MIXED FEELINGS OVER AN UNPRECEDENTED ELECTION: CONTESTATIONS OF ETHNICITY WITHIN THE SÜRYANİ-KELDANİ COMMUNITY

by

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ABSTRACT

In the juncture of the unprecedented election of a Süryani-Keldani candidate as a member of the parliament of Turkey, and the subsequent discussions that elicited conflicting viewpoints regarding what it means to be a 'proper' ethnic subject, this study examines the intimate communities as manifested by these conflicts through citizenship and affect theories. It examines the structural inequalities that result in an affective historical presence, and the particular psychic mechanism of being a model minority in the case of the Süryani-Keldani, a Christian minority group in a predominantly Muslim nation. By demonstrating the institutional, political and psychical dynamics within the community, this study critiques multiculturalism's tendency to essentialize and hierarchize ethnic identity through affect theory. It also implements para-ethnography in overcoming difficulties of ethnographic access.

İLK KEZ SEÇİLEN BİR MİLLETVEKİLİNİN ARDINDAN ÇELİŞKİLİ HİSLER: SÜRYANİ-KELDANİ TOPLUMUNDAKİ FARLI EĞİLİMLER

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ÖZET

Süryani-Keldani bir adayın Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihinde ilk kez milletvekili seçilmesinden sonra toplum içinde yaşanan tartışmalarda bir takım görüş farklılıkları belirdi. Görüş farklılıklarının temelinde yatan sebep kimin daha "doğru" bir etnik özne olduğu hakkındaki görüş ayrılığıydı. Bu çalışma vatandaşlık ve duygulanım teorilerini kullanarak tartışmalarda dışavurulan "samimi" toplulukları inceliyor. Tarihi olayların etkisiyle oluşan şimdiki zamanın yapısal eşitsizliklerini, model azınlık olma durumuyla beliren ruhsal mekanizmaları inceleyerek büyük çoğunluğu Müslüman olan bu ülkede Süryani-Keldanilerin Hristiyan bir azınlık olma durumunu anlamaya çalışıyor. Toplumdaki kurumsal, politik ve ruhsal dinamikleri inceleyerek çokkültürcülüğün etnik kimliği tekilleştirme eğilimini duygulanım teorisini kullanarak eleştiriyor. Ayrıca para-etnografik çalışmanın etnografik engellerin üstesinden gelinmesinde yarattığı kolaylıkları inceliyor.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Süryani-Keldani are native Christians of Mesopotamia, a community whose existence is relatively not well known due to lack of a nation state and ensuing lack of history writing. Süryani-Keldani have been living in the geography of Beth Nahrin for thousands of years. Beth Nahrin means the "Land of the Rivers" in one of the native languages of Süryani-Keldani, Suryoyo, and it spans the area that is also known as Mesopotamia, consisting of parts of southern Turkey, northern Iraq, eastern Syria and western Iran. Provinces of Diyarbakır, Mardin, Urfa, Antakya, Şırnak and Hakkari of modern day Turkey once housed a vibrant Süryani-Keldani community along with other communities, most of whom were displaced, massacred, or migrated in large numbers as a result of a series of tumultuous events spanning late 19th and early 20th century. A small number of approximately 25,000 Süryani-Keldani still remain in Turkey despite the extensive emigration abroad, and live mainly in İstanbul, Mardin, Midyat, and Antakya, as well as small villages in southeastern Turkey. The community in Istanbul makes up a big portion of those who were participants to this ethnographic study.

Süryani-Keldani community in Turkey attends a number of different churches, such as Assyrian Orthodox Church, Assyrian Catholic Church, Assyrian Protestant Church, Chaldean Church, and the Nestorian Church. These various ecclesiastic formations result from a lack of a state or empire in the nation's history. Due to the lack of a central power, regional churches asserted their individual authorities and regulated the daily affairs of their local communities, hence giving rise to different nodes of power in the form of different churches. A brief history and outline of ecclesiastic formations are summarized in the next chapter.

Often people are surprised to hear the existence of this community of Christians in Turkey. However, there is a sizeable Christian community in the Middle East and Arab countries.[1] In fact, next to the numerous Christian villages in pre-war Iraq, the numbers of Süryani-Keldani in Turkey are scarce. America's recent war in Iraq caused many Christians to flee as they have consistently been threatened by their lives in the environment of insecurity created during and after the war. An interlocutor fleeing from the violence in northern Iraq said, "Before the war there was poverty. Now, it is not a safe place to live [for Christians]. I was threatened by my life to leave." Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt are only a few countries that have a sizeable Christian population. Tarık Aziz, one of Saddam Hussein's top aides and minister of foreign affairs to Iraq, was a Süryani-Keldani. In Lebanon, Christians have historically been involved in government ranks. Syria also has a sizeable Christian community.

Ethnography for this study was conducted mainly among the members of the Keldani[2] church in Istanbul. However, it is incredibly hard to ethnographically delineate members of this particular church from those who belong to other Süryani-Keldani churches, since people have been living together and joining in matrimony for years, and often claim that they are the same people. Therefore the findings of this study can be generalized to the community of Süryani-Keldani who live in Istanbul at large. Unfortunately, this study has not yet been extended to the community in southeastern Turkey.

Even though Turkey is supposedly a "cradle of civilizations" in the romantic national imaginary, sadly most of these civilizations are relegated to dilapidated churches, empty schools, and abandoned villages. The Christian population of Turkey is virtually nonexistent compared to the bordering countries of Syria and Iraq, especially the Iraqi community before the war, which caused many Christians to escape. Süryani-Keldani

[1] For a table representing the populations of Süryani-Keldani worldwide, refer to http://www.aina.org/brief.html. This table is dated 2007 and gives the numbers of Süryani-Keldani in Turkey as 24,000; 1,500,000 in Iraq; 700,000 in Syria; 50,000 in

[2] The English equivalent for the term Keldani is "Chaldean". The word "Chaldean" can be substituted with "Keldani". However, due to confusions around naming, part of which also arise from problems of translation, I use the term Keldani as it was the preferred term in most of the fieldwork. Refer to the next chapter for a discussion on ambiguities of naming.

suffered from extensive massacres culminating in the genocide of 1915, in which they shared the fate of Armenians. Discriminatory and incendiary politics towards Süryani-Keldani continued after the genocide and during the republic of Turkey, and still continue, the most recent example being their depiction in history textbooks as "traitors" in October 2011[3]. Süryani-Keldani population of Turkey has been consistently depleting. It is in this eerie present that one can begin to conceptualize what it means to be a Christian or Jewish subject in Turkey. This study intends to provide an ethnographic account of what it means to be a Süryani-Keldani subject in Istanbul by studying both the structural inequalities and the psychic mechanisms of engagement with one's racialization. I use citizenship and affect theories in defining and understanding what I have referred to as "intimate communities" (Aretxaga 1995) and the conditions of being a "model minority," a concept elaborated by race theorist Anne Cheng (Cheng 2001) that has been a very useful in understanding the dynamics within the Süryani-Keldani community. This study happens in the juncture of the unprecedented election of a Süryani-Keldani candidate as a member of the parliament of Turkey, which raised numerous discussions regarding what it means to be a Süryani-Keldani subject. I analyze the importance of Dora's election and the reactions surrounding his election in order to demonstrate this relatively small community as a layered, evolving, and connected group.

1.1. Erol Dora

Erol Dora was elected a member of the parliament on June 12, 2011, being the first Keldani-Süryani politician ever to be represented in the parliament of Turkey. Dora's election was considered a huge success in terms of cultural representation within the republic, which is the reason why he was invited to numerous interviews on mainstream TV channels. However, Dora's call for the need for increased freedoms challenged what he seemed to represent—a happy multicultural nation that is able to choose a minority as a member of the parliament. Instead, Dora expressed a need for increased freedoms in terms of rights. He expressed the discontents around lack of linguistic

[3] Bianet, "Tarih kitapları Yine Sınıfta Kaldı", Emre Ertani, October 1, 2001. http://www.bianet.org/biamag/genclik/133082-tarih-kitaplari-yine-sinifta-kaldi Retrieved 30.11.2011.

rights, the difficulties faced by Christian foundations, and conflicts around ethnic identity for the Süryani-Keldani population. In a nutshell, Dora demonstrated a need for a true multicultural state, as opposed to the boutique multiculturalism, a concept elaborated by Fish (Fish 1997), and analyzed within the context of Turkey by Yumul (Yumul 2005).

Multiculturalism, as defined by Kymlicka, is intended to overcome the inequalities created by a person's belonging to a minority group, and its main tenet of practice is group-differentiated rights for self-determined groups. Recent reforms in Turkey have given limited freedoms to the use of minority languages that have mainly taken the form of decriminalizing certain activities, such as speaking Kurdish in a public arena. However, none of these changes have taken the form of group-differentiated rights. Moreover, minorities are still being depicted in negative ways, such as the recent portrayal of Süryani-Keldani as "traitors" in national history books for primary schools published in 2011, or the casting of any single attempt for Kurdish rights as "terrorism" by the ministry of internal affairs in December, 2011, [4] all of which continue to cast minority identities or minority rights as undesirable, despite the seemingly liberating practices.

Even though advances are made in certain areas in terms of rights, Turkey continues to be a nation that is not multicultural, as increasing liberties are followed by unpunished discriminatory acts, hence demonstrating the lack of a motivation to preserve minority identities or overcome inequalities of being a minority. Structural inequalities persist as well, such as the practices that make it very hard for churches to maintain their structural or financial integrity, whereas there is practically a government organization that supports the building of mosques and collects donations intended for the upkeep and maintenance of mosques, namely the Ministry of Religion. Yumul describes Turkey as being a country of "boutique multiculturalism," which describes "a cosmetic relationship to the objects of affection" (Fish 378), such as appreciation of minority music, food, traditions, and buildings, however a reluctance to accord minorities any

[4] Radikal, "İçişleri Bakanı'ndan yeni terör tarifleri" December 26, 2011, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=Detay&VersionID=7965&Date=22.06.2008&ArticleID=1073629

rights, and a reluctance to deny certain groups what they deem as their core values. For example, a person can enjoy attending Christmas mass and listening to the Christmas hymns in San Antoine in Istanbul, however s/he can deny the right for churches to collect donations from their constituency, hence demonstrating inherent biases about acceptable modes of presence, and a denial of minority rights.

According to Yumul, one of the ways in which boutique multiculturalism plays out in Turkey is through a discourse of pity, by depicting the minority as a pitiful group that has almost disappeared completely (Yumul 2005:97), yet a failure to do anything to ensure its presence and well-being. The boutique multiculturalism of Turkey functions only to depict minorities as "cultural enrichments" to an essentially "Turkish," and hence "Muslim," dominant identity. Furthermore, these boutique presences are used to affirm the "cultural" state of the nation, by representing it as a place where minorities lead happy and good lives.

The assassination of Hrant Dink on January 19, 2007, an Armenian intellectual, journalist and editor of the Armenian-Turkish newspaper *Agos*, and the debates that followed his death, mark a new territory in terms of multiculturalism in Turkey. Even though the tragic death of Dink and the ineffectiveness of the legal process continue to haunt and depress, the debates that followed Dink's assasination in the last 5 years mark a new phase of minority rights and issues in Turkey. It was Dink's death that allowed for a wider public discussion and engagement with minority issues and history of minority oppression in the mainstream media and public sphere. The debates following Dink's assasination reminded the public of an obscured past of minority oppression that was carefully hidden from history textbooks and mainstream media, a past that was at best distanced to an ancient and removed "Ottoman" realm for the majority of the population. Since Dink's assasination, discussions over minority rights have become mainstream. Armenians have started talking about the genocide, and others have followed their example. Hardly a week passes by in which a minority issue is not referred to in mainstream media, even though some of these referrals continue to be discriminatory and incendiary in manner.

Similar advances have also been made in terms of Kurdish rights. Whereas 30 years ago people could be sentenced to jail for claiming that they are Kurdish, now the debate has

moved from the denial of a sociological reality to a discussion of rights and political representation. However, similar to the debates on religious minority issues, the fact that the arena of sayable and unsayable things have altered does not entail that Turkey has become a multicultural nation. Turkey remains to be a nation that is conservative in terms of individual liberties, linguistic and cultural rights, one that forbids, punishes, or incites anger towards criticisms of official state policy or challenges to its particular interpretation of history. It is still the state that dictates the limits of what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of rights, who can benefit from which rights and who is excluded, and the state has an upper hand in determining preconditions for liberties and is the institution that grants liberties. Since 2004, government has been purportedly increasing liberties to Kurdish people by allowing Kurdish media a very narrow and apolitical liberty to exist, and punishing the media channels heavily if they fail to abide by the nation's code of sayable and unsayable things. There are advances in media that allow people to pratice Kurdish, however this has not stopped the stigmitization of Kurdish in primary schools or its stigmatization as a political language. Editors of the Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem have been sentenced to over 100 years of imprisonment, while only particularly cultural issues are permitted to exist. Despite increased liberties, elected members of the parliament have been barred from parliamentary representation. Government has recently engaged in another wave of military attacks against PKK, which will be the basis on which many liberties are rescinded since any news that criticize military attacks or speaks on behalf of modes of Kurdish liberation will be going against the grain of national ideology and military intervention, and thus heavily punishable. It is this increased attention to minority issues as has been advanced following the assasination of Dink, and the increasingly political demands for Kurdish cultural, social, civic and political rights, that provide the context leading to the election of Dora as a member of the candidate as a Süryani-Keldani, as well as contextualize the dynamics within the Süryani-Keldani community in İstanbul.

