed after World War I, most significantly, that the Kurds had a right to their own homeland.²⁸

The distinctions between Kurds, Kizilbaş and Zazas continued to exist in reality, however, albeit in an at times somewhat subterranean manner. In the late 1970s throughout Turkey, animosities between Sunni and 'Alevi Kurds' in areas like Malâtya, Elazi' and Erzincan, where both Sunni Kurds and Kizilbaş live cheek-by-jowl, were violently underlined once more, when 'Islamic fanaticism and fascist propaganda found a willing ear among the Sunni Kurds, to the extent that a virtual civil war between the Alevi (both Turks and Kurds: politically leftist) and Sunnis (both Turks and Kurds: politically of the extreme right)' was touched off (van Bruinessen, 1978, Utrecht: 374). Since then, some Turkish Kurds have become involved in Kurdish Islamist organisations such as the loose guerilla network formed by Sunni Kurdish and Turkish youth - the Islamic Liberation Army (İKO - İslam Kurtuluş Ordusu) which had some support in the Tatvan and Batman districts, in the later 1970s and early 1980s. The inspiration here seems to have been the 1979 Iranian 'Islamic Revolution' (Ahmad, 1991: 19).²⁹ In both Iran and in Turkish Kurdistan, 'anti-imperialist' aspirations seem to have played a role. This has now become a constant theme for the Refah Partisi, a mainstream Islamist Party which exists throughout Turkey, and one of the keys to the growth in its popularity in Turkish Kurdistan (Ahmad, 1991: 16-17). Both the RP and the İKO have a record of hostility towards the Kizilbaş.

By the mid-1980s, even conservative Kurdish Islamist students at the state-run schools for training religious instructors, the imam Hatip Liseleri, 'increasingly emphasised their Kurdish identity in opposition to the Turkish military operations in Kurdistan'. At several places, in fact, initially antagonistic relations between the Islamist groups and the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK) 'became quite cordial' (van Bruinessen in Kurdish Times, 1991: 16-17).

More recently, a combination Islamist/Kurdish nationalist formation has emerged, the Islamic Party of Kurdistan (PêK, Partîya İslamiya Kurdistan). This party's status as the principal Islamist current among Turkish Kurds may be due to the predominance of the nationalist side of its identity. (Apparently, 'its party organ, Judi, writes more about the Kurds than about Islam'.) Nevertheless the PêK appears currently unable to mobilise large numbers (van Bruinessen in Kurdish Times, 1991: 22-23).

Nevertheless, noticeable transformations in the attitudes of both Kurdish nationalists and Kurdish Islamists has occurred over the past decade or so: While Muslim radicals of the early 1980s denied the relevance of ethnicity, most of the Kurdish Islamicists appear to have become nationalists as well. The nationalists, on the other hand, including the PKK, have given up their earlier arrogant attitude toward Islam, recognising it as an important, potentially progressive social force (van Bruinessen, Zed Press, 1992: 249). Thus, the PKK issued the Program of a new front group, the Hereketa İslamiya Kurdistanê (Islamic Movement of Kurdistan), in December 1993. It had earlier made much of its warm links with a 99 year old Sunni cleric, Mele (Mullah) Abdurrahman.

As befits a populist nationalist organisation, of course, the PKK has a record of trying to be all things to all people. When interviewed by this author in mid-1992, for instance, the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan asserted that his party was open equally to Kurds from any religious or cultural background: There are also Yezidis, Christians, Alevi, Sunnis, Zazas and also

Kurmancî speakers and Sorani speakers who are minorities, We don't depend on a special religion, or a special dialect, or something like that. On this subject there is a wide equality and freedom. Nobody sees his religious or dialectal background as either an advantage or a disadvantage; it's all very normal, people have [mutual] respect (White, July 1992).

