

TRAUMA, NARRATIVE AND SILENCE:
THE MILITARY JOURNAL
OF A JEWISH 'SOLDIER' IN TURKEY
DURING THE GRECO-TURKISH WAR

On July 4, 1997, I was in the course of recording my second oral history interview with Yaşar Paker (born Haim Albukrek), a Turkish Jewish man who was over one hundred years old at the time¹. In recounting his life, possibly like many men of modest means, Albukrek felt his military experience to be the most noteworthy for the telling². It is in this way that I found out that he had been conscripted not only once but *twice*: during the Greco-Turkish War and during World War II. And, to my utter surprise, speaking of his first experience in the military, Albukrek reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a small, well-worn notebook. This was the journal he had kept for six months while in the army in 1921. This, surely, was the oral historian's dream come true: a historical document to accompany the narration of an event in later life!

In this article, I will discuss Haim Albukrek's military journal, referring as well to his account of the period in his oral history narrative.

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¹ I interviewed Yaşar Paker on May 30 and July 4, 1997 as part of a project on cultural and generational identity in Istanbul. Leyla NEYZI, *Istanbul'da Hatırlamak ve Unutmak: Birey, Bellek ve Aidiyet* (Remembering and Forgetting in Istanbul: Self, Memory and Belonging), İstanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Press, 1999. Haim Albukrek chose to change his name to Yaşar Paker in 1934, when last names became mandatory by law and citizens were "encouraged" to take Turkish names. As this article mainly focuses on his military journal, I will refer to him throughout as Haim Albukrek.

² Leslie GILL, "Creating Citizens, Making Men: The Military and Masculinity in Bolivia," *Cultural Anthropology* 12, 1999, p. 527-550.

Haim Albukrek's journal is significant for a number of reasons. As Zürcher³ has shown, little is known of the experience of the ordinary Ottoman soldier. Even less is known about the experience of non-Muslims conscripted into labor battalions (*amele taburları*) during World War I and the Greco-Turkish War. Furthermore, Haim Albukrek's journal was written during a turning point in the Greco-Turkish War, when the outcome of the war was far from certain. As Shaw and Shaw put it, "The summer of 1921 was in many ways the most crucial period of the entire Turkish War of Independence"⁴.

Autobiographical sources such as Albukrek's journal and oral history narrative complicate the history of nationalism as written. Ottoman Non-Muslims have usually been portrayed as compradore bourgeoisie or nationalists who "betrayed" the Ottoman cause. As a result, the experiences of the ordinary person, as well as the differences *between* and *within* communities tend to get glossed over. Haim Albukrek is one of many who enlisted because he was unable to pay the exemption tax. Conscripted because they were non-Muslim, Jews (unlike Christians) were not viewed as a threat, representing themselves as victims caught between Christians and Muslims fighting a nationalist war.

Written at a time of war and trauma, when the boundaries of belonging were in flux, Albukrek's journal underscores the multiple allegiances and contradictory positionality of Jews in Turkey. Historically, Sephardic Jewish communities attempted to survive by allying with the centers of power⁵. In an autobiographical document that can hardly be deemed private (in his journal), and in response to an interlocutor of Muslim background (in his oral history narrative), Albukrek identifies closely with state ideology, distinguishing himself from Christians represented as the "enemy". In his journal, he uses narrative strategies such as humor, irony, fantasy and nostalgia as means of coping with the traumatic present. While the former may be viewed as a form of false consciousness, the latter may be construed as a form of resistance. However, I believe that the perspective developed by Navaro-Yashin to analyze contemporary Turkey can be usefully applied here⁶. Navaro-Yashin

³ Erik Jan ZÜRCHER, "Little Mehmet in the Desert: The Ottoman Soldier's Experience," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle, London, Lee Cooper, 1998, p. 230-241.

⁴ Stanford SHAW and Ezel KURAL SHAW, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Volume II, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 359. The Kemalists' struggle against the Ottoman government, outside invasion and local dissent was known as "The War of Independence" after its success, which ensured the Kemalists absolute control of the new Turkish Republic.

⁵ Esther BENBASSA and Aron RODRIGUE, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri Tarihi* (History of the Jews of Turkey and the Balkans), İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2001.

⁶ Yael NAVARO-YASHIN, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002.

argues that those on the margins of society reproduce the state by acting as if the ideology of the state is true. In a similar vein, it is possible to suggest that Albukrek (and Ottoman/Turkish Jews) express agency in willfully submitting to state ideology, reproducing the state while ensuring their own survival.

Albukrek's journal and oral history narrative raise the question as to how healing is best achieved: by remembering or forgetting? Recent debates in the literature on trauma focus on the central role of remembering (and narrative) in the process of healing, viewing the act of forgetting (and silence) as largely dysfunctional⁷. Hebrard argues that the experience of war may lead ordinary persons to the act of writing, while the experience of war may change the act of writing itself⁸. Albukrek's journal suggests that narrativization may directly impact everyday experience, in this case allowing him to endure his victimization by history. On the other hand, Albukrek hardly mentions the war in his journal, though the violence that prevailed in Anatolia can be felt in the silences in the text. The *selective* use of narrative and silence makes possible a record for posterity while ensuring survival in the present. This suggests that silence (and forgetting) may be viewed as an act of agency as narrative (and remembering) itself.

THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

A distinguishing feature of the experience of Jews in Turkey is that unlike in the West, they live in a Muslim—rather than a Christian—society where Jews and Christians have been historically classified as *gayrimüslim* (non-Muslim) as opposed to the dominant Muslims. The status of non-Muslims in Ottoman society was based on Islamic law, according to which *zimmis* (non-Muslim Ottoman subjects) constituted a “protected” group⁹. Non-Muslim communities had considerable internal autonomy in return for the payment of taxes¹⁰.

⁷ Cathy CARUTH, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; but see Marita STURKEN, “Narratives of Recovery: Repressed Memory as Cultural Memory,” in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke BAL *et al.*, Hanover, University Press of New England, 1996, p. 231-248.

⁸ Jean HEBRARD, “The Writings of Moise (1898-1983),” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 44, 2002, p. 263-292.

⁹ Gülnihal BOZKURT, *Alman-İngiliz Belgelerinin ve Siyasi Gelişmelerin Işığında Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu (1839-1914)* (The Legal Status of non-Muslim Ottoman Citizens in Light of German-English Documents and Political Developments), Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996.

¹⁰ *Zimmis* living in Muslim society were restricted in certain ways, however. They could not marry Muslim women or act as witnesses against Muslims. They were required to wear clothing that marked their status, and to refrain from wearing ostentatious clothes. They could not carry firearms or ride horses. They were discouraged from living in Muslim neighborhoods. *Zimmis* had to practice their religion with discretion, and get permis-

The Jewish population was historically a small minority in the Ottoman Empire, compared to the larger Christian population. The Jews in the Ottoman domains constituted a highly diverse group in terms of origins, language and culture, including Romaniot Jews, Italian Jews, Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardic Jews, with the latter constituting the majority¹¹. In the mythology of Sephardic Turkish Jews, their acceptance by the Ottomans at a time of calamity—the exodus from Spain—plays a central role. Yet this also perpetuates a discourse of “tolerance” based on the relationship between “host” and “guest”. Eli Şaul uses an expression to underscore this unequal and insecure relationship: “The Turk does not beat the Jew: What if he does?”¹² Nevertheless, Jews in the Ottoman Empire have tended to fare better than their counterparts in Christian Europe¹³.