Erol Dora's remarks were significant because he reflected a need for increased freedoms for the Süryani-Keldani community, essentially criticizing the state for failing to be a multicultural state. The remarks caused a stir in the community, as people disagreed whether such rights were necessary or not, eliciting conflicting viewpoints regarding what it means to be a proper ethnic subject. There was a flurry of discussions following Dora's nomination, election, and his speeches, which reflected the layered

and varied dispositions within the community. In his speeches, Dora often portrayed the community as lacking access to cultural rights, and demonstrated that there is a need within the community for increased equalities. Dora's remarks, while expressing the needs and desires of a particular Süryani-Keldani community, shocked others within the same community who had pitched their lives as non-problematic and contended, thus bringing to focus a shortfall of multicultural policies.

Terence Turner draws attention to multiculturalism's tendency to hierarchize ethnic communities due to its essentialization and reification ethnic identity. According to Turner, multiculturalism's deficiency comes from a misconception of "culture" as either an autonomous domain of symbols and practices disconnected from social, political and economic circumstances, or by its canonization of an elite aesthetic criteria, which in this case plays out as linguistic and national intactness, following from the image of nation-states. By demonstrating that ethnicities are not necessarily homogenous groups that uniformly aspire for linguistic and national intactness, this thesis engages in a criticism of multiculturalism's tendency to essentialize ethnic identity, and attempts to show how a certain understanding of multiculturalism that reifies distinctions along ethnic lines recreates an evolutionist understanding of cultural difference that deems certain existences as inferior to others, a notion that multiculturalism had initially set out to dismantle through decentering the dominant notions of high culture (Turner 1993). I engage in a similar criticism of multiculturalism by demonstrating the intimate communities manifested by the debates that followed Dora's election. These conflicting viewpoints were epitomized by the responses that were published in the columns of a widely read Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet*, and also on Süryani-Keldani discussion forums, both of which I use in this thesis for analysis. I employ citizenship and affect theories in examining the intimate communities as manifested by these conflicts, and the reasons that have lead to the formation of these intimate communities. I examine in particular the dynamics of being a model minority (Cheng 2001), and the instances in which discourse of model minority ceases to function, such as when Dora announces the need for increased liberties. By demonstrating the dynamics within the Süryani-Keldani community through affect theory, I offer a critique of multiculturalism's tendency to essentialize and hierarchize ethnic identity.

1.2. Fieldwork

I conducted eight months of fieldwork mainly within the community of the Keldani Church in Istanbul, and only partial fieldwork within the diasporic population in various European countries, among the first and second generation of Süryani-Keldani to have migrated from Turkey. Most interviews were conducted in Turkish, hence with Süryani-Keldani who were either born and lived within the borders of Turkey, or who migrated abroad at a later age or only recently. A few interviews were conducted in English with people from Iraq or those born in European countries, as well as with people who either do not wish to speak Turkish due to personal reasons or forgotten Turkish due to lack of use. In the fieldwork I encountered numerous methods of self-referral, such as Süryani, Assyrian, Keldani, Asurlu, the reasons behind which will also be explicated in the following chapter. Suffice it now to say that there is definitely a sense of ethnic community that evades all contention, and I use the term "Süryani-Keldani" to refer to the community at large. Next chapter includes a further discussion regarding my choice to use the term "Süryani-Keldani".

I conducted semi-structured interviews with people of ages ranging from 17 to seventies, women, men, and youth, and with interlocutors from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Among the people with whom I conducted interviews are refugees from Iraq who were fleeing the anti-Christian atmosphere in post-invasion Iraq, priests, people who have studied in monasteries in Turkey, businessmen, students, people who have recently migrated to Istanbul from other parts of Turkey, people whose siblings have recently migrated to European countries such as France or Belgium, people who fled Turkey as young adults, and people who think that they are banned from entering Turkey because they have been pursuing activist work regarding the genocide of Süryani-Keldani in 1915.

I engaged in in-depth conversations and interviewed with about 27 people in Istanbul and in Rijssen. Most of the fieldwork in Istanbul was recorded. The seminar in Rijssen was also recorded, however since individual conversations often happened over coffee breaks and continued over several coffee breaks, occurred during dinner or in the hotel lobby, in field trips or car rides, I needed to resort to taking notes, even though I paid

attention to writing down longer quotes and I took notes fastidiously. All recordings were transcribed, and fieldnotes are extensive. Since the community is relatively small, I changed people's real names in order to prevent people from being identified, even though most people said that they would not have a problem even if their real names were mentioned. I refrained from providing exact locations or in-depth explications of family structures or homes in an effort to prevent identification. I merged different life stories into single personalities during the writing phase of the thesis, thereby giving rise to typologies instead of complex humans, exemplified by Zekiye and Nathali. While this is far from ideal, I did so intentionally in an effort to disguise people's identities. If the community were larger, a simple methodological maneuver of changing names would suffice, but the small size of the community necessitated that I also change and merge people's stories. In order to overcome possible errors of typecasting while building typologies, I introduced quotes from different parts of the population that demonstrate the variety of opinions and varying modes of existences, hence moving the theoretical points of this thesis across a continuum of interlocutors instead of remaining restricted to typologies.

I did multi-sited fieldwork in the church, in offices, in people's homes, and on the way to the subway (Marcus 1995). I conducted fieldwork during a conference in Rijssen, the Netherlands, and in a fieldtrip to a monastery. Most interesting findings happened when I thought fieldwork was over and had turned off the recorder—walking home with an interlocutor as she was confronted by her Christian identity by a neighbor, who threatened her by saying "you should be more mindful of parking your car in inappropriate places and making enemies, especially because you are a foreigner". The fact that such a confrontation could occur even over such a simple matter as a parking dispute, and seeing the way she dealt with such accusations, observing her well picked words which demonstrated that she had to deal with such circumstances many times before, her ease at getting over a confrontation that had left me dumbfounded and with goosebumps, was invaluable to the ethnographic analysis.

The fieldwork I did in Rijssen, the Netherlands, is not comprehensive; however it has been crucial in framing my arguments about the community in Turkey. The fieldwork in Rijssen was only partial, and the diasporic communities certainly need to be studied in much more detail and depth, but I believe that the participants to the conference in

Rijssen qualify as a representative sample for the purposes of this study, and hence I have used my ethnographic findings in Rijssen in demonstrating some of the differences between the community in Istanbul and the community in the diaspora.

The fieldwork in Rijssen was conducted among the diasporic Süryani-Keldani academicians and experts from various countries, including Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, England, and the USA, who had come together under the rubric of a conference on the Süryani-Keldani genocide. The participants actively engaged with questions of history and identity, thus providing a contrast to certain communities in Turkey. Their level of engagement was also refreshing as it informed me about the ways in which one can engage with one's ethnicity. Among this group, chats over history and racial identity occured even during ten-minute coffee breaks, car rides, or over dinner. I spoke with and listened to the presentations of Süryani-Keldani academicians and activists—linguists, historians, anthropologists, archivists, who had their own insights regarding the community, thus making the fieldwork para-ethnographic (Holmes & Marcus). Moreover, they referred me to and shared with me numerous sources of information that do not exist or do not dare to exist in Turkey, since history of Süryani-Keldani is not especially prominent even in academia, let alone publicly. In the last chapter, I engage in a further analysis of the fieldwork conducted in this setting in Rijssen, identify its para-ethnographic elements, and delineate its contribution to analysis.

The Süryani-Keldani community in Europe, as represented by the sample in Rijssen, have escaped Turkey through migration. Currently, most of them are living in a community that is very actively questioning and demanding ethnic rights, unlike the community in Turkey who got entangled in a big debate after Erol Dora called for linguistic rights. The diasporic communities in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, France and in the USA are generally more certain about their future securities and they know that they will not be punished by the state, individually or as a community, as a result of the things they say. On the other hand, fear and repression continue to guide the lives of Süryani-Keldani in Turkey to different extents, manifested by exaggerated stress on loyalty to the state, which casts the state as an entity that can easily be incited to wrath, therefore one that must be dealt with carefully and delicately, and must never be crossed.

I shuddered when I saw a huge camera set in the conference room in Rijssen where a group of people were discussing the genocide. It seemed that the presence of a camera did not bother anyone but me. If this ever happened in Turkey, I thought, the things that were said during the conference would have been used against the community as a part of incendiary politics. Certainly, people would fear that such incendiary politics will happen and they would not let this conference happen in the first place, let alone have it recorded on tape. The conference that will take place in Mardin, Turkey, in 2012 will provide a good ground for comparison of two contexts, Mardin and Rijssen, making another invaluable field for ethnography. In April 2012, Artuklu University in Mardin, Turkey, is hosting an international symposium on Süryani-Keldani history, archeology, language, culture, architecture, religion and literature. The symposium is hosted by the department of "Living Languages," and was announced to the public as being about the "cultural interactions of Süryani-Keldani and others"[5]. The description of the symposium hints at being about the ancient and ecclesiastic history of the Süryani-Keldani and ignores issues such as genocide. The description also seems to be apolitical. This symposium is also self-selective as a result of its location, because there were politically active people in the conference in Rijssen who confessed that they are banned from entering Turkey, and therefore probably will not be able to participate. There are at least two presenters who attended the conference in Rijssen, who will be attending the symposium in Mardin as well. I am certain that there will be presenters or participants who will broach into sensitive topics that the symposium description meticulously left out, and I am looking forward to seeing how this conference folds out, and comparing it with the conference in the Netherlands.

Nahrin, a woman in her 40's who has been living in Sweden since she was a teenager said, "When I went to Turkey to visit relatives in our town I found out that we failed to understand each other" implying differences that are beyond that of mechanical obstructions of language. However, parts of the community do interact. In most cases,

[5] Mardin Artuklu University, "1. International Süryani Semposium: Süryani and Their Cultural Interactions with Other Cultures", April 22-22 2012, Mardin, Turkey. Retrieved on Jan 2, 2012. http://www.artuklu.edu.tr/duyurular/page-yasayan-diller-enstitusu-ilk-suryani-sempozyumunu-duzenliyor.aspx

nearly all relatives, except for close family members, live in the diaspora in Europe, USA or Australia. People interact over internet discussion forums. Family members visit each other. There is a passage of information between the community in Turkey and the community abroad. This study includes an analysis of these discussion forums as well, particularly those restricted to Turkish.

Throughout the study, I was intensely aware of my positionality. I am proceeding with the knowledge that people I speak with might not be entirely honest about all their feelings, might be hiding certain facts, acting with the knowledge that a mis-interpreted information might bring the whole community into conflict with the state of Turkey, and hence proceeding cautiously and reservedly. Such a cautionary stance is pronounced when a person like me who does not belong to the community through religious or conjugal ties asks for an interview. However, silence about certain topics exists within the members of the community as well, in certain instances blocking the intergenerational passage of information. Despite the reserved nature of some interlocutors, others, especially the younger members of the community, gave me the feeling that they were sharing their thoughts without restraint. The cautious and reserved nature of the information transfer in the community in Turkey was especially stark in comparison to the community in Rijssen, who actively talked about inequalities and brutalities of history, such as Seyfo, the massacres of Süryani-Keldani in 1915, an issue that occurred only occasionally and often upon my insistence in the fieldwork in Turkey, and even when it was mentioned, it was quickly followed by declarations of loyalty to the state of Turkey. This phenomena, which is also sometimes referred to as the "minority psychology"[6] in a maneuver to depoliticize and personalize what is intensely political and historical, makes the central point of this study.

1.3. Outline of Thesis

In the next chapter I briefly attempt to delineate a very basic history of the Süryani-Keldani. Due to lack of a nation state that dictates its official history, history writing has

[6] "azınlık psikolojisi"

a chance at dimensionality and needs to be supported by further research; however it is filled with ambivalences and is contentious. I also provide a brief overview of ecclesiastic formation of the Süryani-Keldani churches. I provide a recent history of Christians within the republic of Turkey, and examine the studies of scholars such as Mahçupyan and Oran in order to understand the historical bases of the current structural inequalities against minorities in Turkey and the shaping of public opinion.

In the third chapter I present my ethnographic findings. I examine the conditions of the Süryani-Keldani community through citizenship theory of Silverstein, who moves the citizenship theories from that of a debate over rights discourses to a social practice and a surveilled performance, and therefore to an ethnographic study of citizenship. I refer to theories of affect in reconciling the structural biases towards minorities with the disparate remarks of parts of the community that purport a discourse of well-being that is belied by numerous migrations abroad as well as by Erol Dora's remarks. I examine the structural conditions of the Süryani-Keldani through the definition of affective intimate communities, which were epitomized during the debates that followed Dora's election. This study happens at the conjuncture in which Süryani-Keldani themselves have engaged in a discussion regarding their presence, rights, and notions of equality in purview of active Kurdish minority rights politics, an active diaspora, and active groups within the community in Turkey, specifically those in Mardin, and those that elected Dora, hence opting for political representation.

I employ Aretxaga's concept of 'intimacy' in defining intimate communities of Süryani-Keldani, in an effort to see the variances within the Süryani-Keldani community. However, my attempt to define such intimate communities is not intended to demonstrate the rifts within the community, but to outline the conditions that lead to misjudgment of others which in turn may hinder a wider engagement against inequality. I employ the concept of 'model minority' as articulated by race theorist Annalise Cheng in understanding the dynamics of the Süryani-Keldani in Istanbul. Cheng's theory of racial melancholia of which 'model minority' is an instance also carries a component of jouissance which I believe is crucial in studying minorities outside the single lens of victimization by allowing for self-affirming modes of being. The concept of 'model minority' also allows me to analyze why and how subjectivities have shaped in certain ways, how discourses of recognition are subject to disciplining mechanisms of the state,

and how even seemingly liberating discourses of multiculturalism can function to create hierarchies of ethnic identity, and continue subordination, as articulated by Povinelli (Povinelli 2002). In the fourth chapter, I present a critique of multiculturalism as provided by theories of affect.