When asked about the increase of political and cultural activity by Alevis and Zazas in Turkey-Kurdistan and Turkey, however, Öcalan was not so magnanimous, asserting: 'The MiT [Turkish political police] is behind this. They are doing this to stop the development of Kurdish national consciousness' (White, July 1992).

The same view was carried in PKK publications as well, until late 1993, when even the PKK felt compelled to bow to the weight of the growing particularist ethnic feeling among 'Alevi Kurds'. Beginning in April 1994, therefore, the PKK began publishing a new glossy colour magazine, *Zülfikar* (named after Imam 'Ali's sword), which attempts to recuperate the Alevilik movement among Kurds for itself. In a daring historical forgery, the PKK even goes to the extent of painting a headband in Kurdish national colours on the portrait of Seyt R»za adorning the front cover of the first issue of this publication!

Even more recently, a glossy pamphlet by the PKK-inspired and dominated 'Parliament in Exile' to celebrate the first meeting of that body, has explicitly stated that not only the victims of the March 1995 Gazi Osman Paşa (Istanbul) massacre of 'Alevi Kurds', and all 'Alevi Kurds' in Turkey are Kurds, but also that the Kurdish nationalist movement includes the Assyro-Chaldeans and the Armenians - both of which are clearly racially, culturally and ethnically distinct from the Kurmancî

Kurds. All these peoples, the parliament decreed in its 'Statute Number 1', share the same 'common homeland' - Kurdistan! (Kurdistan Parliament in Exile, 1995: 5 and 16).³⁰

It is unlikely that the PKK - or any other non-Kizilbaş or non-Zaza force - can ever win over the 'Alevi Kurds' or the 'Zaza Kurds' with such attempts to square circles. For, as this article has shown, the whole history of ethnic differentiation among peoples generally classified as Turkey's Kurds demonstrates that they are sufficiently aware of their own history - and the many wrongs inflicted on them in the course of it - to resist such crude attempts at incorporation.

That same history also shows, however, that collaboration by the K»z»lbaş and Zaza minorities in eastern Anatolia with Kurmancî Kurdish nationalists such as the PKK cannot be completely ruled out. For that to occur, however, the PKK would have to overcome the image that it has obtained in the eyes of many 'Alevi Kurds' that it is a Sunni Kurdish movement, if not a base for anti-Kizilbaş pogroms, if it ever achieves success. And Zazas would need to be certain that their own specific identity would not be swallowed up by an all pervasive Kurmancî nationalist culture. In any event, the distinctions between Kurds, Kizilbaş and Zazas will continue to be of extreme importance in contemporary Turkey as they were in the past.

Notes:

1. The sociologists Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1984: 83) reject any notion of defining a group of people on the basis of 'their genetic constitution': groups in sociological theory are more commonly defined by reference to shared culture such as language, customs and institutions. There is a difference between a group which claims ethnic distinctiveness and one which has distinctiveness imposed upon it by some politically superior group in a context

of political struggle. Ethnicity may, therefore, become the basis either for national separatism or for political subordination. The ambiguity of the definition of 'ethnic group' thus reflects the political struggles in society around exclusive and inclusive group membership.

2. See also: 'Kurds and Kurdistan: Facts and Figures', note by Kurdish Studies Editorial Board (1992) *Kurdish Studies* (V: 1 & 2: 105) & Izady (1992: 137).

3. Izady estimates (1992: 137) that three-fifths of Kurds 'are today at least nominally Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i rite'.

4. For a solid discussion of the main ghulat sects, see also Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim Shahrastani, (1994: 149-63).

5. I have also confirmed this, in numerous conversations with both Turkish and 'Kurdish' Alevi. For accounts of Alevi rituals, basic beliefs and sacred books, consult Moosa (1987: 120-62) & Izady (1992: 137-45). Also useful, despite dealing immediately with the Turkic Bektashi rather than the specifically 'Alevi Kurd' variant of Aleviism, are Ismet Zeki Eybo'lu, (1991: passim) & R»za Zelyut, (1991: passim). See also Ayse Kudat Sertel, 'Ritual Kinship in Eastern Turkey', in the *Anthropological Quarterly* (44: 1), which actually deals with the Alevi version of circumcision rites, although the author seems unaware of this.