While the terms *zimmi* or *gayrimuslim* do not differentiate among Greek Orthodox, Armenians and Jews¹⁴, from the perspective of each of these communities these distinctions are crucial. Historically allying with the powers-to-be, in this case the Ottoman state, Jews tended to compete with Christians. During the 16th century, Ottoman Jews were at the height of their commercial success. From the 17th century, as European trade became more important, Christians began to replace Jews in commercial life. Greek Orthodox and Armenian communities in particular benefited from the capitulations and other agreements with the Western powers which gave them protected status¹⁵. The rise of nationalist movements bolstered a discourse which opposed “loyal” Jews as against “treacherous” Christians¹⁶.

The Ottoman reform movement, which emerged from the 18th century, had as its goal the “saving of Empire.” The ideology of Ottoman-

sion to build or repair churches or synagogues. For a discussion of the extent to which these rules were enforced, see M. Pınar Emiralioğlu, “Osmanlıda Müslim Gayrimüslim İlişkileri Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler,” Some Reflections on Muslim-non-Muslim Relations in the Ottoman Empire, *Kebikeç*, 10, 2000, p. 75-88.

¹¹ Avner LEVI, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Yahudiler* (Jews in the Turkish Republic), İstanbul, İletişim Press, 1996.

¹² Eli ŞAUL, *Balat'tan Bat-Yam'a* (From Balat to Bat-Yam), İstanbul, İletişim Press, 1999, p. 59.

¹³ Esther BENBASSA and Aron RODRIGUE, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri Tarihi*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ In a recent debate on the internet, some writers have suggested that the category *zimmi* is most closely associated with Christians, Jews often being separately referred to as *Yehudi* (Debate on Turkish Studies Association/H-Net List for Turkish and Ottoman History and Culture, January 2001).

¹⁵ Bernard LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968. Marc Baer suggests that anti-Jewish Ottoman policies contributed to the loss of their influence in the 17th century. “17. Yüzyılda Yahudilerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Nüfus ve Mevkilerini Yitirmeleri,” (The Loss of Influence and Status of Jews in the Ottoman Empire in the 17th Century), *Toplum ve Bilim* 83, Winter 1999/2000, p. 202-222.

¹⁶ In 1893, Sultan Abdülhamit II even considered creating a Jewish regiment from among the Russian Jews who sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire.

ism which marked the reform edicts of 1839 and 1856 had important consequences for non-Muslim communities. Due to a combination of pressures from Europe and the internalization of Enlightenment ideas by elites, these edicts decreed that all Ottoman subjects, regardless of religion, had equal rights and duties vis-à-vis the state. This meant no less than the abolishment of *zimmi* status in favor of universal citizenship. At least on paper, these reforms abolished differences in clothing, residence and taxation, and made it possible for non-Muslims to attend state schools (and to learn Turkish), serve in the military, act as witnesses, be represented on local councils and work as government employees. New secular state schools and the military were viewed as important means by which to integrate non-Muslims as Ottoman subjects¹⁷.

In the late Ottoman period, the Jewish community was split between traditionalists, modernists and nationalists. In the mid 19th century, a movement emerged in Europe, particularly among French Jews, the goal of which was to “emancipate” Eastern Jews¹⁸. While based on orientalist conceptions of “Eastern” society, this movement nevertheless led to the improvement of the lot of Ottoman Jews through the introduction of a modern educational system. Between 1860 and 1920, Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU) established schools in Jewish communities throughout the Ottoman domains. While initially resisted by traditionalists, this movement succeeded in time in becoming the establishment itself. With the entry of Ottoman Jews into state and AIU schools, a Jewish bourgeoisie gradually emerged.

While ensuring that modernist discourse would be the dominant discourse of Ottoman/Turkish Jews¹⁹, the AIU schools also created (or enhanced) class divisions within the community—divisions expressed in linguistic form²⁰. As non-Muslims who did not identify with a nationalist movement centered in Anatolia, Turkish Jews have historically been at pains to represent themselves as loyal subjects. Represented in the Ottoman parliaments of 1877-78 and 1908-1918, Jews were active in the Young Turk movement, many of whose Muslim leaders attended

¹⁷ Ufuk GÜLSOY, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni* (The Military Experience of Ottoman non-Muslims), İstanbul, Simurg Press, 2000.

¹⁸ Aron RODRIGUE, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990.

¹⁹ Melin LEVENT YUNA, “Identity Construction: Self-Narration of Educated Turkish Jewish Young Adults”, unpublished M.A. Thesis, İstanbul, Boğaziçi University, 1999.

²⁰ Mahir ŞAUL, “The Mother Tongue of the Polyglot: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism among the Sephardim of Istanbul,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 25, 1983, p. 326-358. The rift between upper-class French-speakers and lower-class Judeo-Espagnol speakers would provide the basis for the Zionist challenge to the Alliantist establishment during the Allied occupation. Nissim BENEZRA, *Une Enfance Juive à Istanbul, 1911-1929*, İstanbul, Isis Press, 1996. Benbassa uses the term “Zionists without Zionism” to characterize Ottoman/Turkish Jews, arguing that it was less ideology than the search for a better life that pushed poorer Jews to migrate to Palestine. Esther Benbassa, “Des Sionistes sans Sionisme,” *CEMOTI* 28, June-December 1999, p. 19-30.

Alliance Israelite Universelle schools²¹. The Jewish community was divided: although a nationalist movement also emerged, many threw in their lot with the Young Turks, and later with the Kemalists.

NON-MUSLIMS AND THE MILITARY

The experience of non-Muslims in the Ottoman military has been little studied. A modern conscription system can be dated back to the Gülhane Reform Edict of 1839²². According to this system, non-Muslims paid a military exemption tax. However, the modernizing reforms that followed the reform edict of 1856 were aimed at replacing the *millet* system based on religious identity with universal citizenship. While the head-tax paid by non-Muslims was abolished, they were able to pay a military exemption tax until the Second Constitutional Period (1908), after which all able-bodied Ottoman (male) subjects were subject to conscription²³.

Although the Ottoman army was desperately in need of soldiers to fight its wars (an additional fear was that the non-Muslim population was growing much faster than the Muslim population decimated by continual war), conscription was not successful in practice, because non-Muslims were reluctant to join the army (or deserted after joining), because Ottoman elites distrusted non-Muslims, and because the Ottoman treasury was in need of taxes paid by the non-Muslim communities. Still, many non-Muslim Ottoman subjects—particularly the poor—fought in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and in World War I, many perishing during this period²⁴.

²¹ Liz BEHMOARAS, *Kimsin Jan Samanon ?* (Who Are You Jak Samanon?), İstanbul, Sel Press, 1997.

²² Erik Jan ZÜRCHER, "Ottoman Labor Battalions in World War I," *Turkology Update Leiden Project Working Papers Archive*, Department of Turkish Studies, Universiteit Leiden, March 2002.

²³ Ufuk GÜLSOY, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ According to McCarthy, migration alone cannot account for the loss of the Jewish population between the Balkan Wars and the end of the Greco-Turkish War. Justin MCCARTHY, "Jewish Population in the Late Ottoman Period," in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy, Princeton, The Darwin Press, 1994, p. 375-397. In her memoirs, Bahar writes that the legs of her mother's uncle froze on the eastern front and had to be cut off. Her grandmother sewed for the soldiers during World War I, and her uncle's father was killed in Gallipoli—but his widow was not given a pension. Beki BAHAR, *Ordan Burdan: Altmış Yılın Ardından* (From Here and There, After Sixty Years), İstanbul, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., 1995. Benezra's father was also killed in Gallipoli, his mother dying during the famine which followed World War I. Nissim BENEZRA, *Une Enfance juive à Istanbul, 1911-1929*, *op. cit.* Ovadia refers to a Sephardic song in which Ottoman Jews sang, "Youth from villages, we joined the army for the love of Turkey." (*Mancevos de los kazales/Nos fuemos al askerlik/Por amor de la Turquia*). Stella OVADIA, "Kentte Gözükmek ve Saklanmak" (To Be Seen and to Hide in the City), in *Kentte Birlikte Yaşamak Üzerine* (On Living Together in the City), İstanbul, Dünya Yerel Yönetim ve Demokrasi Akademisi, 1996, p. 180.