This thesis arises out of the insight I gained in the para-ethnographic field in Rijssen, the Netherlands, in which I had a chance to discuss topics that people in Turkey carefully refrained from, also observe the very different understandings of ethnic identity. Even though the ethnography conducted in Rijssen is not extensive, it was central in shaping the arguments, the viewpoints and the objectives of this thesis. In the last chapter, I return to methodology briefly in order to point out further fields and modes of research that I see as necessary as a result of the ethnographic process of this thesis. I delve into the dynamics of para-ethnography and discuss how it has benefited this study, both through the redefinition of interlocutors as epistemic partners and the ensuing changed level of information transfer especially prominent in the diaspora, and also by confirming and necessitating further multi-sited research.

2 HISTORY

The Süryani-Keldani community in the diaspora, academicians and archivists are engaging in in-depth research in their efforts to compile a comprehensive documentation of the history of the Süryani-Keldani. University of Cambridge has a recently launched Modern Assyrian Research Archive (MARA)[7]. There is an effort to include Süryani-Keldani history in university programs. An overview of the history of the Süryani-Keldani community is necessary for my purposes, both as a participation in the effort to document, as well as in understanding the various subjectivities within the community that give rise to conflicting identifications of Süryani-Keldani, Assyrian, Süryani, Aramaic, Keldani, Assyrian-descent. Only through knowledge of Süryani-Keldani history can we begin to understand the partial neglect of certain historical facts in people's oral histories and their significance to the ethnographic analysis of subjectivity. A study of oral histories of Süryani-Keldani in Turkey reveals ambivalent discourses, that of an institutionalized state discourse versus discourse of a brutal local past as relayed by relatives and recent historical documentation (Neyzi 2008:107), thus constituting a challenge to the state discourse of national history. The dynamics that lead to ambivalences in the interpretation of the past are reflected by the numerous names used to depict the community, each portending a different negotiation of the past with the present. These ambivalences of naming do not only reflect the complex and contradictory nature of the past, but also reflect a history of assimilation and propagation of anti-Christian and anti-Jewish sentiments in late Ottoman Empire and the current republican era[8], and therefore necessitate an analysis of the circumstances leading to the present context.

[7] http://assyrianarchive.org/home/

[8] Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923.

The history of Süryani-Keldani is dazzlingly manifold. Lack of a nation-state and thus lack of an official history has resulted in the creation of multiple historical accounts that use different terminology, trace different interests, and often contradict each other. Keldani Catholic church, members of whom make up a big portion of this study, is a religion of eastern Christianity, and a part of Syriac Christianity that originated in the Antioch Church. A history of the Keldani Catholic church requires a recital of the history of the Süryani people, with whom they are ethnic kins and indeed share a common history until their ecclesiastic separation in 15th century. Even after the ecclesiastic separation people continued living under similar political and economic circumstances, albeit within the organization of different churches, in a region that was abutted against Persian and Ottoman empires, and later in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, leading up to the national independence war of Turkey, and events that succeeded the war.

Even though currently Süryani-Keldani communities exist in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, the population that makes up this ethnographic study shared similar fates as a result of their location as similarly marked ethnic subjects within the specific geographical and political location of late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. It is this shared history that leads to the acceptance of common unifying self-depictions, such as Assyrian or "model minority". Hence, after a brief overview of the origins and early history of the churches of Süryani-Keldani with a specific focus on the constitution of the Keldani Catholic church, this historical account will focus on the histories of all the Süryani-Keldani who lived in eastern Anatolia and who remained within the borders of modern day Turkey after the independence war of 1923.

2.1. Terminology

Süryani is often used in Turkish language as an umbrella term for all the different Syriac churches, especially by the members of the Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic churches. For example, when politician Erol Dora speaks for the whole Süryani-Keldani community of Turkey at large, he uses the term "Süryani". However, the term Süryani also stands specifically for the Syriac Orthodox Church (Süryani Ortodoks

Kilisesi, in Turkish), which is the basis on which Keldani prefer not be included under the term Süryani. Members of the Keldani church acknowledge its wide use due to the presence of a bigger number of members of the Syriac Orthodox church in Turkey, and do not mind being termed as "Süryani" even though they prefer to use the term "Keldani" or more specifically "members of the Keldani Catholic Church" in referring to themselves. This is the reason I opt to use the term "Süryani-Keldani", instead of only "Süryani", in speaking of the general ethnic community. Yildiz, a linguist specializing in the Süryani-Keldani languages, also claims that the most accurate way to refer to the community is Assyrian-Chaldean (Yildiz: 25). Similarly, albeit cautious of the fact that the word "Assyrian" carries potential political meanings which could lead to a misinterpretation of the dispositions of the communities in Turkey, and also on account of the fact that the word "Assyrian" does not occur in a majority of my fieldwork in Turkey, I will use the depiction "Süryani-Keldani" in referring to the community at large.

The meanings and the etymology of the term Süryani, and hence the Süryani identity, are debated and current meanings vary, often reinterpreted according to the political stances of the communities[9]. Historically, a line of debate argues that Süryani-Keldani descended from Aramaens, Aramaic speaking people, Aramaic being the language of Jesus, thus designating a lingual and religious lineage to early Christianity and earlier. Another strong identification is attributed to the ancient Mesopotamian Empire of Assyria, thus delineating a racial lineage of Assyrians that persisted in the region after the Assyrian Empire fell. However, people started referring to themselves as Assyrian beginning in 19th century (Aktürk: 2). Bilge claims that the term Assyrian is also often used to refer to the community of Mesopotamia before Christianity, whereas Süryani is used to refer to the same community specifically during Christianity, and only to those who remained Christians. Others debate that Süryani-Keldani are an amalgamation of the people of upper Mesopotamia, a lineage of Assyrians, also including Babylonians and Aramaens, thus framing the discourse geographically. Süryani—as its often used in Turkey, or Assyrian—as is often used to refer to the community in Europe, and Süryani-Keldani—the depiction I employ for the community, thus describe a population

[9] For more information on these debates, see Bilge, Y. p17; for information about various views on the constitution of terms such as Assyria or Suryoye, see Makko 2010 or Rollinger 2006.

that belongs to the churches that originate in the region, such as the Syriac Orthodox church, Syriac Catholic church, Nestorian Church, Melkit church, Syriac Keldani Catholic church etc. Due to a lack of political leaders or a ruling dynasty, Süryani-Keldani formed groups around ecclesiastical institutions (Yildiz: 22). This study does not attempt to challenge or settle the politics of naming and etymology, but only to acknowledge these differences in order to understand wider claims of identification that they portend.

The word "Assyrian" is particularly used in claims of Süryani-Keldani nationalism. It is an attempt to justify and convey the community as an ethnic unity, which often gets obscured in the presence of numerous churches and religious identifications. It is meant to restore the unity of a community, and nourish a sense of unity in a community that has been divided through manipulations of churches and outside forces, in order to provide a solid foundation for future rights claims (Makko: 2). Usage of the term Assyrian therefore makes an ethnic claim that trumps all religious identification, and is specifically employed in the diaspora in European countries in expressing desires for cultural rights, ethnic unity, and possibly, a nation-state.

The term "Assyrian", as it appeared in documentation from 19th century, expressed desires of national unity, albeit with different meanings of what "national unity" entailed. National unity in 19th century, Makko argues, stands for a unity of millets, and thus is realizable under the regime of Ottoman Empire (Makko: 6, 15). However in its current usage, the term Assyrian is not only an ethnic claim, but also carries connotations of multiculturalism, and even national liberation. This is specifically why I find the term "Assyrian" unfit to describe the community in Turkey, and rather use the term Süryani-Keldani. Even though a sense of ethnic and religious community certainly exists among the Süryani-Keldani community in Turkey, their view of community is generally apolitical. They refer to themselves as "we" or "Süryani" or "Keldani". None of these terms have the same ramifications as "Assyrian" does within the diaspora in European countries as represented by the community in Rijssen. Such a strong political claim is unexemplary of the Süryani-Keldani in Istanbul, for reasons that will become manifest in the next chapter. Usage of the word Assyrian in describing the community in Turkey, particularly in İstanbul, will do injustice to the political grounds of meaning that term has come to cover over 50 years of presence in certain European communities,

and will be an inaccurate representation of the generally apolitical population in Istanbul. On the other hand, my reluctance to use the term Assyrian does not entail that there is a complete lack of political activism in Turkey. In fact, there are forms of resistance to the curtailment of minority rights, epitomized by the election of Erol Dora. People are not disconnected from the diaspora or the present context of Kurdish rights claims in Turkey, and they have been inevitably affected by the intellectual developments that occurred among certain communities in Europe in the presence of increased liberties and rights. Often the term "Asurlu" is used to represent such politically bent thoughts.

2.2. History

Be it called Assyrian, Süryani, or Süryani-Keldani, terminologies of varying political views always refer to a distinct group of people with mythical ties to upper Mesopotamian culture that distinguishes itself ethnically from Arabs or Persians, and also distinguishes itself from those of similar descent who are no longer Christians, and yet it designates community that has inevitably been influenced greatly by the cultures around it. Aramaic became the dominant language of Assyrians[10] early on, around 7th century BC. There were trade relations and probably an ethnic mixing with Aramaic speaking people, as a result of which Aramaic became widely used in upper Mesopotamia. Later when upper Mesopotamia was invaded by Muslim Arabs, Arabic culture became dominant among Süryani-Keldani. There is a common misconception in Turkey that Süryani-Keldani are Arab Christians. Even though it is inevitable that Arab blood has mingled with Süryani-Keldani blood, and certainly Arab culture and language is prevalent among some Süryani-Keldani, and despite the fact that some Süryani-Keldani in Iraq refer to themselves as Christian Arabs[11], people I met in my fieldwork do not designate themselves as Arabs. The church service, which is derived from the

[10] This identification is employed at this point in order to refer to the ethnic community prior to Christianity. Substitution of Assyrian at this point with Süryani-Keldani could omit those who speak Aramaic and did not convert to Christianity.

[11] In the case of Iraq, especially due to Arabization campaigns, some Süryani-Keldani have started calling themselves Arab Christians—either because of the years of interbreeding and/or also in order to maintain their safety. See Aktürk, Ş., p5

liturgy of the Antioch church, remains in a derivative of Aramaic[12]. In the Keldani Church in Istanbul, liturgy is in ancient Aramaic, and service is conducted mainly in Turkish; in another church where especially the refugees from Iraq attend, the service is conducted in modern Assyrian, "Suryoyo".

According to Bilge, Christianity was both a unifying force in the region of Mesopotamia, as well as a cultural determinacy for a community that had been under the influence of Hellenistic culture. Most of the pagan public converted to Christianity. The church records indicate that Apostle Thomas himself converted Assyrians to Christianity within a generation after the death of Christ (Travis: 327). They were speaking the language of Jesus, and it was easier for ideas of Christianity to spread in the region (Bilge: 47). This unifying force soon established institutional churches and became a method of voicing discontents towards Byzantine rule, and later the Süryani-Keldani churches became a basis of religious separation from the Byzantine Empire. In fact, due to an absence of regional governance, the church, through its institutionalization, became politically and ideologically the most influential establishment in the region for Christians. Bilge makes a note of the fact that this region, never fully sovereign, has been the bumper zone between Byzantine and the Sassanid empires, and that the developments in the region, such as the separation of the numerous churches, must be understood not solely in terms of spiritual disagreements, but more importantly within the context of the political manipulation of the two empires, the struggle which later transformed to that between Ottomans and Sassanid Empire.

With the beginning of Muslim invasions in 6th century, Arabs and Arab culture arrived in upper Mesopotamia. This was a period of religious suppression, and many people converted to Islam. Arab culture and language became dominant in the region. Bilge claims that Arab influence was prevalent in middle and southern-upper Mesopotamia, but that the mountainous north and northwestern regions were not affected, and continued using their own language. After the Muslim invasions, the region was ruled

[12] For further information about the adoption of Aramaic as a formal language, refer to Yildiz 1999:19-20

by Selçuks, Mogols, and later Ottomans. Meanwhile, the church always had a spiritual and worldly leading influence in the lives of Süryani-Keldani.

2.3. Ecclesiastic Divisions

In this enclave between the distant and recent history of upper Mesopotamia, which brought about invasions, deportations, and migrations in the recent past that are still active in postmemories of many Süryani-Keldani, I would like to say a few words about the religious formations of the Süryani-Keldani Churches. Christianity arises out of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, as Jerusalem lost its influence through invasions (B.C. 70), the church in Antioch became powerful over other churches in the Middle East. There were two other main churches besides the Antioch Syriac church, Roman church and church of Alexandria. By the end of 3rd century, Antioch Syriac church was the administrative ruler of churches in Syria, Lebanon, Arab states, Palestine, Cilicia, Cappadocia, Mesopotamia and Iran (Bilge: 72).