6. The well known mass killings of Kahramanmaraş (December 1978), Sivas (July 1993) and Gazi Osman Paşa (Istanbul - March 1995) are simply three of the most recent such episodes of Sunnis massacring Alevi in Turkey. Following the Gazi Osman Paşa outrage, Alevi demonstrations and riots raged for up to four days in several Turkish cities. Gazi Osman Paşa is a heavily 'Alevi Kurd' suburb of Istanbul. These events provide some evidence that even the so called 'Alevi Kurds' still retain some sort of Alevi identity - even if the PKK tried to use these protests to push itself forward. For a succinct discussion of what appear to be

deliberate anti-Alevi provocations in Turkey, see Hugh Pope, 'Delaying Human Rights Reform', in *Middle East International* (501 [misnumbered as edition number 500]: 13).

7. Even the normally restrained Molyneux-Seel stated in *The Geographical Journal* (1914, 44: 67): 'The Keezelbash have not a very high standard of morals, though the worst vices of the Turks are not practised'.

8. For a succinct summary of Nusayri origins, relations to other religions and doctrines, see Alain Nimier, *Les Alawites*, passim. See also the entry 'Nusairi', in Gibb and Kramers (1953 453-56) and Shahrastani, (1984: 161-63).

9. Minorsky's pioneering article 'La Domination des Dailamites' (1964) draws heavily on the works of medieval Arab and other historians.

10. Minorsky, (1964). See also Minorsky (1964: footnote 1: 26) , in which he remarks that 'the true pronunciation' of Dailam 'was probably Dêlam or Dêlum.

11. One scholar has noted that the inhabitants of ancient Dailam, and other inhabitants of the Alburz mountains were both physically different from each other and from the Guilek of the lowlands of Gilan to their immediate south. These physical differences must have been quite marked, in the author's opinion, for he adds: 'Their physical differences cannot be attributed to the respective influences of their milieu'. See C. Sahimi (no date [mid-1960s]: 33).

12. Summary of historians' accounts, by Minorsky (1964: 13). See also Bausani (1975: 73).

13. Minorsky adds that these exploits were discussed by the Arab poet Baladhuri.

14. The 'Abbasids are sometimes labelled incorrectly as partisans of 'Ali. In fact, they merely made use of certain 'extremist Shi'ite' movements (as well as many other different movements), to assist them in their own drive for the caliphate.

15. Zaydi or Zaydite Shi'a are those followers of Imam 'Ali who recognise only four true imams: 'Ali; Hasan; Hussein and finally, 'Ali Zayn al-'Abdin. They were founded by Zayd Ibn 'Ali, grandson of the third Imam. (See Minorsky (1965: 193)). Much later, of course, most of

the Dailamites transferred their allegiance to the even more ghulat sect the Isma'ilis. This development followed a determined campaign by the founder and longtime leader of the Assassins, Hasan as-Sabbah. The Assassins were a highly controversial sub-group within the Isma'ilis. Consult: Willey (1963: 20-23); von Hammer-Purgstall (1965/1835 passim); Lewis (1967: 41ff. and 51ff.); Shahrastani (1984 : 167-70 and Zelyut (1991 : 42-7).

16. Minorsky adds (1964: 16): 'In their turn, the imams Dailamicised themselves and embraced the cause of the local populations'.

17. Minorsky also states (1982/1943: 87, 89): 'From ancient times the Caspian provinces had been a reservoir of human energy overflowing and spreading westwards'.

18. Roehmer (1986: 220), notes: The rebels belonged to the landless rural classes who had nothing to lose but who believed themselves to be assured of paradise if they were killed. The economic distress in Anatolia should not be ignored as a motivating factor in the uprising. This social aspect combined with Shi'i extremism is clearly discernible.