Although non-Muslims served as officers and soldiers in the Balkan Wars, distrust fueled by desertions and the mounting nationalism of the Young Turks meant that most were disarmed and served in labor battalions (*amele taburları*) used in road construction and transport behind the lines during World War I²⁵. This presumably provided the model for units of the same name created by the Central Army during the Turkish "War of Independence".

THE TURKISH "WAR OF INDEPENDENCE"

The experience of the Jewish community in Turkey cannot be understood without reference to the history of intercommunal violence which put bad blood between the Anatolian population of Muslim heritage on the one hand, and of Christian heritage on the other. Although Jews who remained in Anatolia during the Greco-Turkish War (many migrated to Palestine, Europe or America in the late Ottoman period) largely supported the Kemalist movement, they suffered from the actions of both sides²⁶.

By the time Turkey was occupied by the European powers at the end of World War I, nationalist movements had rent the Ottoman Empire asunder. From 1919, a movement led by Mustafa Kemal, a former Ottoman officer, challenged the defunct Ottoman regime in occupied Istanbul by creating a national assembly in the central Anatolian town of Ankara and entering war on three fronts: with Armenia in the east, the French in the south and Greece in the west²⁷.

The most important front was the Western front. The Greek army invaded western and northwestern Anatolia and Thrace in the summer of 1920. This offensive was forestalled at the First Battle of İnönü in January 1921. A second Greek offensive in late March 1921 ended with Turkish victory at the Second Battle of İnönü. A new Greek offensive in mid-July led to a Turkish retreat and invasion of the towns of Afyonkarahisar, Kütahya and Eskişehir. The Greek advance led to a battle in which "the thunder of cannon was plainly heard in Ankara"²⁸. Panic in the national assembly followed, with plans to move to Sivas if Ankara fell. The three-week fight ended in Turkish victory by September. The battle that would result in the final defeat of the Greeks would be fought on August 1922, leading the way to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

²⁵ Erik Jan ZÜRCHER, "Ottoman Labor Battalions in World War I," *op. cit.*

²⁶ Avner LEVI, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Yahudiler*, *op. cit.*

²⁷ The war with Armenia ended with victory for the Turks, and a peace treaty was signed on December 1920. An agreement with France over Cilicia was signed in October 1921. Stanford SHAW and Ezel KURAL SHAW, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, *op. cit.*, Volume II.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

Beginning their resistance movement with local militias (*kuvayı milliye*), the Kemalists gradually established a regular army. They fought both outside invasion and internal movements which challenged their authority. Local powerholders (such as Çapanoğulları, Aynacıoğulları, Çerkez Ethem) revolted against the Kemalists, sometimes after a period of collaboration, as in the case of Ethem “the Circassian.” An important uprising involved the Alevi/Kurdish Koçgiri tribe of central Anatolia (with origins in Dersim in eastern Turkey). According to Balcıoğlu, the separatist movement of the Pontus Greeks in the Black Sea region was the most important reason for the establishment of a separate army known as the Central Army (*Merkez Ordusu*)²⁹. Established on December 9, 1920, this army, based in the town of Amasya in the Black Sea region, aimed at quelling internal rebellion and securing the region behind the western front.

After widespread debate in parliament, the Ankara government decided on December 26, 1920 that non-Muslims would be conscripted³⁰. On March 2, 1921, an order went out that labor battalions (*amele taburları*) be formed. Established by the Central Army, these units were subsequently attached to the Ministry of Public Works. One of the main reasons for the formation of these units was to ensure that local non-Muslims (read Christian, particularly local Greeks) left their regions of origin and did not join the forces fighting the Turks³¹. At the time of conscription, arms belonging to these men were requisitioned, and they served without arms or uniforms. In this sense, this was a very particular “military” experience: one which attempted to ensure that these “soldiers” were disarmed and to prevent their mobilization by other forces³². However, conscription was of limited success as not only did many resist recruitment but deserted to join brigands or forces fighting the Turks/Muslims. Balcıoğlu claims that it was due to desertions and defections that these units were moved to Eastern Turkey between late May and August 1921³³. This was a crucial period in the course of

²⁹ Mustafa BALCIOĞLU, *Belgelerle Milli Mücadele Sırasında Anadolu’da Ayaklanmalar ve Merkez Ordusu* (Documents on Uprisings and the Central Army during the War of Independence in Anatolia), Ankara, Yükseköğretim Kurulu Matbaası, 1991.

³⁰ *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Gizli Celse Zabıtları* (Records of the Secret Meetings of the Turkish Parliament), Ankara, TBMM, 1920-21.

³¹ In his study of the Central Army, Balcıoğlu refers exclusively to Christians, with no mention of Jews. Mustafa BALCIOĞLU, *Belgelerle Milli Mücadele Sırasında Anadolu’da Ayaklanmalar ve Merkez Ordusu*, *op. cit.*

³² Whereas working behind the lines might be considered less traumatic than the experience of fighting itself, it should be noted that these non-Muslims had reason to be anxious about their fate: most of the Armenian recruits in the labor battalions in World War I were massacred by their fellow (Muslim) soldiers. Erik Jan ZÜRCHER, “Ottoman Labor Battalions in World War I,” *op. cit.*

³³ Mustafa BALCIOĞLU, *Belgelerle Milli Mücadele Sırasında Anadolu’da Ayaklanmalar ve Merkez Ordusu*, *op. cit.*

the war. It was in July that the Turkish forces were forced to retreat—and only in mid-September 1921 that the Greek advance forestalled.

FROM HAIM ALBUKREK TO YAŞAR PAKER

Haim Albucrek was born in 1896 into a Sephardic family in the Jewish quarter of Ankara, the history of which goes back to Roman times³⁴. Losing his father at the age of nine, Albucrek grew up in dire economic circumstances, having to support his widowed mother and two younger siblings. Unable to run his father's fabric shop during World War I, he worked as an employee in another shop until his conscription. After his military service, Albucrek moved to the cosmopolitan district of Galata in Istanbul, where he spent the rest of his long life. Whereas many kept their Jewish names, Albucrek's decision to change both his last and his first name in 1934 shows the degree to which he supported assimilation. In his oral history narrative, he speaks of undergoing a transformation in his youth when he rejected the traditional religious values of his community in favor of a more cosmopolitan and secular perspective. Although Albucrek did not attend an Alliance Israelite Universelle school (there were none in Ankara), the director of the traditional school he briefly attended was a modernizer bent on transforming both the school and the conservative Jewish community.

A single man living a modest life, Albucrek did a variety of jobs in Istanbul, including work as an insurance agent. During World War II, he became a soldier for the second time when non-Muslims were conscripted into units known as the "twenty class reserves"³⁵. His two experiences in the military framed Albucrek's oral history narrative—he possibly sensed that these experiences constituted important historical testimony in an otherwise ordinary life. Albucrek died in Istanbul in 1998 at the age of 102.