In the 3rd century, Constantine accepted Christianity as the religion of the Byzantine Empire. Shortly after religion became a governmental tool for the Byzantine and often a suppressive instrument used against the Middle Eastern churches. Religious and political disagreements arose between what the institutionalized Byzantine church decreed and the opinions of local churches. As Bilge points out, these religious disagreements mainly reflected regional politics in power struggle between Sassanid and Byzantine empires, in which religious disputes and clergy power struggles became political tools of manipulation, rather than debates about the dogmas of religion. After several councils with disavowals mainly of the Antioch Syriac church, finally in 5th century, upon the disavowal of Nestorianism (a branch of the Antioch church) as a heretic belief in the Khalkedon ecumenical council in 451, Antioch Syriac church broke off from the Byzantine church and became autonomous, thus giving rise to the realm of Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity, Antioch Church representing the Süryani-Keldani (Assyrian) Churches of Eastern Christianity.[13]

[13] For further information about the accuracy of these ecclesiastic names, refer to Efrem Yildiz's article, "The Assyrians: A Historical and Current Reality"

Nestorianism was a school of thought originating in the Antioch Church with Nestorius. After his education in Antioch, Nestorius became patriarch in Istanbul. He believed that God had both a spiritual and a worldly aspect, and that Jesus was born a man, but became God through baptism. He thus believed that Virgin Mary is not the mother of god, but mother of Jesus, and thus mother of man. This belief, also named diophysism, was a matter of contention in religious circles, and is stated as the basis of the separation of the Antioch Syriac church from Western Christianity, albeit separation is largely due to bigger political conflicts. Nestorians were not uniform in the diophsyite belief either. Nevertheless, Antioch Syriac became autonomous in its religious teachings in 451. As Syriac and Western churches divided as a result of the Khalkedon council in 451, further divides within Syriac church took place. The Süryani-Keldani were divided into the Syriac Orthodox Church which was Monophysite (aka Western Syriac Church), the Syriac Nestorian (aka Eastern Syriac Church) church, and the small group of Melkit church, which was a Syriac church that joined the Byzantine church. Further divides occurred within Syrian churches as a result of missionary activities by the western churches (Bilge: 66).

In 1551, a group of the Syriac Nestorian church (also known as Eastern Syriac church) embraced Catholicism under Patriarch Yuhanna Sulaka. This group of Catholic Nestorians was named Keldani (Chaldean), after the ancient region of Babylon called Kalde (Chalde), Keldani meaning "the people of Kalde." It is debated whether this particular group is actually from Kalde. An interlocutor relayed to me that he doubts whether there are any members of the Keldani church who are in fact from Kalde, and he does not think that it is possible to track it down. The prevalent view is that the Keldani are ethnic kins to the Süryani communities, and lived in just about the same region; however were Babylonians, not Assyrians. According to Özcoşar, starting in 1551, the term Keldani is used to refer to a sect of Christianity, rather than an ethnic origin (Özçoşar: 272). This study does not wish to settle the debate in anyway, but it is important to state that regardless of the exact nature of kinship, even if there were ethnic difference between Süryani and Keldani, it would be accurate to state that both ethnicities have thoroughly interbred over hundreds of years, and the communities in Turkey have shared similar fates.

The union of Keldani Catholic Christians collapsed and reunited in 1672, 1771, 1778, and finally in 1830. In 1830, Babylon Patriarchy was formed and has existed until today as the patriarchy of the Keldani Catholic church. It is now in Baghdad. In addition to the patriarchy in Baghdad, there are four archbishops in Basra, Kirkuk, Sehna, Iran, and Urmiye, as well as 7 bishops Aleppo, Alkoş, Amadya, Akka, Beirut, Mosul and Zaho. There were other separations from the Nestorian church besides the Keldani Catholics. Some people joined the Monophysite Antioch Süryani Kadim patriarchy. And some Nestorians joined the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus the Keldani Catholic Church, (known as Chaldean Catholic Church in western literature) is part of the church of the east in communion with the see of Rome. The customs and the discipline of the Keldani have similarities to Latin rites, but Süryani liturgical tradition is retained. The Keldani liturgy is in a form of Aramaic as it was derived from the Jerusalem-Antioch liturgy.

Near the end of 19th century, Süryani-Keldani lived in eastern Anatolia, the northern plateau of Mesopotamia, and northwestern Persia (Makko: 3), and the approximate population was 619,000 (Gaunt 2006:28) even though it is impossible to get at an accurate and unbiased census. The population that constitutes the population of this ethnographic study lived in eastern Anatolia, in the Ottoman vilayets of Aleppo, Bitlis, Diyarbakır (Omid/Āmid), Erzurum, Mamûretü'l-Azîz, Mosul, Sivas and Van (Makko: 3). They lived in villages and towns and they had allegiances to difference ecclesiastic leaders. In order to settle a dispute between Nestorians and Keldani, it was decided by the Istanbul representative of the Keldani church in 19th century to let Keldani Christians to have Mardin and Diyarbakır, and Nestorians have Mosul and Aleppo, thus restoring peace (Albayrak: 112). We need to think of these regions not as sovereign lands, but rather as a concentration of villages, which were intermixed with other Christians like Armenians, as well as Kurds, Alevis, and Yezidis as well.

2.4. Seyfo, Before and After

The Keldani Catholic church was officially recognized by the Ottomans in 19th century in an attempt to exert control over Catholic churches (including the Armenian Catholic church and other Catholic churches), which were feared to be wielded by western countries. Catholic churches were recognized by the Ottomans as the Istanbul

Catholic Millet, which was later merged with the Armenian Millet. Thus, all the churches in it, including the Keldani church, had to recognize the patriarch of the Armenian Millet. Besides the patriarch in Istanbul, the Keldani Catholic Church was also in communion with the Pope through Baghdad, and a competition between the Ottoman Empire and the Pope continued over patriarch elections and priest organizations of the Keldani church (Özcoşar: 281).

The Christians of the Ottoman empire were recognized under a system of protection and governance, *himaye,* recognized as believers as opposed to pagans, *ehl-i kitap*, and their lives were protected by the zimmet pact which required them to make regular payments to the empire, even though the specific nature of their rights and obligations varied from period to period (Gaunt: 37). The place of the Süryani-Keldani community within the religious establishment of Ottoman Empire millets was complex. The Süryani-Keldani were divided into separate millets, thus at times creating differences of treatment between members of Nestorian, Chaldean, and Süryani orthodox churches. Also, many were included in the Armenian millet and were subsumed into their numbers, and treated as Armenians until it was evident they were not Armenians.

In 19th century, after the invasion of Egypt, local Kurds realized the military weakness of Ottomans and some rebellious people garnered hopes of gaining independence or autonomy (Gaunt: 63). This forced the local Christian population to choose allies. Empowerment of religious Sheiks in the region caused the mainly political struggles to be plotted against religious divides (Gaunt: 65), which made it hard for some Christians to ally with the Kurds, and caused alienation of certain Kurdish groups from the government of Jeune Turks. In a desire to sustain unity, Ottoman Empire engaged in a series of local military organizations in eastern Turkey. These military establishments, Hamidiye regiments, organized under the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, were spread out throughout the area, mainly consisting of Kurds, and they were enticed into jihad, provoked by the cooperation of some Christians with the invading Europeans or Russians. (Gaunt: 68) Their main duty was to ensure the protection of border areas. Hamidiye regiments were far from professional—often times they would refuse to fight, and sometimes they would raid Christian villages to gain the payments the empire had failed to make. As certain officials and members of the populations attacked Christians, others protected their lives (Gaunt: 77). There were differences of opinion between the

Süryani-Keldani community under different leaders and living in different cities. Whereas certain cities and groups of Süryani-Keldani declared loyalty to the Ottoman Empire in early 20th century, people in other cities acted differently as demonstrated by the participation of Süryani-Keldani to certain Kurdish uprisings against the centralized rule of Jeune Turk government in 1913 (Gaunt: 70), or as demonstrated by Patriarch İlyas Şakir's communication to the Süryani-Keldani in Urfa in which he expresses his disapproval for their decision to ally with the French (Akyüz:445). Often times people's acts of self-defense in the presence of brutalities were also interpreted as "rebellion" and used to justify the massacres.

Ottoman Empire had regional land disputes with Russia in Caucasia, Persia in its eastern borders, and British forces in northern Mesopotamia; Süryani-Keldani became a buffer zone for most of the clashes and disagreements between these empires. In order to justify the massacre of Christian populations, public opinion had to be led to believe that Christians were allying with foreign powers, even though the foreign powers would change—Russians, French or British. It was the aggravation of Muslim and Christian relations that prepared the environment and public opinion in favor of genocide (Gaunt: 79).

Süryani-Keldani suffered their biggest loss during WW1. They shared the fate of Armenians. Often they were killed on the spot in their villages instead of being deported.[14] Still, differences of opinion permeated the region. Patriarch Mar Şimun promised their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire to the governor of Van. However, a group of Süryani-Keldani in the east fought back as a result of increased violence and massacres in the area, which was then considered a rebellion by the ground forces. Baum and Winkler claim that upon hearing the news of Süryani-Keldani massacres in the northwest, the patriarch officially declared war on Turkey in the name of his Millet on May 10, 1915, hoping for support from the Russians (Baum&Winkler: 137). Thousands were killed. People were killed regardless of whether they had pledged their allegiance to the Ottomans or not, as a result of systematic massacres conducted by the Ottoman Empire against Christians. Many of them ran away to Iran or sought refuge in Russian territories (Bilge: 113). Even the Süryani-Keldani that never cooperated with

[14]David Gaunt's presentation in Innanna Foundation Conference 2011.

foreign powers and claimed allegiance to the Ottoman Empire and who prayed in favor of the Ottoman sultan and supported the Ottoman Empire were massacred. Due to lack of a nation-state, Süryani-Keldani were fragmented, and they had many religious leaders and political stances. Groups of Süryani-Keldani even belonged to different millets, therefore at times they were treated differently by the authorities and at times they acted differently. Nevertheless, insurgents, allies, civilians, women, and youth alike were brutally massacred by the Hamidiye regiments starting in late 19th century, and most intensely in 1915. These massacres are also known as Seyfo, the Suryoyo word for "sword" which refers for the genocide, but rarely occurs in oral accounts of Süryani-Keldani in Turkey as there is both a lack of knowledge and transmission, as well as fear around its pronunciation. Generally there is an inclination to draw ties to the peacefully existing loyal Süryani-Keldani who never aggravated the state and were not killed in the thousands, as often happens in the discourse of model minority.

Although a detailed study is beyond the scope of this paper, an analysis of the formation of public opinion around Christian and Jewish identities is due in order to explicate the reasons leading to institutionalized and public racism against Christians. Initial notions of "non-Muslim[15]" in early republican Turkey occur and shape over the ownership of capital. Many Christians were traders and businessmen, lived in town centers and owned economic capital. Economic motives and market interests of a newly formed government lay behind the confiscation of Christian owned properties and businesses (Keyder: 95)[16], leading to the Christian massacres of 1915. Üngör cites an instance of the confiscation of the silk factory owned by the Tirpandjian family, which employed dozens of Armenians and Süryani-Keldani. In 1915, the owner and employees were killed, and the factory was confiscated by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the only political party, and allotted to local CUP member Müftüzade Hüseyin (Üngör:25). Transfer of wealth and property continued through the republic of Turkey. The notorious Varlık Tax in 1942 specifically intended to impoverish Christians and

[15] Christian and Jewish subjects of the nation are often referred to as "gayrimüslim", which translates as "non-Muslim." However, since such a depiction assumes "Muslim" as the norm, I prefer to refer to the so-called population as "Christians and Jews". For the sake of ease of reading, and since this paper specifically examines a particular Christian community, I will use "Christian" instead of "Christians and Jews".

[16] "Geleneksel yönetici sınıf ile bu sınıfı tehdit eden burjuvazi arasındaki mücadele ideolojik olarak etnik ve dinsel çatışma alanına kaydırıldı"

Jews (Yumul 2005:88). Christians and Jews were taxed ten times more than Muslims and they were banished to work camps if they could not pay the preemptory amounts. Şükrü Saracoğlu, the prime minister of the republic of Turkey at the time of Varlık Tax claimed, "...this law is a revolution. This is a chance to regain control of our economy. We will hence eliminate the foreigners that dominate our market, and give the Turkish economy to Turks"[17] thus publicly designating Christians as foreigners and non-Turkish and inciting people to violence against Christians and Jews. Christian businesses were raided in 1955. Widespread assassinations occurred in Christian regions following the derogatory representation of Rums in the media during conflicts in Cyprus, which lead to massive migration. As an interlocutor said, "my father ordered my brothers to 'take your family and leave'". Economic desire to centralize profits went hand in hand with the constitution of Christians as "enemy within" in order to justify the government's unjust actions to the public. Thus posing of the Christian as "enemy within" itself is a discourse that constitutes the government and its main citizenry as primarily Muslim. The fear of "enemy within" and the fear mongering around Christian identity became so operative, enabling, and exonerating that with the aid of other discourse producing organs of the state—history telling, media and other nationalist organizations—Christians were constituted and perceived as a danger to the state, therefore disguising the economic motives behind their constitution as such. As the economic bases of such policies intended to consolidate capital and power were concealed behind portrayal of Christians as "enemy within", perception of Christians as "enemy within" and ensuing racism became normalized.

2.5. Ambiguities

A historically discriminatory narrative inevitably has implications in daily life. Christians encounter rampant racism throughout their lives. As children they get called names at school, and most people have vivid accounts of being hurt as children. Later on in life they get called derogatory names, such as aliens and infidels. Given such a discriminatory history and present, how can one account for deliberate mis-interpretations of the past that I often witnessed while doing fieldwork, such as the

[17]Relayed by A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*:148

denial or insignificance of Seyfo—the Assyrian word referring to the genocide of 1915—or a refusal of minority rights as guaranteed by Lausanne treaty? There is rampant misinterpretation among academicians and public alike that only Jewish, Rum and Armenian communities were accorded minority rights[18] by Lausanne treaty in 1923. In fact, legally speaking, all religious minorities are entitled to minority rights (Oran 2004:67); however the government has been denying de facto realization of minority rights to the Süryani-Keldani community. Despite the numerous articles and books that Oran published regarding the rights of Süryani-Keldani, why does a particular part of the community continue to take pride out of denying minority rights in Lausanne?