19. A product of this has been the emergence of political currents around such journals as *Bildirge* and *Desmala Sure*. Both these currents unified (under the rubric of *Desmala Sure*) in late 1993.

20. The continued existence of the ethnically similar Guran in parts of Iraqi Kurdistan is one of the main obstacles in the way of resolving the enigma of the 'Alevi Kurds'. The Guran - who adopted another offshoot of Yazdânism, the *Ahl-i Haqq* religion - could also be of ancient Dailamite origin. Research to date by scholars has been insufficient to clearly determine this, unfortunately. However, it is known that the Guran language, *Gurani*, is linguistically closely related to *Zaza/Dimli*, and it is even suggested that the Guran differ in physiognomy from *Kurmancî Kurds* (Rich 1836: I, 81, 88; van Bruinessen, *Zed*: 110-15; Minorsky, 1928: passim; Minorsky, 1964/1920-21: passim; Minorsky 1982/1943: XV: 75-76 & 88). Minorsky also notes several connections between the ancient Guran and the Dailam-Gilan area on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea (Minorsky 1982/1943: XV: 80, 81 and 86-89), indicating that this people could have originated from there.

21. Olson, *Ibid*, pp. 39-41. 'Azadî' means 'freedom', in *Kurmancî*. The organisation's full name was actually *Ciwata Azadîya Kurd*. It later changed its name to the *Ciwata Xweseriya Kurd*, but it is usually referred to as simply *Azadî*.

22. Seyt R»za's son had been murdered shortly before the rebellion began, possibly by a Kemalist 'dirty tricks' squad. Dersimi claims that the Turkish military leader, Abdullah Paşa, ordered Seyt R»za's son ¼brahim to be murdered by the Turkish military's intelligence commander and his troops (Dersimi, 1988: 272).

23. Letter of Dersim tribal leaders to the League of Nations, dated 20 November, 1937. Translated from: Dersimi (1988: 299-303).

24. The *Tunceli Law* (Decision No. 2884) was originally to last till 1 January 1940. In fact, the law remained in force until 1 January 1947. So it took eleven years to fully do the job that this legislation was designed for.

25. Pelletiere (1984: 83) gives 14 November 1937 as the date of both the trial and execution of R»za and the other leaders of the rebellion.

26. This account was related to me in an interview with former 'Alevi Kurdish' guerilla leader turned scholar Seyfi Cengiz. See also van Bruinessen (Utrecht, 1978: 332).

27. Musa Anter [*Hat»ralar»m*: 46-47], relates the account of a young Turkish officer, who stated: During the cleaning operation, we had found a family in a grotto: the grandfather, the father, the mother, and a boy of 5-6 years. The adults were executed immediately, whereas the small boy was with us, for we wanted him to show us where to find others. He said nothing. We had given him some sweets to eat - he refused. At a given moment, one of our planes flew over us. The small boy stood up, took a stick, directing it towards our plane and chasing our

plane with his stick. I was angry myself. I gave the order to execute him. They executed him and he was thrown from the top of the cliffs. We continued the cleaning operation.

28. The Armenian identity was less plausible and, more to the point, the Armenians were themselves thoroughly defeated by this time.

29. Ahmad states that the mainstream Islamist Refah Partisi fared well in Diyarbakır during the 1987 elections, after stressing 'the struggle against feudalism, imperialism and fascism' in its electoral material.

30. The Turkish-language edition of this brochure (Parlamenta Kurdistane li Derveyi Welat) contains the supposed Kurmanci language version of the oath taken by all members of the new parliament. (See 'Destûra Parlamento Kurdistanê li Derveyî Welat': 4) An examination of this 'Kurmanci' version shows that it is actually in Kurmancî, but spiced with five or six Kurmanci words. Needless to say, such acts only tend to confirm Kızıldağ's suspicions.

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