THE MILITARY JOURNAL OF HAIM ALBUKREK

Haim Albucrek's military journal, written by hand and in French in a small notebook, begins on March 31, 1921 when he is recruited and ends six months later on October 2, 1921, when he arrives back in Ankara. The journal is divided into two parts. The first section is entitled, "Voyage a Kastamonu Pour Mon Service Militaire", and includes Albucrek's

³⁴ Fügen ILTER, "The Jewish Quarter and Synagogue in the Old Urban Context of Ankara," *Belleten* 40, 1996, p. 733-743.

³⁵ Rifat BALI, "'20 Kur'a İhtiyatlar' Olayı." (The Twenty Class Reserves Event) *Tarih ve Toplum* 179, November 1998, p. 4-18.

voyage to and stay in Kastamonu (a town in the Black Sea region). The second section of the journal, entitled “La Suite de Mon Service: Depart pour Erzincan—retour a Ankara,” concerns Albukrek’s voyage from Kastamonu to Eastern Turkey and then back to Ankara.

Albukrek wrote in his diary almost every day, recording the place in which his unit stayed, and describing the natural and social environment. Entries vary from a couple of sentences to several pages. However, Albukrek rarely made reference to the war or to the more negative personal experiences he undoubtedly had—Albukrek’s diary is significant as much for what it says as for what it remains silent about.

Given the lack of a tradition of memoir writing in the Jewish community, and the need for self-censorship which Albukrek’s particular circumstances must have required, one may ask why Albukrek chose to keep a journal at all. Skultans has noted that autobiography has a different meaning in (post)communist countries where one’s private life was considered public property³⁶. No doubt the Ottoman context necessitated self-censorship, particularly for a member of a minority community writing at a time of war. We know, for example, that mail was censored in the Central Army³⁷. As for Albukrek’s oral history narrative, the fact that his interlocutor was of Muslim heritage undoubtedly influenced the narrative produced³⁸.

In his oral account, Albukrek said that his goal in keeping a journal was to practice French, a language he was learning at the time. The use of French and the act of keeping a journal in the European fashion indicate the influence of the modernization movement among Ottoman Jews. As both his journal and oral history narrative show, Albukrek aimed at the time to move beyond what he had come to view as the narrow world view of his community. Although Albukrek does not refer directly to the war in his journal, the novelty of the experience may have prompted him to keep a record. As Hebrard suggests, ordinary men might come to the act of writing through the experience of war³⁹.

The discussion of Albukrek’s military journal will be divided into two parts. The first part will focus on how Albukrek represents the experience of non-Muslims in the labor battalions. The second part will analyze Albukrek’s narrative strategies in representing his own experience.

³⁶ Vieda SKULTANS, *The Testimony of Lives*, London, Routledge, 1996.

³⁷ Mustafa BALCIOĞLU, *Belgelerle Milli Mücadele Sirasında Anadolu’da Ayaklanmalar ve Merkez Ordusu*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³⁸ For a discussion of the different discourses of Turkish Jews, see Melin Levent YUNA, “Identity Construction: Self-Narration of Educated Turkish Jewish Young Adults”, *op. cit.*

³⁹ Jean HEBRARD, “The Writings of Moise (1898-1983),” *art. cit.*

A CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

Albukrek's journal begins on March 31, 1921 with the account of his recruitment. He writes in the first page of his journal that he was still in bed when, summoned to the Jewish school, he and other Jewish colleagues "nous apprend que nous sommes soldats"⁴⁰. Albukrek was forced to go directly to the transport area along with his "camarades Israelites." He describes the transport area where they spent the night as "une si sale place que jamais ne peut exister place plus sâle que ça." Here, soldiers were "prêts pour partir dans une direction inconnue chacun ayant 5 pains sous les bras." While waiting to leave, Albukrek and others were instructed to distribute food to wounded soldiers. On April 4, when Albukrek went to see a Turkish patron whom he hoped would help get him an exemption, "les miserables des gardiens amènent mon beau frère Vitalis à ma place"⁴¹. In the end, although it was possible to pay an exemption tax, Albukrek chose to do his military service instead. This is how he put it in his oral history narrative: "My capital was very limited. I said to my family, 'Let me go. This war will not last long'⁴². If things get difficult, I will send a telegram and you can pay my exemption tax'."

Between April 4 and April 15, Albukrek's unit marched on foot from Ankara to the town of Kastamonu in the Black sea region, accompanied by guards. Along the way, they stayed in locations Albukrek records as "Kalaba, Djamyly, Arabli, Dumely, Kangiri, Mergi, Kotch Hissar, Han, Ummoud Keuy." Sometimes placed in military barracks, at other times the soldiers stayed in peasant homes where they had to pay for lodgings.

When Albukrek's unit arrived in Kastamonu, they were taken "au Sevkiat"⁴³ à un Djamy, on à desinfecté nos vêtements puis on nous a rasé." Albukrek notes on April 16 that "pour le moment on ne sait pas de quel genre d'affaire nous chargera-t-on le regiment ce n'est pas encore formé." This suggests a lack of organization as well as uncer-

⁴⁰ I would like to thank Gönül Akgerman for help in deciphering the handwritten text. According to Akgerman, a professional translator, Albukrek's French is highly idiosyncratic, including many direct translations from Turkish (and possibly Judeo-Espagnol) expressions and words. In two places in the text, Albukrek writes several words in the Ottoman script. He also uses many Turkish words, particularly in reference to official matters. These include *sevkiat* (transport area, March 31), *caracol* (police station, April 4), *kaymakamlık* (municipality, August 11), *çavuş* (sergeant, August 22), *posta* (soldier, May 5), *caravana* (army rations, August 7) *han* (cheap hotel, April 13), *djamy* (mosque, April 11), *kalpak* (Muslim man's headgear, August 13), *baglama* (musical instrument, April 11), *saraf* (money changer, August 3), *havous* (pool, August 7). Both French and Turkish words, including place names, have been transcribed exactly as in the original.

⁴¹ Hostage-taking was a common means of enforcing conscription laws. Jan LUCASSEN and Erik Jan ZÜRCHER, "Conscription and Resistance: The Historical Context," *International Review of Social History* 43, 3, 1998, p. 405-419.

⁴² Note that Albukrek never refers directly to the war in his journal.

⁴³ Transport location.

tainty on the part of the government as to what to do with these recruits. On April 20, Albukrek interceded for “tous les 5 Israelites” to visit the public bath and to do their laundry. In Kastamonu, he met the government doctor, with whom he spoke in French: “Nous parlons tout en français et comme il est amateur de musique il trouve en moi un bon causeur”⁴⁴. Asked about his profession, Albukrek claimed to be a pharmacist. Working as the doctor’s assistant, Albukrek would largely manage to avoid working as a laborer like his fellow soldiers.

On May 5, a telegram from Ankara arrived, demanding that Albukrek return to the city to join a music group. Although further details are not available, it seems that Albukrek and his family were in search of connections which would make an exemption possible. However, just as Albukrek was about to leave, he was ordered to remain. On May 6, Albukrek notes that he was under the surveillance of a soldier (*posta*). Suspected of using personal connections to get an exemption, “un ordre est arrivé du ministre des travaux pour qu’on m’envoie casser les pierres”. He soon reports, however, that the commandant allowed him to return to work as doctor’s assistant.