Political theorist Montag offers the concept of "ghosts" in understanding how and why such different dispositions happen and get propagated, resulting in the formation of intimate communities. According to Montag, ghosts are weighted and nuanced accumulations and residues of past and present experiences that determine the possibility of action or inaction, and the structure of desire in the present (Montag: 77). They are forces that people are unconscious of, yet those that affect the way they behave by structuring apprehensions and desires. Affective interpretations of the past are inevitably conditioned by institutional dynamics and conditions of the present. For example, presence in an environment where Christians are easily accused of being "traitors of the state" can necessitate a reiteration of the nationalist discourse, leading to the interpretation of massacres of 1915 as necessary retaliation in the context of the war of independence, an inclination to draw ties to the peaceful and loyal Süryani-Keldani of early 20th century, or a denial of such a bloody history altogether.

However, knowledge of the injustices exists in forms of post-memory, in family histories, and books, looming, disrupting, and requiring re-interpretations of the past, thus intermittently challenging the linear temporality of the nationalist discourse. As Neyzi demonstrates through the local knowledge of the history of Izmir/Smyrna, such knowledge and its vocalization in the form of memories are inevitably acts of resistance because they grind against the nationalist discourse (Neyzi 2008:124). Existence of both

[18] For an analysis of the rights accorded to Christian and Jewish communities, refer to Oran 2004.

the nationalist discourse as well as a version of the past as relayed through family, memory, books, and diaspora can create an ambiguity in the subject, giving rise to varying interpretations and mis-interpretations of the past. Such ambiguity can be talked about through the metaphor of "ghosts", that is forces that loom and haunt people occasionally, challenging and contradicting one's understanding of reality. There is a ghost of the millet system that either begets a tumultuous existence or a peaceful history of coexistence of Muslim and Christian; there is a ghost of the invasions of Anatolia by Europeans in late 19th and early 20th century that necessitates either an acknowledgement of brutalities, constructed ties to the "loyal" Süryani-Keldani that never rebelled against the state, or an adoption of the rhetoric of nationalist justification; there is a ghost of ancient Assyria that creates a sense of ethnic community albeit with varying views of community; there is a ghost of language that either is a contribution to the cultural mosaic of Turkey, or cause of bitterness for being neglected, undervalued, or assimilated. These historical facts have a ghostly presence as they create ambiguities and contradictions in the subject. Different interpretations of the past are influenced by the present, and influence the way life, meaning, and action is conceived as it unfolds in the present, thus forming intimate communities of feeling. Knowledge of ghosts enable and account for diverse interpretations, allegiances, or stakes in past events, and particular interpretations of what it means to be a Süryani-Keldani.

Concept of ghosts is also useful because it helps to dissect the unconscious meanings behind actions or inactions. How should the silence about genocide of the Süryani-Keldani community in İstanbul be interpreted? It could be interpreted straightforwardly as 'assimilation' but ghosts help to interpret this silence as due to ensuing fear of genocide, uncertainty about future safety, lack of minority rights, and dynamics of being a model minority. If we did not have the concept of thinking about ghosts that loom from the past and influence possibilities of action and inaction, the silence and contradiction in the Süryani-Keldani community in İstanbul could simply be understood as assimilation, therefore disguising the sense of fear, oppression, lack of future protection, hierarchies within minority communities, and an insecurity about possible reverberations of an active Süryani-Keldani politics brewing in the diaspora that could

create nationalist and religious backlashes in Turkey. Similarly, centrality of 1915[19] to conversations about the community in the diaspora can easily be misinterpreted as identity politics—thus disguising the motivation for persistent migration and inequalities that people had to endure even after the genocide, such as starvation, imprisonments, murders, impoverishments, banishments and arrests (Beth-Şawoce & Bar Abraham: 23)[20], assimilatory procedures, as well as alienation experienced abroad.[21]

2.6. Hrant Dink and To-day

On January 19, 2007, Hrant Dink, journalist and editor-in-chief of the Armenian-Turkish newspaper *Agos*, was assasinated in front of his office in Şişli, İstanbul. About 100,000 thousand people joined Dink's funeral. The court case is closed as of January 17, 2012, and despite the ample evidence of a plotting scheme, the court has failed to pronounce the conspiracy as a terrorist act, a charge otherwise easily attributed, such as often is done in response to student demonstrations. The plotters have not been completely identified, hitmen's sentences are shortened, the government, army and police officials who are guilty of both encouraging the assasination and failing to prevent it have either been not brought to court, excuplated, or at most penalized with 6 months of jailtime[22]. Meanwhile, the tape records of the crime scene have mysteriously disappeared, other evidence such as phone records that might lead to the identification of plotters have either been barred from disclosure or disregarded by the court, key people were not investigated, and ensuing threats against Armenians have been condoned, evidencing the multifarious attempts to obfuscate evidence, obscure the identification of the networks plotting Dink's assasination, and failure to pronounce the

[19] 1915 is the year of the most brutal Christian massacres in Anatolia. The word "1915" is used to refer to the genocide.

[20] Jan Beth-Şawoce and Abdulmesih Bar Abraham's coauthored article gives very detailed and referenced account of the distresses suffered by Süryani-Keldani population after the genocide and in the period of Republic of Turkey. It supports its arguments through oral histories and governmental records.

[21] A man in the diaspora conveyed feelings of constant estrangement, not being able to fully belong to Europe or Turkey.

[22] http://www.hranticinadaleticin.com/tr/kronoloji.php

plot as an act of terror, which has significantly mitigated the penalty. The failure of the legal process to penalize the necessary actors signifies a wider condoning of an Armenian's murder on the ground that he continues to be an "enemy within".

However, as I mentioned earlier, the assassination of Hrant Dink and the debates that followed his death have altered the way minorities and minority rights are talked about and viewed within the public sphere. Since Hrant Dink's death, Armenians have started speaking about the genocide openly, and even the wider public sphere has engaged in these conversations to certain extents. Meanwhile, it is also the case that such vocalizations of past and present injustices have created backlashes in the form of publicly made racist and anti-Armenian remarks that have also increased in number (interview with Yumul, 2010)[23]. Death of Hrant Dink and Kurdish right activisms have provided the context for the dynamics within the Süryani-Keldani communities.

This chapter aimed at informing the readers both about the relatively unknown history of the Süryani-Keldani, as well as providing information about the context in which ethnography was conducted. In the next chapter, I offer ethnography of the Süryani-Keldani population in Istanbul by drawing certain contrasts from the community in Europe as represented by the sample community in Rijssen. In the next chapter I also expand on the concepts of "model minority" and "intimate community" that I briefly introduced in this chapter. Both concepts inevitably portend a restricted knowledge or awareness of the history explicated in this chapter. In the next chapter I attempt to situate the reasons underlying the specific modes of interpretations of this history in forms of partial recognition and partial remittance, as well as demonstrate the ways in which knowledge of history changes as a result of the circumstances of the present.

[23] Taraf, Tuğba Tekerek's interview with Arus Yumul, "Arus Yumul: Hrant Şato'daki K'ydı", 01.17.2010

3 CONTESTATIONS OF ETHNICITY

Erol Dora was elected a member of the parliament on June 12, 2011, being the first Keldani-Süryani politician ever to be represented in the parliament of Turkey. His election was newsworthy both because it was a tale of victory that seemed to prove the multicultural status of Turkey, as well as a poignant tale of the newfound success of an afflicted and underprivileged minority. The following moment occurred in the TV program *İlk Süryani Aday Söz Sende,* on Habertürk, a popular Turkish news channel:

> Reporter[24]: Why was <becoming a member of the parliament > utopic? Is that because you are a Süryani?
>
> Dora[25]: [No, definitely not] I mean of course.... how shall I say (a lump forms in his throat, and he swallows hard) that might have to do with it too, and secondly there is the issue of getting votes. [26]

Confronted with what the reporter deemed belonged to him, a victimized Süryani-Keldani identity that despairs for political representation and cannot get it due to his

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[24] Pamir, Balçiçek (reporter); Dora, Erol (guest). İlk Süryani aday Söz Sende. Habertürk, Date of publication: 22 April 2011. http://video.haberturk.com/haber/video/ilk-suryani-aday-soz-sendede/50109. Retrieved on 2011.

[25] A Süryani-Keldani nominated to be a part of the Parliament through independent parties. On June 12, 2011 he got elected and thus is the first representative of the Süryani-Keldani community in the parliament of Turkey. Erol Dora is an independent candidate supported by the Emek, Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Platform, and will join the leadership of BDP once parliament convenes, as stated in his interview on news channel NTV (CITE: http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25222948/)

[26] Interaction in its original language, Turkish, is a follows:

Reporter: Neden <milletvekili olmak> utopikti? Süryani oldugunuz icin mi?

Dora: [Yook yook] yani şimdi tabi ki...yani mesela diyelim (lump in the throat, swallows hard) onun da etkisi olabilir, ikincisi bir de oy olayı vardır.

identity as a Süryani-Keldani, Dora faltered. A lump formed in his throat. At once Dora denied that such a victimized and pitied identity existed "No, definitely not," soon after he conceded, "that might have to do with it too". While wary of making the lump do more symbolic work than it carries, I nonetheless suggest that the lump is an affective moment that may be potentially seen as bearing with it traces of the dynamics that give rise to both a denial and acceptance of subordination, hence evoking conflicting dispositions of what it means to be a Süryani-Keldani in Turkey.

The study of affect and affective moments is as much about pauses, silences, and lumps as it is about discourse. Ngai theorizes a lump in the throat as standing for a whole range of undischarged emotions (Ngai: 92). The instant refusal, the ensuing lump, and the following half-hearted affirmation of Dora need not be overlooked as simply a slip-of-the-tongue or stage fright, but in fact can be viewed as a potent moment to be analyzed. The lump is a physical reaction against categorization as a victimized Süryani-Keldani, as well as a physical reaction to being portrayed as a completely untroubled and self-conscious member of a contained, static, and total ethnic community, and all the dynamics that lie in between. This chapter explores the institutional, political and psychical factors that create contestations over what it means to be a Süryani-Keldani subject.

Eng&Han employ the term "racialized melancholia" in order to refer to a certain lack that can occur in a minority subject as a result of her inability to fully become an unmarked citizen of the majority population due to discrimination; a racialization that is "melancholic" because it becomes a central engagement in life (Eng&Han: 363). Realizing the inadequacy of the term "racialized" in describing modes of discrimination, I use it with caution and extend its meaning to rather that of "marked" belonging, since such melancholia can and does occur in other modes of economic, ideological, or gendered existences. In the case of the Süryani-Keldani community in Istanbul, a small Christian minority group of merely 25,000 people in a nation that is predominantly Muslim, veritably a community that has been subjected to mass genocide in early 20th century and ongoing displacements, denigration, confiscations, and legal despotisms due to religion, Christianity often becomes the inassimilable property around which racialized melancholia forms. Most people have vivid memories

of confrontation with their Christian identities at school and in other social environments.

This chapter demonstrates the processes that lead to the creation of Süryani-Keldani identities through examining the particular dynamics of "model minority" as racial melancholia, and the moments in which the dynamics of model minority ceases to function for particular communities. I attempt to enhance understanding of the complexity of this ethnic group by charting particular life circumstances that lead to conflicting dispositions about what it means to be a proper ethnic subject, and offer a critique of multiculturalism through affect theory. These conflicting dispositions became vocalized in the juncture of Dora's public demands for multicultural rights.

3.1 Conflicting Communities

In an interview[27] on NTV, another popular news channel, Erol Dora speaks about the discriminations that the Süryani-Keldani experience, talking on behalf of the community in Mardin by whose votes he was elected. He speaks about the legal complications of the Süryani-Keldani, such as the lawsuit that assaults the territorial integrity of Mor Gabriel, an ancient Christian monastery built in 397. Dora mentions discontent about hindrances towards learning and teaching in native language, and laments about lack of access to minority rights that were accorded to the Süryani-Keldani community by Lausanne treaty. These concerns collide with dispositions of a part of the community who pitch their lives as unproblematic. This section tackles the formation of these two conflicting communities in the context of the Süryani-Keldani community in Istanbul.

A person from the Süryani-Keldani community responded to Dora's interview with a letter, which was published in Yalçın Bayer's column[28] in Hürriyet, one of the

[27] Interview with Erol Dora on NTV, June 14, 2011. Retrieved 08.18.2011. http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25222948/

[28] On 06/23/2011, Yalcin Bayer relayed an anonymous letter from Sweden. The excerpts have been taken from this letter. (www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/18090474.asp). On 06/25/2011, Yalcin Bayer also

mainstream newspapers, without any comments. The letter is titled, "Erol Dora is not our representative"[29] and it reflects the concerns of an intimate community of Süryani-Keldani in response to Erol Dora's remarks on NTV about the need for increased minority rights.

> He says 'Süryani community has been living here for 6500 years; they are natives to this land. And they have problems.' But the Catholic Keldani and Orthodox Süryani communities belong to different churches. One doesn't know the other. We do not have anything to do with certain individuals.[30]

The author wants to distinguish his community from the community that Dora represents, by pointing to ecclesiastic distinctions. Repudiation of Dora's representative power as a member of the parliament through a stress on denominational distinctions and ensuing public rejection of his cause, aims to refute Dora's claim that Süryani-Keldani community has problems. It also reflects the fear that increased minority rights claims will cause frictions with the government. "This will cause Süryani to be affronted by the government in many circumstances"[31]. The author fears that a rights-seeking Süryani-Keldani image might cause increased attention and scorn, which might result in the retraction of certain securities the community has secured through being model minority subjects of the nation. This behavior is exemplary of the rhetoric of "model minority", which describes a situation in which a group denies its modes and history of discrimination, and purports to be exemplary citizens of a nation.

Another member of the Süryani-Keldani community responded to the anonymous letter with another letter. Jan Bartuma[32], born in Turkey and now living in Sweden, blamed the anonymous author in Bayer's column for being assimilated, "Nobody would want to

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included in his column the response of the Mezopotamya Kultur ve Dayanisma Dernegi in his column .(*www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/18106710.asp)* Both the letter and the response were published in his column without any comments.

[29] "Erol Dora bizim vekilimiz değil"

[30] "Süryaniler bu bölgede 6500 yıllık tarihleri olan yerli bir halktır. Dolayısıyla onların da sıkıntıları var' diye konuşuyor. Oysa, Katolik Keldaniler ve Ortodoks Süryaniler ayrı kiliselere bağlıdır. Kimin ne olduğu bilinmez. Bizim şahıslarla ilgimiz olamaz."

[31] "Süryanileri her platformda devletle karşı karşıya getirecek"

[32] Names of people have been changed in order to ensure people's privacy.

represent people who doubt their Süryani identity,"[33] hence criticizing the anonymous author for impeding on the community's access to minority rights, which he deems is essential for the sustenance of a proper Süryani-Keldani identity and for overcoming inequality.

The disagreements, denunciations, allegations and loyalties that are established by these letters demonstrate the variances and ambivalences within this community, which became manifest in the form of a lump in Dora's throat. In this chapter I attempt to elucidate the conditions that lead to these ambivalences. As mentioned in the last chapter, there is disagreement even about the proper ways of self-referral. Whether "Süryani" "Keldani" "Süryani-Keldani" "Asurlu" "Assyrian" or "Aramaic" needs to be employed in referring to the community is a matter of contention and portends different world views regarding how one conceives of her ethnicity, her rights, her present conditions and her past. Furthermore, there are disagreements about what it means to be a "minority"; some people desire minority rights, like those whom Dora represents, whereas others deny that such a need exists, and others, like the anonymous reviewer, loath the idea. These feelings are inevitably related with the contradictory and varying interpretations of history, such as whether patriarch İlyas Şakir denounced minority status in Lausanne conference out of his accord as an act of loyalty to the state, as one interlocutor proudly explains, or whether patriarch İlyas Şakir signed off minority rights through manipulation, threat, or financial outcome, as another interlocutor asserts. There are disagreements about genocide; some people define and understand their displaced existence through genocide, while others deny that it ever took place, and there are others who claim that it did not affect them, therefore they need not be concerned about genocide.

These disagreements reflect the wide range of feelings within the community that are based on particular interpretations of history, structural inequalities and pressures, defined by class, displacement and current conditions of presence, what I call the historical present. Even though there is certainly a sense of a wider ethnic community that evades such disagreements, particular interpretations of the past and present define

[33] "Süryaniliklerinden şüphe edilen bu insanları ne Erol Dora nede başkası temsil etmek istemez."

specific sensitivities, and form "intimate communities". These communities are "intimate", because there are visceral things that lead to such sensitivities, such as institutional restraints, fear, and what I have been referring to as the ghostly presence of history, which lead to particular interpretations of the past that poise minds and bodies differently, resulting in specific forms of racialized melancholia in which the self becomes invested (Aretxaga: 182). In the case of the intimate communities of Süryani-Keldani in İstanbul, racialized melancholia has given rise to the complicated dynamics of model minority. Racialized melancholia has also allowed for political organization around rights claims, and it has compelled people to escape through migration. In the following part, I describe the institutional and psychological factors that lead to the creation of particular intimate communities of racialized melancholia through an affective ethnography, focusing primarily on those who live in İstanbul, but with occasional and less comprehensive references to those in diaspora and Mardin.

3.2 Dynamics of Model Minority

The ethnographic material I present in this thesis revolves around two intimate communities within the Keldani Church community in Istanbul that can briefly, albeit inadequately, be described by the following remarks:

> Zekiye: "the only difference between you and me is that I go to church on Sundays" [34]
>
> Nathali: "I am not Turkish… It would be nice to live with my own people[35]"

These views reflect major differences regarding people's orientation toward the state, their sense of belonging and inclusion, which inevitably arise out of various interpretations of the past in purview of the conditions of the present, caused by what I have been referring to as the ghostly presence of history. These two intimate communities should be regarded as a continuum of affective community, rather than mutually exclusive categories.

[34] "Senle benim tek farkım ben Pazar günleri kiliseye gidiyorum."

[35] "Kendi milletimin insanlarıyla birlikte olmak belki daha iyi olurdu."

Tangential with Parla's claims of the importance of class in accessing social citizenship (Parla 2011a:457), a sense of belonging and inclusion is aligned with economic and social capital, as increasing wealth is an indicator of increased engagement with the political economic system of Turkey. Zekiye is an example to this group. Her family migrated to Istanbul in the 1970s from the city of Mardin. She works for a family business, travels abroad, joins social clubs that are socially selective and costly. She sends her kids to private schools, and buys the latest playstation games.

Nathali, on the other hand, is a young adult. Her family moved to İstanbul when she was a toddler, in early 1990s. Her native language is Suryoyo, the ethnic language of Süryani-Keldani. She lives in a poorer area of Istanbul, and has attended public schools. Her parents have heavy accents, and are poor due to loss of property and livelihood—livestock and gardens—caused by recent deportation from their village. She feels alienated from the majority, and equates "Turk" with "Muslim". Nearly all her relatives live abroad, and she wants to go abroad as well. Even though social and economic classes have a big role in her feelings of alienation from the community, they are not the only factors that make her doubt her belonging. Kymlicka, a political scientist known for his work on multiculturalism, claims that providing material benefits to a community, whose structure of feeling is represented by Nathali, will not necessarily ensure its integration into the common culture or make people first class social citizens (Kymlicka:173). This results from the fact that most institutions are implicitly geared towards the interests of majority groups, therefore creating burdens and barriers for members of minority groups (Kymlicka & Norman: 4), hence necessitating group-differentiated rights for increased equality.

3.2.1. "We are just like you"

Zekiye represents a group of Süryani-Keldani who mainly migrated from the cities of Mardin and Diyarbakır. They comprise the wealthier part of the population, who were and are still traders or business owners. Many moved abroad to Europe, Americas, and Australia, but those who moved to Istanbul arrived in the 70s. People in Rijssen often remarked about the wealth and shrewdness of this community for "having their eyes

open" and moving to İstanbul to open businesses. Most members of this community do not speak Suryoyo. People are business owners, jewelers or textile manufacturers. Some people disapprove of minorities who seek minority rights, and describe the claims for minority rights as "cheating the government", whereas others claim that they do not need these rights.

> "I am a Turk. We are children of this land. We are citizens of Turkey. Hence we did not deem the title of minority as appropriate, they didn't at the time, and if you ask me, I do not think it is an appropriate title either. Because I am a Turk. I live in Turkey. And I will ask to be referred to as minority? It seems senseless. Then what am I doing in Turkey? You want a special status, so you ask for minority rights. I think it is ridiculous[36]"

Members of this group have adopted a much stronger identification with the mainstream constructed Turkish identity, and are reluctant to see themselves as outsiders to this identity. This does not mean that they do not struggle for inclusion. People often allude to the fact that they pay taxes and serve in the army, which is an effort to prove citizenship.

> "We have been living in Turkey for about 200-300 years. We have come to embody Turkish traditions and beliefs. We are citizens of Turkey. We live just like Turkish citizens, and we have the same needs and obligations as all citizens of Turkey. Does a Turkish male serve in the army? We also serve in the army. If there is a war, god forbid, we join the armed forces."[37]

Marshall offered one of the first theorization of citizenship by defining citizenship as constituting of political rights, civic rights and social rights (Marshall 1964). However, the presence of rights does not necessarily entail that they are practiced equally.

[36] "Ben Turk'um. Biz bu topraklarin cocuklariyiz. Turkiye cumhuriyeti vatandasiyiz. Dolayisiyla biz azinligi yani uygun gormedik, gormediler ki, ben de aslinda su anda bana sorarsaniz ben de uygun gormuyorum. Cunku ben turk'um. Turkiyede yasiyorum. Azinlik diye birsey mi isticem? Bana cok manasiz geliyor. O zaman ben turkiyede ne isim var... hem de azinlik ikinci bir kategoride gormek icin kendinize baska birsey istiyorsunuz. Bana bu cok sacma geliyor"

[37] "200-300 senedir türkiye'de yaşantısı sözkonusu ve bu yaşantı içerisinde türk örf ve anenilerini benimseyerek yaşamışlar, türkiye vatandaşıdır, türkiye vatandaşının bütün ne ihtiyacı varsa, ne nasıl yaşanması gerkeiyorsa onu yaşıyor. yani bir türk vatandaşı erkek çocuk olarak askere mi gitmesi gerekiyor, askere gidiyor. Allah korusun savaş mı oluyor savaşa katılıyor."

Additionally, viewing citizenship solely in terms of equality in rights fails to account for the inherent assumptions in the law itself. Paul Silverstein made an intervention to the concept of citizenship by introducing the concept of citizenship as a "surveilled performance", thus moving the debate away from a possession of the formal, civic, and social rights to observing differences in practice of daily life, which reflected institutional biases of the state. "Citizenship, when viewed as a social practice rather than as a set of formal rights and duties, emerges out of a set of embodied (and often linguistic) performances." (Silverstein 2008:25) Certain people are expected to perform their loyalty to the state more than formal citizens are expected to do so (Silverstein 2008:29), which creates a marked citizenship. The struggle of this intimate community to include itself within the majority dominant group through underlining cultural or economic practices that signify good citizenship makes them marked citizens who are expected to perform their citizenship, unlike others whose citizenships are taken for granted. People often claim "we pay our taxes; our sons do their military service duties. We are just like you.[38]" The need for such an assurance itself indicates that certainty about their full citizenship is lacking.

Zekiye's remark also signifies an attempt made by the community to cast religion to a personal realm, which is another method of proving one's inclusion in a secular dominant society as religion-less secular subjects. However, Islam remains a central tenet of the Turkish government and definition of what it means to be "Turkish", hence belying the secular imaginings of citizenship in Turkey. Furthermore, centrality of religion to the lives of many Süryani-Keldani belies such decentralization. Church service occupies a very distinct place among the community in Istanbul. Youth attends Bible classes on weekends, which is also one of the ways Christians socialize. There are young people who attend church at least monthly. "I feel like I have sinned if I do not attend church on a Sunday"[39] says a teenager. Groups of women gather biweekly for special prayers specific to women. Women are actively involved in the upkeep of churches.

> "Recently the vicar of the Patriarch came here to sanctify our new priest. He stayed about a week, 3 or 4 days. We looked after him during the whole

[38] "Vergimizi ödüyoruz, oğlumuzu askere gönderiyoruz. Yani sizinle aynıyız."

[39] " bir Pazar kiliseye gitmiyim sanki suç işlemişim gibi hissediyorum kendimi."

> length of his stay, we made his food, hosted his guests, helped around. As you can see, it is completely voluntary. We do not do this because it is in our belief. We go to church and we pray because of our belief. This, however, is voluntary. It gives me peace to serve the church voluntarily. It makes me happy and powerful. We really enjoy it. We do things here that we do not do at home. At home, we get tired of these chores, but in the church we never get tired of these chores. If you really think about God when you do these things, you relax and become peaceful, because you reach a spiritual bliss. There are people who are paid to do the upkeep of the church, such as the zangoç. Zangoç can prepare the breakfast as well. But we truly want to do these things. For example, two women, we would wake up at 5.30 every morning to serve their breakfast. The priest says, "Please do not tire yourselves, we have a zangoç". But servitude really makes us happy, it gives us something rich, a spiritual richness. It is a beautiful thing. Just like a family. We pray, we pray to God. We come here to pray, but we also get to see each other. It makes me happy. Instead of going and visiting these people at their homes, I see them at church."[40]

Homes are decorated with images of Christ, the patriarch, and religious leaders. Language learning and religious education are also displaced to the church due to a lack of schools that aim to nourish minority languages or religions. In Istanbul, the sense of community is created around attendance to church since other methods of community creation are unlikely due to what I have been referring to as the ghosts of state oppression. Church is the space in which most liberties have been given by the Turkish

[40] "Mesela geçenlerde patrik hazretlerinin yardımcısı geldi buraya bu papaz yeni oldu ya onu kutsamak üzere. bir hafta kalışı, yaklaşık 3-4 gün kaldı. Onun burda kalışı içerisinde yemeği, bakımı, gelen misafirleri ağırlama. Bu tür yani. Anlayacağınız, tamamen keyfi. Bunu inancımız için yapmıyoruz. inancımız için kiliseye geliyorz, ayinde bulunuyoruz, yani tamamen istek…Yani seve seve bu kiliseye hizmet vermek huzur veriyor. Zevk veriyor. Güç veriyor. Hoşumuza gidiyor. Evimizde yapmadığımız şeyleri burda yaptığımız zaman… orda yoruluyoruz, burda yorulmuyoruz. burda hiç yorgunluk hissetmiyor insan hakkaten. eğer ki gerçekten tanrıyı düşünüyorsanız bu hizmetleri yaptığınızda gerçekten rahatlıyorsunuz, çünkü manevi olarak rahatlık hissediyorsunuz. Burada zaten ücretli bakıcılar var. Mesela zangoç, o da kahvaltılarını yapabilir. Ama biz, biz kendimiz istiyoruz. ben mesela geldik iki kadın biz her sabah 5.30 uyanır gelip kahvaltılarını verirdim. Papaz diyor ki üzülmeyin zangoç var! Ama biz bunu neden yapıyoruz, birşey veriyor size.. manevi bir zenginlik sağlıyor. bu çok güzel bir duygu. Bunu hissetmek… Aile, aile aynen aile. güzel bir aile sevgisi var. güzel bir aile bağlantısı var. başka birşey yok. Dualarımız var, tanrıya yakarışlarımız var. Yani buraya niye geliyoruz, sadece tanrıya yakarış olarak, ama bir yerde de hasret gideriyoruz. Ben mutlu oluyorum. Yani ben bu insanları özel olarak evlerine gidip göreceğime kilisede görüyorum."

republic; it is the only official cultural right that is approved and recognized by the state[41] and deemed as a cultural richness, ironically also marking the attribute on the basis of which Süryani-Keldani are discriminated against.