On July 2nd, Albukrek was sent to Ilgaz, a town near Kastamonu where he worked for another unit until August 3. On July 26, Albukrek heard from an acquaintance arriving from Ankara that “l’ennemi est tout près d’Angora”: It is in July that the Greek army began to move in the direction of Ankara after defeating the Turkish army and invading the towns of Afyon Karahisar, Kütahya and Eskişehir⁴⁵. On July 31 Albukrek writes, “des bruits courent que nous partirons pour Kangiri”. On August 3, he received permission to go to Kastamonu to see acquaintances and to get news of Ankara, since “nous attendons que l’ennemi s’avance et que la ville peut être pour tomber.”

On the way to Kastamonu, his company encountered a soldier from their unit, who informed them that he was carrying an order for departure to a faraway destination, perhaps Sivas (a town further east). Arriving in Kastamonu, Albukrek spent the night in the home of the local *saraf* (money changer), where these rumours were confirmed. Upon leaving Kastamonu for Ilgaz, Albukrek writes that his clothes and shoes are not in condition to make a long journey on foot towards “On dit Sivas, Tokat, Erzroum ou la frontière de la Russie.” On August 6, he writes in Ilgaz, “Angora est tombé dit-on.”

On August 7, Albukrek begins the second part of his military journal. Between August 7 and September 8, his unit marches from Kastamonu through the towns of Çorum, Amasya, Tokat to Erzincan in Eastern Turkey. According to Albukrek’s log, these are the locations where his

⁴⁴ Due to a shortage of doctors, doctors were not assigned to the labor battalions, who had to rely on government doctors assigned to the region. Mustafa BALCIOĞLU, *Belgelerle Milli Mücadele Sırasında Anadolu’da Ayaklanmalar ve Merkez Ordusu*, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

⁴⁵ Stanford SHAW and Ezel KURAL SHAW, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Volume II, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

unit spent the night between Ilgaz and Erzincan, where they arrived on September 8: "Tossia, Kelli Kouyou, Eskelib, au bord de Yechil irmak, Tchorum, Kodja Biik, Médjid Uzun, Zara, Amassia, Iné Bazar, Tourhal, Kaz Ova, Tokad, Toyhan, Niksar, Akindji, Réchadié, Modason, Kolhissar, Sucheïr, une ferme, Tchobandjilar, Refahié, Muruk cherif, Yer Han and Erzindjan". The unit stayed only one day in most places during this continuous and difficult march.

In Tosya, on August 7, Albukrek sent a telegram to Ankara demanding that his family pay the tax. On August 13, arriving in Çorum and finding no telegram, he writes, "c'était triste vraiment si Angora n'était pas tombé sûrement qu'ils auraient répondu." On August 15, the commandant makes a speech to the company, informing them that they are going to Amasya, where they may or may not remain.

During the night of August 15, which they spent in the village of "Kodja Biik," Albukrek was awakened at midnight to the sound of shooting. Asking the guards for information and getting no response, he hid in fear of "surtout les brigands qu'on dit que se trouvent en masse dans ces régions." He writes: "à la fin j'ai compris qu'ils voulaient faire feu sur quelques soldats de notre bataillon qui se sont évadés." This anecdote provides evidence of desertions and demonstrates the tensions of a time when everyone was forced to choose sides.

On August 18, they arrived in Amasya, where, finding no response from his family, Albukrek concludes that this must mean "c'est que Angora est tombé." Arriving in Tokat on August 23rd, Albukrek and his Jewish comrades appealed to the local Jews to assist them in paying the exemption tax, but the sum demanded by the military was too high. Albukrek notes here that it may not be worth paying the tax anyway, not knowing whether Ankara has fallen or not. On September 1, in "Sucheïr", he writes, "Un personnage a dit qu'Angora n'est pas tombé encore dans ce cas on a payé sûrement la taxe."

On September 4, in "Tchobandjilar Tekessi", Albukrek writes at night: "c'était drôle de voir le camp plein des petites feu avec les *caravanas* dessus"⁴⁶. On September 8, arriving in Erzincan, Albukrek encountered a deputy from Ankara who informed him that "Angora n'est pas tombé." The Turkish army had held out against the Greek forces. The same day, a message arrived from the recruitment bureau in Ankara informing the commandant that the taxes had been paid. On September 9, Albukrek and his Jewish comrades (joined by "un armenien aussi a payé la taxe") took leave of the unit, and the return journey to Ankara began.

On their return journey, Albukrek and his friends started out from Erzincan on September 11. They had difficulty renting carriages due to lack of money and the requisitioning of all transport by the government. On September 14 Albukrek writes, "Jamais je ne pense pas que nous

⁴⁶ Communal soup pots.

retournons à Angora, il me paraît un songe.” The five friends stayed in hotels or cheaper accommodation known as *han* in locations Albukrek records as “Yer Han, Ak Keuy, Sucheir, Cherifé, Zara, Sivas, Kaya Débi, Cheer Kichla, Sultan Han, Césaré, Aumed dédé, Yeni-yapan, Kir Chéir, Péra Palace⁴⁷, Keupru Keuy and Beynem Keuy”, arriving in “Angora” on October 2, 1921. Albukrek wrote, “Je retourne par le chemin que nous allions jadis à la campagne. Je ne crois pas encore que je suis arrivé.”

A THEMATIC ACCOUNT

Most of Albukrek’s journal entries focus on describing the route, the natural environment and the towns his unit passed through, as well as accommodation and food in so far as these were available. In many ways, life was reduced to its most basic tenets: to be able to walk, to find food and shelter. Albukrek describes the terrible material conditions under which soldiers were forced to live. On August 28, in Rechadie, he writes, “Le lieu qu’on nous a montré pour passer était plus sale qu’on etable, nous preferons de passer le nuit dehors.” On April 12, he notes that they were served tea for the first time in the barracks, followed by bean soup. The next morning they were given three loaves of bread each at departure time. Sometimes they were also given “quelques olives,” as on April 10. On August 17, in Ziara, he writes, “Par cette fatigue ce que nous trouvames pour souper c’était de simples tomates avec du pain noir.”

The soldiers were forced to march for many hours every day, regardless of weather conditions or their state of fatigue. They often found themselves scaling mountains, losing their way and walking endlessly in rain, mud or snow. On August 26, in Niksar, Albukrek writes, “Nous étions heureux quand nous devons passer la nuit sous un toit, comme le mond voulait de tout coeur se reposer quelques jours mais est-ce possible de se reposer? Marche! Marche! en avant.” On August 17, in Ziara, he writes, “Aujourd’hui je ne puis plus tenir car mes pieds sont gonflés considérablement.”

Albukrek’s narrative suggests the treatment the soldiers received varied by context and the particular officials involved. On April 12 he writes, “le gardien était un mechant homme nous poussait pour atteindre Kotchhissar dont nous sommes arrivés après 10 h. de marche.” On the other hand, the guards the next day were “de braves tipes on nous faisait marcher lentement.” Overall, Albukrek seems to have maintained good relations with his commandant, who allowed him to work as pharmacist and to ride in official vehicles from time to time. On June 29, he

⁴⁷ Forced to spend the night in the countryside after an accident with a vehicle, the soldiers named the location after a luxury hotel in Istanbul.

notes, "Voilà aujourd'hui le commandant me fait appeler et me dit qu'il est content de moi et me fait encore une fois pharmacien." On August 10, "nous marchames tout le jour grace à Dieu que le commandant m'a fait une faveur en me permettant de donner mes effets aux voitures." On the other hand, on September 9 he writes, "je reste très curieux de me voir ainsi libre je n'ai plus un commandant le lendemain personne ne nous obligera de partir à pied. Quelle changement tout d'un coup."