According to the item 66/1 of the constitution of Turkey, the term "Turkish" defines everyone who is a formal citizen of Turkey (Oran 2005:87). However, in practice "Turkish" has been used to refer to specifically Muslim citizens, as demonstrated by numerous court decisions that have depicted Christian citizens of Turkey as "nationals of foreign countries" (Oran 2005:91). There are legally instituted double standards regarding to the community foundations of Christians (Kurban & Hatemi; Kurban), as well as discriminatory practices such as that of appointing Muslim headmasters of "Turkish origin" to minority schools with Christian headmasters, which demonstrate the distrust associated with Christian citizens (Mahçupyan 2004:10) and is an overt demonstration of the suspicions regarding Christian citizens. Muslim headmasters were instructed to do the following:

> "Observe what is going on in school and inform the ministry of education. The main purpose of your presence is not educational. You must control the minority teachers. Having been chosen by their own community organizations, they cannot protect our interest" (Yumul 94)[42].

Despite the discriminatory practices, this community tries to function as unmarked citizens by neglecting the glaring Muslim component of what it means to be "Turkish", by relegating religion to a personal realm, even though in effect it is central to the in/formal definition of the "Turkish" citizen.

Christians face innumerable injustices and deal with these in different ways. Some attribute it to their being marked religious subjects. When a young girl such as Nathali expresses a desire to live in a Christian country with "my own people", she is also

[41] In the last few years, municipals of Beyoğlu have been conducting celebratory visits to churches in Christmas and Easter.

[42] "Burada olup biteni takip etmek ve bizlere haber vermek sizing göreviniz. Eğitim öğretimle ilgili göreviniz o kadar önemli değil. Sizler azınlıklardan olan öğretmenleri çok iyi control etmelisiniz. Onlar vakıfları tarafından seçilmiş kişiler olarak bizim menfaatlerimizi koruyamazlar"

expressing that she feels alienated in Turkey because of her religion. Others deal with this segregation either by denying that such injustices only happen to the Christians of Turkey, or by universalizing injustices to the whole world and thereby naturalizing and de-personalizing them, as demonstrated by the following quote from a middle-aged male interlocutor in the community. Zekiye belongs to this latter group.

> "[speaking of discrimination] of course I know it exists. Unfortunately there is discrimination, but not only in Turkey. Same racism and religious discriminations exist in Europe. For example in Northern Ireland the Protestants and the Catholics are killing each other.. We say it is a religious problem, but unfortunately Christians have it among each other too… It is a problem in Egypt. In Libya. Is it a Christian problem? No. Humans create the problem, as philosophy goes, human is the biggest enemy to humans. Unfortunately this is how things are. Humans are angels, but also small devils, that is how humanity is."[43]

The community as represented by Zekiye is the group that very much wants to belong, and despite all its attempts, is barred from being complete insiders. This behavior demonstrates what race theorist Cheng refers to as "model minority," a minority group that desires to overlook and contain its history of destitution, and identify itself as model national subjects, thus becoming a model as to how other minorities should act (Cheng:23). Model minority dynamics necessitate the gratification of certain actions or inactions, and shunning of others, and beget a particular interpretation of history.

Historically, Jews have been regarded as "model minority" subjects of the nation as they have embraced the Turkish language, and have not shown activism around minority rights, and are viewed as being smoothly integrated into the public. However, recent history demonstrates anti-Jewish policies, such as the evacuation of Jews from their villages in Thrace in 1934, which resulted in massive emigration. The details of

[43] "[ayrılıkçılıktan bahsediyor] biliyorum evet yani. Vardır maalesef tabi, ama bu yalnız burda değildir türkiyede değildir. Avrupada da aynı var yani ırkçılık falan, dincilik, diyelim mesela hemen hemen şimdiye kadar kuzey irlanda protestantlar ve katolikler birbirini... Yani bu yalnız islam hristiyan problemi değildir. Yani her din, bu insani problemdir yani. Biz diyoruz dini problem ama maalesef hristyan... Mısır'da problem.. Libya'da problem. Hristiyan mı problemi? Yok. İnsan kendi kendine maalesef, felsefede hep diyorlar, insan kendi kendine en büyük düşmandır. Gerçi ister istemez öyledir yani, aynı zamanda bir melek ama maalesef küçük bir şeytan, insan öyledir."

the constitution of Jews as model minority are complex and beyond the means of this thesis, however the reader can refer to Rıfat Bali's works for further information and references (Bali 1999). Similarly, even though the issue of Armenian minority rights has become heavily debated especially since the assassination of Hrant Dink, for a long time majority of Armenians had also been a quiet community that did not voice concern, similar to the majority Süryani-Keldani population in Istanbul. Dink's assassination has provided the conditions for increased public demands for Armenian minority rights and equalities, and hence caused a change of the Armenian image from a quiet and reticent community to a community that demands rights in the public sphere, even though such change has also come with negative depictions of Armenians.

The expression "In Lausanne treaty we decided not to ask for minority rights. We do not want to be considered as a minority" made by a member of the Süryani-Keldani community propagates the idea that minority status—even if model minority status—is not a desirable status in Turkey, and is often associated with being 'foreigner' and at times even "enemy within", and certainly entails a marked citizenship from which certain Süryani-Keldani would like to refrain. Since the foundation of the republic, Christian and Jewish subjects of the nation have been depicted as traitors of the state who backstab the nation or ally with foreign powers (Yumul 2005:93). There are no particular rights attributed to minorities in Turkey. In fact, there are negative connotations associated with the term "azınlık"[44], such as that of being a "foreigner" or a "second class citizen" as Yumul demonstrates through drawing attention to the words of a prior president, Süleyman Demirel. Demirel served as the president of Turkey between 1993-2000, and during his presidency, as a response to the Kurdish demands for minority status, he said the following "Why do they want to be relegated to the status of second class citizens by assuming the title of azınlık?" (Yumul 2005: 90)[45] hence demonstrating the stigma attached to minority status.

Since there are not any group-differentiated rights to benefit from, and due to the negative connotations of the status of minority, most Christian subjects in Turkey do

[44] Equivalent of the term "minority" in Turkish.

[45] "Neden azınlık hakları verilerek ikinci sınıf vatandaş konumuna düşsünler?"

not want to be referred to as a minority (Yumul 2005:100). However, while denying the title of "azınlık", some groups of Süryani-Keldani are not only rejecting a title that only is a liability, but they are also adopting the nationalist discourse of antagonism towards minority status, and in doing so they find self-emancipation in disapproving of rights-seeking minorities such as Armenians and Kurds, by casting them as separatists. By denying minority status and simultaneously adopting the stigmatizing national stance around "minority" status, this community attempts to displace the stigma attached to "non-Muslims" onto specific others, thus engaging in a re-interpretation of the stigma against "non-Muslims" as that of a stigma towards "minority non-Muslims," hence betraying a hierarchy of minority identities in Turkey. Disparaging of minority rights claims also implies a sense of living free of discrimination, thus disguising a brutal past of massacres and present injustices. Model-minority rhetoric requires that a specific version of history be repeated with neglect of painful and dissonant items.

I argue that the dynamics of "model minority" should not be interpreted simply as an act of self-defense towards the majority Muslim population or as a response to the hierarchy of minority populations, but also as a self-engaged psychical formation that serves to justify a person's conditions of presence. Discourse of model minority is an active involvement in the creation of a dignified self and one's involvement with life. It reflects a desiring subject that wants to make sense out of her presence, even if she might be encumbered by discriminatory structures. Certainly, Süryani-Keldani people encounter rampant racism throughout their lives. However this does not necessarily entail that they lead downtrodden lives. They deal with this oppression by ignoring and displacing such painful events and encounters to the wider injustices in the world. They reiterate their national identity as citizens of Turkey through verbal stressing of their good citizenship practices. Some people seize moments of confrontation as an opportunity to instruct people about the native Christians of Turkey, such as when a woman corrects her neighbor for using the term "foreigner". Others utilize such confrontations as an affirmation of their own knowledge of history and intellect, as when a lady cuts off contact certain people she deems are too opinionated to change.

Cheng says that for people who encounter racism, "there are deep-seated, intangible, psychical complications... but this doesn't mean that minority subject does not develop other relations to that injunctive ideal which can be self-affirming or sustaining"

(Cheng: 7) Cheng introduces the idea of jouissance that is created around one's engagement with one's racialization. The concept of jouissance allows one to see the self-affirmations and self-understandings people create despite the lack of rights, second-class citizenship, and lack of future securities. "Understanding melancholia of a raced subject needs to extend beyond a description of her sadness to a sense of how that sadness conditions life and shapes subjectivity" (Cheng: 23-24). Racialized melancholia is a result of discrimination, however it can also be a source of jouissance, an active engagement with one's conditions of being, therefore a source of meaning for one's condition. It is a formation through which Süryani-Keldani subjects come not only to espouse their situation, but also to indulge in it. This approach is useful in trying to understand a community not as simply victimized (Eng&Han: 363), but as engaged in its wounded identity.

Jouissance does not entail that structural inequalities do not exist. Indeed, racialized subject has to go through a painful negotiation of her identity as every Süryani-Keldani have to as children and adults, nevertheless she can actively create conditions for jouissance. Adoption of the rhetoric of model minority is an affirmation of one's good citizenship, deserved presence, and special status among all the subordinated classes, and is a method by which Süryani-Keldani create jouissance out of their subordination.

However, jouissance created around the status of being model minority is not a completely self-developed discourse, and neither is it absolute. An analysis of the content of Erol Dora's remarks in the interview on Habertürk about the history of Süryani-Keldani is significant in this respect. Dora begins by mentioning their roots in Mesopotamian civilizations and the importance of ancient Assyrian civilization to world civilization, thus stressing that their presence is enrichment to the image of Turkey as a cradle of civilizations. Immediately he moves onto the village evacuations of early 1990s. His narrative of history completely omits the atrocities of 1915, and the ensuing environment of fear up until the 90's that resulted in the abandoning of land and property in hope of an escape abroad. Why are the village evacuations more newsworthy at this particular moment than genocide? Why are migrations during the war with Greece which made people fear a rerun of 1915 and forced them to escape not newsworthy? Being a model minority comes with consequences of being easily manipulated by the state. It requires that the Süryani-Keldani adopt the dominant

national discourse, and do not insist on a national identity, or past grievances of the state. This is why genocide is omitted from their ethnic histories. Another Süryani-Keldani says the following about the community:

> "Maybe people do not know about us because we are a small community. Up until the 80s and 90s, people in Turkey had not heard of the Chaldean Church. We must also say that we do not talk much about ourselves; we do not say 'such and such happened to us, these things happened to us'. We say, 'the past is past'. We live in the present, like everybody else. We are citizens of Turkey or children of this nation. So, we do not have big problems. We do not say, 'things are like such and such because we are Christians.' Of course in the past we suffered because we are Christians, as slaves of aghas. Not really slaves but that is what it comes down to."[46]

Insofar as Dora speaks of the evacuations of 90s, he is still talking about a catastrophic event in Süryani-Keldani memory, but framing it in a way that affirms the necessity of evacuation due to the nation's armed struggle with PKK. Even though he is speaking of people's painful experiences in a public arena, at the same time he is also affirming national ideology and state rhetoric of national security. Village evacuations can be viewed and talked about in a way that affirms the government's actions and still makes a case against the hardship of being a Süryani-Keldani, but such a stance cannot be achieved by mentioning genocide or ongoing ambience of fear. Precedent has made it clear that discourses that go against the grain of national ideology, in forms of genocide or minority rights, are not allowed to exist in the public arena, and could lead to an annulment of his candidacy. Criticisms of state policy are not tolerated and heavily punished by the Turkish state, or used as a method to incur people into violent demonstrations of nationalism. This attitude demonstrates exactly what model minority rhetoric creates—both an affirmation of state ideology, and one's melancholic, injured, yet self-affirming relation to it. Thus model-minority becomes a method by which the government tames the Süryani-Keldani identity, as well as a tactic employed by the

[46] "Belki biz daha az olduğumuz için kimse bizi tanımıyor yani şimdiye kadar 80lere 90lara kadar kimse Keldani türkiyede olduğunu hemen hemen bilmezdi. Ve biz de kendimizden az konuşuyoruz diyeceğiz, biz böyle oldu veya bize şöyle oldu bilmem ne, biz demişiz geçmiş geçmiş zaman geçmiştir, şimdi yaşıyoruz ve herkes gibi burda yani, türk vatandaşıyız ya da bu ülkenin çocuklarıyız, ona göre yani problemlerimiz pek çok yok. Yani hristiyan olarak demiyoruz böyle ya da şöyle... ama tabi ki geçmişte problem ister istemez hristiyan olarak ya da bir agha kölesi olarak, köle değildir de gerçi ama yani sonuç öyleydi."