On July 10, Albukrek makes one of the few direct critiques of the military in his journal: "J'apprends bien de choses dans mon service militaire surtout du point de vue psychologique: des portefais des hommes paresseux et miserables sont respectés plus ceux qui sont de la plus basse classe deviennent des sergents et caporaux surtout ceux qui fument (*essrar*) il faut voir ces gens avec quelle fierté il vous command comme ils se glorifient, ils se croient des Pachas."

While Albukrek rarely makes reference to the ongoing war in Anatolia, the description he provides is of a beautiful but devastated landscape, where the remaining villages are depopulated, ruined and very poor. He is especially meticulous in describing the state of commercial life: the overall impression is of a region in which the traders and merchants have largely disappeared. On August 6, he describes the natives of Bilecik (a town near Bursa, close to the theater of war in Western Anatolia) whom he encounters in Ilgaz: "Je voyais des *biledjiclis* qui ne recevaient pas aucune nouvelle de ses parents depuis des mois et des mois et il ne leur restaient point d'habits de couvertures de bas rien de tout ils n'attendaient que la *caravana*⁴⁸ et un pain par jour dont ça ne leur suffisaient nullement."

Most of the towns and villages Albukrek's unit passed through were burnt down and depopulated. He notes on August 18, "Amassia est une jolie ville, seulement la moitié incendié." On September 1: "le lieu que nous couchames c'était un vaste champs où il y avait beacoup de muriers, Sucheir la plupart est incendié." On September 5: "Refahié semble à une ville morte le marché est tout fermé sauf de 3 à 4 boutiques la plupart des maisons sons inhabité." On September 6: "arrivé à Muruk Cherif. La plupart incendié il parait qu'il y avait dans cet endroit beaucoup d'armeniens nous nous reposames dans un champs de blé." On September 7: "Aujourd'hui nous avons fait à peu près 45 km. sans rencontré dans le chemin même une baraque sauf midi nous dejeunames au pied d'un han ruiné il parait que cet endroit était un champs de guerre."

Albukrek's journal shows that he repeatedly appealed to various patrons in the hope of getting out of the army. Among those mentioned include Rıza Bey, an acquaintance from Ankara, as well as Emin Bey, a deputy. Albukrek went to see Rıza Bey in Ankara when he was first conscripted. They later met in Kastamonu, where Rıza Bey promised to help Albukrek remain in Kastamonu. Albukrek met Emin Bey on the way to

⁴⁸ Communal food distributed by the government.

Erzincan. While Emin Bey brought Albukrek a letter from his family, he refused to lend him money. Albukrek remarks philosophically, “D’ailleurs dans cet état que je suis on perd aussi le credit encore une chose à apprendre.” The government doctor in Kastamonu became an important patron as well. However, Albukrek’s relationship with the doctor soured over time, as he found the doctor, “c’est un homme mal-adif et alcoolique tout à fait contre mes principes.” (May 29).

In contrast to his relationship with Muslim patrons, Albukrek rarely mentions encounters with local Muslim villagers and townspeople, apart from trading in the marketplace and staying as renters in their homes. The few entries demonstrate the social distance between the non-Muslim soldiers and the local Muslim population, and the mutual curiosity (tinged with hostility) that this engenders: On April 11, staying in a local house in Kangiri, Albukrek writes, “Tout d’un coup je vis le chambre pleines de villagois de tout âge, on nous examinait de la tête au pied on a exigait que nous dansons et jouons à le *bağlama*⁴⁹.” On August 21, in Tourhal, Albukrek writes that his friend Leon and he “nous nous arrêtâmes au marché pour tromper notre faim nous avons fait un dîner de gala n. achetames du miel du lait caillé et prunes...nous avons pris le fameux repas dans une rue écarté par terre sur le pavé les femmes turcs nous regardaient par la fenêtre.” In the village of Kaya Dibi on September 21, “Un pauvre émigré a fait écrire une lettre a Léon après quoi comme pour le remercier d’un coup il ouvre le gosier et commence une chanson avec toute la force de sa voix.”

Albukrek’s comments on the Black Sea town of Kastamonu are intriguing enough to justify quoting at length: “je trouve Kastamoni plus avancé que notre Angora. Le climat, les forêts l’eau ne laisse à desirer rien à coté de la ville il y a une montagne...là vont tous les jeunes gens et les demoiselles se promener le dimanche, on dirait que vous êtes a Consple⁵⁰... ce qui à attiré mon attention a Kastamoni c’est les mœurs du peuple ils sont fanatiques et liberales ils font tous les prières du jour et ils frequentent toutes les femmes il y a beacoup de liberté sur ce sujet et puis ils aiment beaucoup les distractions et ne se soucient pas beaucoup de ses affaires ils sont aussi très paresseux mais ils aiment aussi les autres peuples.”

Whereever they went in Anatolia, Albukrek and his comrades made an effort to get in touch with local non-Muslims, with whom they pleaded their cause and by whom they were frequently helped. In Kastamonu on April 15, Albukrek notes that “Un camarade de M. Artin nous ayant rencontré nous amena tous dans sa maison où nous passames la nuit.” In Sivas, having found out that M. Harfouch, an accountant at the Ottoman Bank, lived in Sivas, Albukrek went to see him on September 16: “Ils m’ont montré beaucoup d’amitié, même M. Harfouch à

⁴⁹ An Anatolian string instrument.

⁵⁰ Constantinople.

exprimé son désir de m'avancer une certain somme pour que je puisse partir plutôt mais j'avais des camarades." In the marketplace later on: "Un brave type M. Karabet n. a avancé 15 livres". In Tokat, the Jewish soldiers hoped to borrow money from local Jews in order to pay the exemption tax. However, the locals were unable to pay the large sum demanded by the military, though Albukrek and his friend Leon were thankful to borrow "15 livres" each (August 23).

The various names Albukrek mentions in his journal gives some indication of the ethnic/religious composition of the unit: Léon, Moïse, Refael, Gabriel, Albert, Kemal, Youvan, Artin, Noussrati and Yorgi. In several places in the journal, Albukrek makes derogatory comments about fellow soldiers who are Christian. On April 7, he writes that his "camarades Chrétiens que nous avions fumaient une sale chause qu'on appelle *esrar*⁵¹ ce qui les rendaient parfois ivres, ça me dégoute beaucoup." On April 15, in Kastamonu, he makes a strange remark, not wholly comprehensible, calling his fellow soldiers Yorgi (a Greek) and Kirkor (an Armenian) "de chiens"⁵².

AN INTERPRETIVE ACCOUNT

Haim Albukrek comes across in the first part of the journal as an optimistic young man who takes things in his stride and uses the journal as a log to record his impressions of the places and people he encounters in Anatolia. Once the danger to Ankara becomes apparent, and the prospect of being sent into the unknown looms ahead, however, the tone changes. It becomes more introspective, giving us more of a glimpse of Albukrek's feelings.

Albukrek makes an early comment on the emotional state of his unit when the march to Kastamonu began on April 4: "Parmis nous il y avait qui plaisantait il y avait qui pensait, qui chantait chacun était l'humeur different." Upon encountering the country home of a friend ("M. Halas") on the way out of Ankara, he expresses a sense of foreboding: "En passant devant la campagne de M. Halas quelle émotion, en quelle état je venais ici pour me divertir et en quelle état suis-je maintenant? a cette instant je me rappelle la musique que nous faisons avec accompagnement de piano etc."

Overall, though, while describing the difficult material conditions and the negative treatment they sometimes received at the hands of their superiors, Albukrek displays an attitude of patience and stoicism. On April 4, after describing that they had to sleep on the floor with only their coats for cover, he writes, "à vrai dire je ne me suis plainté avec

⁵¹ Hashish.

⁵² According to Gönül Akgerman, this cryptic sentence might imply that these men had visited a brothel.

personne au contraire je me dis, allons il faut s'habituer." On June 29, after he is put to work as a laborer, he writes, "Voilà 15 jours que je travaille et je suis 1000 fois plus content, car l'exercice m'ouvre l'appétit et me donne de nouvelles forces." On July 10 he writes, "Que j'étais délicat à Angora, je suivais minutieusement l'hygien, un peu la fenêtre ouverte j'avais peur de devenir malade. Oh! Que la vie d'ici est bien changé coucher sur le planche n'avoir d'autre couverture que le paletot manger avec les gens grossiers dans le même plat, partout salté misère et en consequent je ne devient pas malade au contraire je me porte mieu qu'avant et j'ai un avantage c'est que j'apprends a souffrir ou bien je n'ai plus peur de la misère je deviens plus courageux a lutter et même j'envie ceux qui vont travailler a la pierre et je ne suis pas content parce que je suis bien vu, je me demande parfois y-a-t-il souffrance plus dure que celle-ci je sens que je voudrais souffrir davantage connaître les souffrances les plus dures."

Albukrek represents his experience as a personal trial or challenge. In his narrative, he tells a version of a classic quest story in which the hero leaves home to face adversity, only to return a transformed man. On August 22 he notes, "hier je croyais ne pouvoir faire plus un pas malgré ça je me porte aujourd'hui mieux qu'hier et je prends patience devant le malheur l'homme devient plus fort que l'acier."

It is in the second part of the journal in particular that Albukrek begins to express anxiety and fear. On August 3 he writes, "Impossible de cacher ma tristesse le bataillon partira nous serons séparés si non éternellement au moins pour un longu duré de nos parents, loins d'eux, sans argent. Dieu quel sera notre sort?" On August 7 he writes, "Nous partons aujourd'hui. Adieu. Ilgaz Kastamoni je porte bien le souvenir de ces lieux charmants... Adieu Angora, Konstantinople. Que Dieux me préserve et qu'enfin je puisse vous revoir!" On August 10 he writes, "Nous pleurnichons avec Léon, Gabriel, et Samuel sur notre état et notre sort." On August 13, his despondency took a tragicomic form: "j'étais si troublé que j'ai laissé tomber mon *calpac*⁵³ dans le cabinet et ça a était un sujet de distraction pour un certain temps heureusement j'avais sur mois une calotte mais elle n'avait pas de *püskül*⁵⁴." The lack of news from Ankara led him to write in Tokat on August 23, "Partout est mystère peut être que nous sommes plus heureux que nos parents nous ne savons pas pour le moment, nous sommes commes le Juif errant. Marche, marche!" On September 1 he notes, "Ce qui est plus curieux avec tout ça c'est que nous ne savons pas ou nous allons ou nous nous arreterons."

How did Albukrek come to terms with this traumatic experience? He dealt with it first of all through narrative: by creating a written record of his experience. In his journal, Albukrek refers to the act of record-keep-

⁵³ A type of man's headgear.

⁵⁴ Tassel.

ing in several places. On April 12, he notes that upon leaving Koç Hisar, "Tout le mond à écrit son nom à la muraille." On August 31, in Kolhissar, he writes, "Depuis Niksar jusqu'a Suchër c'était une chaine de montagnes avec une rivière qui traverse au milieu en vain j'ai demandé le nom de cette montagne et de cette rivière personne n'a pu me répondre." On September 16, when his shoes were stolen he writes, "je comptai de les conserver comme un souvenir." The construction of a discursive account of his experience which he represented as a personal challenge or trial gave Albukrek a sense of control, turning victim into hero.

While Albukrek viewed the journal as a means of recording his experience, he was also highly conscious of the need for silence. In his oral account, Albukrek told an anecdote which he had not recorded in his military journal, and which he was even wary of telling decades later: "I am going to tell you something but don't publish it in the newspaper. Going along the road towards Erzurum, we were passing through some villages. Seeing us, the women there assumed we were going to war. So they began to cry, saying, "My boy!" (*oğlum!*). But when the gendarme who was accompanying us said to them, "Don't cry. These are infidels (*gavur*)," the same women who had been crying began to insult and to stone us"⁵⁵.

Albukrek uses irony, humor, fantasy and nostalgia as means of coping with the traumatic present. Conscripted at the beginning of April, he refers to this as "un poisson d'avril". Humor and fantasy become intertwined as Albukrek and his comrades create a fantasy world, remember the past, or try to imagine a positive future. On August 13, he writes, "Avec les camarades nous faisons de rêves, nous espérons que la reponse d'Angora est arrivé deja et le lendemain on vas nous liberer." On August 17: "Aujourd'h'hui je ne puis plus tenir car mes pieds sont gonflés considérablement mais pour oublier je plaisante avec mes camarades on causait de l'ancien bon temps des soirés qu'on faisait etc. Alors j'invite les amis à une soirée imaginaire, je recite le programme qui sera avec un grand éclat et tout le monde rit." Albukrek notes that he often entered into a fantasy world while marching: "quelles reves ne fais-je pas en chemin tout en marchant, parfois je me plonge et d'un coup je me vois arrivé." (August 22).

Sometimes his dreams concerned the future. On July 27 he writes, "Une suposition; je suis libre par exemple qu'est-ce-que je ferai? Je sens le désir d'aller a Consple chose curieuse, je préfère d'aller là bas sans argent, dans un état miserable que d'aller à Angora à cote de mes chers parents... Ma resolution est prise aussitôt que je serai libre je quitterai Angora, je veux chercher un milieu plus civilise et pour ça c'est

⁵⁵ The original Turkish version: "Size bir şey anlatacağım ama gazetede çıkmasın. Erzurum'a doğru giderken bazı köylerden geçiyoruz. Oradaki kadınlar, biz yeniden harbe gireceğiz zannederek 'oğlum'! diye ağlarlar, yanımızdaki jandarmalar, 'ağlamayın, bunlar gavur' deyince, aynı kadınlar hemen küfretmeye, taş atmaya başlarlardı."

vrai j'aurai beaucoup des d'obstacles mais rien n'empêchera pas ma volonté d'agir je souffrirai je travaillerai, d'ailleurs est-ce que je ne souffre pas le service militaire m'apprend a souffrir et bien des choses."

On August 25, writing that they had difficulty finding water along the route, he remarks with irony, "Dans ce moment d'autres gens à Pera par exemple ne pensent qu'au rendez-vous et s'impatientent c'est la vie."

Albukrek also established an important relationship with the environment in the course of his military service. His journal is full of picturesque descriptions of the Anatolian landscape. It may be that the lack of ties to the inhabitants made it easier for him to experience the countryside in a more abstract, romantic, and possibly therapeutic fashion. On April 4, upon leaving Ankara, he writes, "la fraîcheur de la nuit me fait du bien." Albukrek's romantic descriptions of the countryside form a contrast to the bleak images of the burnt down, impoverished and depopulated towns in his journal. On April 9: "le temps superbe de temps en temps une nuage couvrait le ciel pour nous garantir du soleil jusqu'au soir était une suite de forêts des prairies à chaque pas n. trouvions un source d'eau l'une plus belle que l'autre j'ai fini tout ce que j'avais préparé pour 3 jours, impossible de me rassasier ce jour soit l'estomac soit de la beauté de la nature après midi nous passames une forêt impossible à decire à l'angle coulait une source d'eau brillant comme la perle assez froide si vous buvez 2-3 litres vous ne sentirez aucune lourdeur. Nous restames pendant un quart d'heure, jouissant de ce spectacle de la nature."

At this time of war and trauma, the boundaries of belonging were ever in flux. Albukrek's journal demonstrates the multiple allegiances and contradictory positionality of Jews in Ottoman society. The use of pronouns in the text is particularly indicative of this. Albukrek begins his narrative in the first person singular. Yet soon enough, he switches to "we": "Il (a policeman) appelle divers noms et nous apprend que nous sommes soldats." The meaning of "we", however, changes by context: Sometimes it refers to non-Muslims as a group ("nous nous sommes proménés comme des fous sur le marché c'était fête pour les musulmans", August 13), sometimes to the Jewish soldiers in the unit ("les Israélites qui se trouvent là bas... voulu nous retenir a coté d'eux" August 23), sometimes to Albukrek's own coterie ("Nous pleurnichons avec Léon, Gabriel, et Samuel", August 10), sometimes to the natives of Ankara ("notre Angora", August 3), and sometimes to the natives of Anatolia (Muslim and non-Muslim) who viewed the Greek army as "the enemy" ("Nous attendons que l'ennemi s'avance et que la ville est peut être pour tomber", August 3). On August 15, at the point when Albukrek thought the guards were preparing to fire upon brigands, he identified with the guards as "we". But when he learned that his fellow soldiers had escaped, he realized that he himself was a possible target for the guards, whose "other" he represented at the moment.

In his oral history narrative, speaking of the decision of the Ankara government to conscript local non-Muslims, Albukrek claims to identify with the state, implying that it was the Christians who were to blame for the situation the Jews found themselves in: "Our situation was terrible. But the government was right. For there was no security at all. Outside, there was the enemy. But the enemy inside was even worse. If Haymana [a town near Ankara] fell, all us soldiers would become the enemy of the government. This was true, but us poor Jews had no problems with the government at all! But could they make a separate law for four Jews? When they said 'Non-Muslim,' we had to go too"⁵⁶.

Albukrek reiterates this view when speaking of his conscription during World War II. His contradictory positionality is particularly evident in this statement: "İnönü (the second president of Turkey) is the one who recruited twenty divisions of soldiers from among the non-Muslims. Isn't it strange? We did not enter the war. If we had entered the war, [he could] recruit equally from all communities. But we do not enter the war. And he doesn't recruit from among the Muslims. Just from the non-Muslims. How strange! Now let's speak openly. We have the right. There is enmity between Muslim and non-Muslim. But there is none with the Jews. We are caught in the crossfire. But İnönü kept us out of the war. We are very grateful"⁵⁷.

Labor battalions (*amele taburları*) in the Central Army during the Greco-Turkish War constituted a particular military service: one in which recruits were disarmed at conscription and where the main goal of mobilization was to prevent local non-Muslims from crossing over to the "enemy" side. Analysis of Haim Albukrek's military journal demonstrates the contradictory positionality of Jews in Turkey: while willfully submitting to state ideology in their public discourse, they remain outside the national imaginary. In his journal, Haim Albukrek represents his predicament as a personal challenge or trial, constructing himself as the hero of his text and selectively using narrative and silence to endure his victimization by history.

Albukrek's military journal and oral history narrative suggest that studies of life writing can vastly enrich historical research on Turkey,

⁵⁶ The original Turkish version: "Bizim vaziyetimiz fena. Hükümetin hakkı vardı. Çünkü emniyet yok. Mesela maazallah Haymana düşseydi bütün bu bizim askerler hükümete karşı düşman. İçerideki düşman daha berbat düşman. Bir düşmanlık vardır müslimle gayrimüslim arasında. Rumlarla Ermeniler. Bu doğrudur ama bizim zavallı Yahudilerin hükümetle hiçbir problemleri yoktu ki. Dört tane Yahudi için ayrı kanun yapabilirler mi? Gayrimüslim deyince biz de gittik. Boşu boşuna yandık."

⁵⁷ The original Turkish version: "Gayrimüslimlerden yirmi sınıf asker aldı İnönü. Ne kadar garip değil mi? Biz harbe girmiyoruz. Harbe girsek, o zaman herkesten al, bizden de al. Ama harbe girmiyoruz. Ve İslamlardan da almıyoruz 20 sınıf. Yalnız gayrimüslimlerden. Ne kadar garip! Açık söyleyelim. Şimdi hakkımız da var. Bir düşmanlık vardır müslimle gayrimüslim arasında. Ama Yahudilerle bir şey yok. Biz onlar için yanıyoruz. Ama İnönü bizi kurtardı harpten harbe sokmadı. Çok müteşekkirim."

where autobiography, biography, letters and oral history have been little used to complement conventional historical documents. Given the extensive theoretical interest in life writing in the fields of cultural studies, literature, anthropology, and social history, comparison of the Ottoman/Turkish case with other imperial traditions would be of particular value.

Leyla NEYZI, *Trauma, Narrative and Silence: The Military Journal of a Jewish 'Soldier' in Turkey during the Greco-Turkish War*

Little is known of the experience of the ordinary Ottoman soldier. Even less is known about the experience of non-Muslims conscripted into labor battalions (*amele taburları*). This paper is based on the military journal and life history narrative of Haim Albukrek, a Jewish "soldier" conscripted into non-Muslim units of the Turkish army during the Greco-Turkish War in 1921. Written at a time of war and trauma, when the boundaries of belonging were in flux, Albukrek's journal underscores the multiple allegiances and contradictory positionality of Jews in Turkey. The paper analyzes how Albukrek uses humor, fantasy, irony and memory (and the construction of narrative itself) as means of coping with this traumatic experience. The paper shows how Albukrek's narrative moves between resignation and resistance. Albukrek's journal raises the question as to how healing is best achieved: by remembering or forgetting? The selective use of narrative and silence by Albukrek suggests that silence (and forgetting) may be viewed as an act of agency as narrative (and remembering) itself. Albukrek's military journal and life history narrative suggest that studies of oral history and life writing can vastly enrich historical research on Turkey.

Leyla NEYZI, *Traumatisme, narration et silence: le journal de campagne d'un « soldat » juif en Turquie, pendant la guerre gréco-turque*

On connaît peu de choses de l'expérience d'un soldat ottoman ordinaire. On en connaît encore moins concernant l'expérience de non-musulmans recrutés dans des bataillons de travailleurs (*amele taburları*). Cet article se base sur le journal militaire et le récit de vie d'Haim Albukrek, un 'soldat' juif enrôlé dans des unités non-musulmanes de l'armée turque pendant la guerre gréco-turque de 1921. Écrit à un moment de guerre et de traumatisme, à un moment où les frontières d'appartenance subissaient des modifications continues, le journal d'Albukrek met en évidence les multiples allégeances et la position contradictoire des juifs en Turquie. L'article analyse comment Albukrek utilise l'humour, la fantaisie, l'ironie et la mémoire (ainsi que la construction du récit lui-même), comme un moyen de s'arranger avec cette expérience traumatisante. L'article montre comment le récit d'Albukrek oscille entre résignation et résistance. Le journal d'Albukrek soulève la question de savoir quel est le meilleur moyen d'obtenir la guérison: par le souvenir ou par l'oubli? L'usage sélectif du récit et du silence par Albukrek suggère que le silence (et l'oubli) peuvent être vus comme un instrument d'action, comme le récit (et le souvenir) lui-même. Le journal militaire d'Albukrek et le récit de sa vie suggèrent que les études d'histoire orale et les écritures de vies peuvent grandement enrichir la recherche historique sur la Turquie.