Süryani-Keldani as constitutive of what Süryani-Keldani's are like—and to delineate whom (Armenian, Rum) they are not like. Hence, on a public introduction of his candidacy to the nation, Dora is motivated to exclude these painful facts from his narrative. As much as the rhetoric of model minority is assumed by the Süryani-Keldani community in an effort to differentiate themselves from other minorities, discourse of 'model minority' is also a means by which the state dominates over discourses of identity.

Dora is not the quintessential model minority. His later calls for multicultural rights in Mardin are at odds with the discourse of model minority, which demonstrate that as much as model minority is a taming discourse and a method of jouissance, it is not an overarching discourse that closes down all other possibilities of being. Dora's candidacy as a Süryani-Keldani that demands minority rights stretches the boundaries of the model minority discourse by delineating a discontented minority that actively seeks emancipation from subordination. Dora goes beyond the model of being the representative of a model minority; however, he still needs to resort to the silences necessitated by condition of being a model minority when it comes to certain issues, such as genocide, the mention of which could lead to the annulment of his position. Dora's call for multicultural rights is aberrance from model minority discourse; however, in a desire to make his presence officially recognized within a general public, he needs to refrain from certain issues and self-censor.

Certainly the concealment of the past in an effort to form jouissance around being a model minority sometimes leads to generations of young people who are unaware of the extent of the disasters that befell their grand relatives, even though they might, and do, find out about their histories as adults. Model minority discourse can be central to one's understanding of self and one's self-confidence as it might distance a brutal past, and the alienations such a sense of injustice can cause. In doing so, model minority discourse becomes a restraint against more rebellious forms of self-arrangements. However, at times, a relative passes onto the child the burden of the knowledge of a horrible family history that was so carefully hidden from him by the state, as happens when an interlocutor deemed was the beginning of his interest in his identity and history: "When I turned 18, my father gave my Gabriela Yonnan's book about the Assyrian Genocide." People also hear about these issues over the internet, through the

voices of a diaspora that is actively engaged with Assyrian history, and hence Seyfo, which means "sword" in Suryoyo and represents the massacres of 1915. Even though model minority acts as a discourse that closes down other modes of being, I argue that possibility of jouissance should not be considered an essentialization of identity. People do become conflicted by the disjunction between their identities as model minority and the injustices they face in daily life as a result of their Christianity, the misguided symbolisms associated with it in the public mindset, as well as increasing knowledge about their past.

3.2.2. "It would be nice to live with my own people"

The other intimate community within the Süryani-Keldani community in Istanbul consists of people who easily deny their "Turkishness". Community epitomized by Nathali is economically disadvantaged and recently uprooted[47]. An interlocutor in his early 20s described his arrival in Istanbul as follows:

> "We were obligated to leave the village and move to Istanbul. We had lots of disadvantages, of course, lacking savings. We received our things from the land, and so we had nothing in our hands without our land. We had to migrate. We had nothing when we arrived in Istanbul. Absolutely zero. We came with nothing. We started school, and of course we had difficulties with Turkish because we did not speak it."[48]

These people had to abandon their native villages in Tur Abdin[49] or Şırnak in the last 20-30 years. Forced to abandon their homesteads, they found themselves in a metropolis as farmers, lacking economic, social and symbolic capital. Many moved on

[47] In early 90s many Süryani-Keldani villages were evacuated in the state military campaign against the PKK.

[48] "mecbur köyü boşaltıp İstanbul'a yerleştik tabi ki. Eee çok çok dezavantajlarla geldik çünkü hani bir birikim yok birşey yok hani toprağın.. elindeki hani, nasıl diyim, toprağından çıkıyorsun yani....Göç etmek zorunda kaldık. Elimizde birşey yokken geldik buralara. Hani sıfır yani. Sıfır geldik. İşte okula başladık ve okuldayken tabi dilimiz Türkçe olmadığı için sıkıntı çektik bayağı.

[49] Tur Abdin is one of the native lands of Süryani-Keldani community. It ranges from eastern Mardin to Şırnak provinces of modern day Turkey.

to Europe, and those who remained lament not having left upon having heard of the relative financial ease of relatives in diaspora. Below is excerpt from a lady reflecting on the village she had to abandon:

> "It was a very precious village. We had a garden and olive trees. People would plant rice, wheat and other grains. We farmed and we had animals. Thank goodness we had this land. Everything we ate and had was from the village. We had a garden and we ate lots of dried figs. We were there until PKK came about. Government said that it cannot build a police station for every couple of homes, it said that we had to leave. All our villages, so many of them. All villages with a small population, be it Christian or Muslim, had to abandon their lands. People migrated. They moved us out. So we left the villages, all our olives and gardens, all those precious things. Most came and said, "what are we going to do in Istanbul?". Most remained in Midyat for a year. Then they said, "What are we going to do here?". We have no village, we own nothing, what are we going to do? We were all farmers. We were not educated or anything, nor had we any money. They all wrote to Germany. It was easy during those times. Some went to Germany, some to Belgium. Both of my sisters went to Belgium. My sister-in-law went to Sweden. They all went to different places. But most went to Germany... Perhaps you remember from the TV, they emptied the villages during PKK period. Then we said, we better leave and go abroad. It is a good thing they left. Now they are living in a good condition. They got jobs. Social system looked after them well, thank goodness. Some got jobs, and social system took care of the others." [50]

The native language of this intimate community is Suryoyo. Suryoyo names of their villages as well as their last names were changed by the state, even though they still

[50] "Çok değerli bir köydü. Bahçemiz vardır zeytinlerimiz vardır. Pirinç ekiyorlardı, buğday muğday, hep ekiyorlardı. Ekim yani çiftçilik çok şükür şeyimiz vardır, herşeyimiz ordan geliyordu. Bahçemiz vardı, hep kuru incirimiz ordan. Ondan sonra yavrum kaldık, sonra o PKK çıkana kadar. Hükümet dedi her bir iki haneye bir karakol yapamam, mecbur çıkacaksınız. Yani bizim köyler çok yani. Ordan. Hristiyan köyleri, müslüman köyleri, az olanı hadi çıkartıyor. Göç ettiler çıkarttılar, olduğu gibi köyü bıraktılar, o kadar zeytinleri, o kadar bahçeleri o kadar değerli şeyler. (daha önceki kilisedeki bir konuşmamızda kiliselerin soyulduğunu değerleri şeylerin çalındığını anlatmıştı) Hepsi kaldı. Geldiler. Çoğu da geldiler, dediler, "İstanbul'da napacaz?" Bir sene yakın Midyat'ta kaldılar. Ondan sonra dediler biz burda napıcaz? Köyümüzden olduk, eşyamızdan olduk, biz burda ne iş yapıcaz? Çiftçi hani. Ne okumuştuk ne şeyimiz var. Kalktılar hepsi Almanya'ya yazdı.. O zamanlar kolaydır. Kimi Almanya'ya gitti, kimi Belçika'ya. İki kız kardeşim Belçika'da. Bir görümce İsveç'te. Her biri bir yere gittiler, ama çoğu da Almanya'ya gitti... Televizyondan belki hatırlıyorsun PKK zamanında köyleri boşalttılar. O zaman dedik en iyisi dışarı gittiler. İyi ki gittiler. Şimdi orda durumları güzeldir. İş buldular orda sosyal bakıyordu sağolsun o sosyal çok bakıyordu onlara, kimi iş buldu, kimi sosyal baktı şimdiye kadar yani."

know and adhere to these Suryoyo names, and feel alienated from the generic Turkish last names that were assigned by government officials. They have very large families, often seven eight siblings, or more. Extended families are extremely divided, with almost everyone living abroad. They feel primarily as Christians, and to a lesser extent Assyrians. The younger generation especially feels alienated in Istanbul, and often is vocal about it: "It would be nice to live with my own people[51]". These are the precarious citizens of the nation. Religion is central to this group as is to the first group. However, unlike the first group, language is also important and they regret lacking the option of teaching it to their kids. Below is an excerpt relayed by an interlocutor about the time when she was visiting her son in Germany:

> "We went to Germany in winter. My son was driving. There was frost on the road and he had an accident. The police came. Meanwhile my brother told his older brother to move his car to the curb so that other cars would not skid and hit us. The German police officer who overheard him was really surprised, so he asked, "what language are you speaking?" I said that we speak Aramaic—Chaldean is Aramaic. Then the police said, "Wow, so you know that language?" I said, "yes it is our native language". He said, "This is an ancient language. Do you know how old it is? It is ancient" I said, (laughs) that it is our native language. Then the police said, "Please never forget this language! It is a beautiful language." They know it there too. They know it is an old language. My son said, "It is our language, our native language. We are Chaldean and we speak in this language". It is so. We did not learn history. All I know is what my elders told me. It is old. Our village was really old too, who knows when people first started living there…" [52]

Many people in this intimate community are proud of their language Suryoyo, and often mention that is it the language of Jesus Christ. Having such an allegiance to a language that is unprotected and neglected by the state adds to their subordination and

[51] "Kendi milletimin insanlarıyla birlikte olmak belki daha iyi olurdu."

[52] "Almanyaya gittik kışın, oğlum, çok buzlanma oldu yolda oğlum kaza yaptı orda, polis geldi. Ondan sonra oğlum kardaşına demiş, arabanı çek, arabalara geliyor vuruyor, kayıyor. baktım Alman polis şaştı kaldı, dedi, bu ne dilde konuşuyorsunuz? Dedi aramica'dır—keldanice aramica aynı—dedim. Aman, diyor, sen bu dili biliyor musun? Evet diyorum, anadilimizdir. Bu diyor, bu dil çok eski bir dildir, dedi. Bu dil biliyor musun ne kadar eskidir? Çok eskidir. E diyorum bizim dilimiz budur. Ay diyor sakın bu dili unutmayın! Bu dil çok güzel bir dil. Orda da biliyorlar. Eski bir dildir diyor, onlar biliyorlar. Hangi tarihte... bililiyorlar yani Almanlar biliyorlar. Şaştı kaldı, bu dil, nasıl biliyor sunuz? Oğlan da diyor, bizim dilimiz, anadilimiz budur! Biz keldaniyiz yani bu dilde konuşuyoruz. Öyledir. Biz tarih okumadık. Bildiğim, büyüklerin bize anlattığı budur yani. Eski şeydir. Mesela bizim köy o kadar eskiydi... kim bilir hangi zamanda ordalardı."

resentment. Most of them have already migrated to Christian countries, are leaving, or regret not having left at a younger age. If anything ties them to Turkey, it is the presence of close family members in İstanbul. A young interlocutor who wants to leave Turkey said that he can easily forget his friends in İstanbul and start new relationships in Europe:

> "We will forget friends in Turkey in a few days. If we go there we will work with our brothers. It is not about the economy that I want to leave…It's not because Turkey is not doing well economically. Our relations are there. It is hard for us here. I only have an aunt left in Turkey… Some of my friends want to leave, and others are not like me, they do not want to leave their parents alone. They say that they would go if their parents came along too. But I do not feel that way."[53]

Due to a longer history of presence in the native lands, certain people also have a wider access to local memory and events. The following excerpt from an interview attests to both the presence of local memory, as well as the generational differences in how the past is blocked and recalled:

> "My mother would not tell anything to us. Neither my mom nor my dad would tell us anything. My grandmother was a very wise woman and she would tell us everything. She would sit, and tell and tell. When we were kid we'd say, "why are you telling so much?". And she'd say, "you do not understand now. But when you grow up, you will understand." She was correct, that is how things are. People need to know. I wish I had listened to my grandmother but I did not. But my mom would not tell anything. Neither my mom nor my dad would tell anything… I don't know why they weren't telling. I don't know why, but they would not tell things. It's like that. They would never tell. But my grandmother, she was so wise. She would tell us everything. Do not stray from God's way, she would tell things like that too. Do not lie, do not steal, do not do such and such when you grow up. Do not discriminate people. If you work, be loyal to your state, pay your taxes, do such as such… She would tell so much. She would tell about what happened to them in the past.. [implying the genocide that she had mentioned earlier during our conversation]"[54]

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[53] "bir gün iki gün ondan sonra unuturuz. Oraya gitsek orda çalışçaz abilerle... Ekonomiyle alakası yok ki gitmek istememin. Buranın durumu kötü diye değil. Akrabalar orda. Yani bize zor.burda bir halam var.. Var arkadaşlarım var. Ya kimisi istiyor kimisi diyor ailem da gitse gelirim. Onlar benim gibi düşünmüyor, aileyi bırakmak istemiyorlar. Ama anne babam gelse giderdik diyor. Ama bende o şey yok."

[54] "Annem hiçbir şey anlatmıyordu bize, hiçbir şey anlatmıyordu ne baba ne anne. Babaannem çok bilmiş bir kadındı, herşeyi anlatıyordu. Oturuyordu anlatıyordu anlatıyordu. Biz çocukken diyoruz, "ne anlatıyorsun?" Ama diyor büyünce anlarsın, şimdi anlamıyorsun, büyüyünce anlarsın. Hakkaten öyle. İnsan bilmesi lazım. Ama keşke dedim dinleseydim babanemi ama dinlemedim. Ama annem hiçbirşey anlatmıyordu. Annem babam hiçbir şey anlatmıyordu. Bilmiyorum niye ama

The community living in Turkey cannot be conceived without fear. A person from the community once said "When I see someone in mass that I do not know, I panic. I fear bombs." In another conversation, I witnessed the fact that the church has the right to keep the parking space in front empty, because of possibility of car-bomb attacks. Fear is a part of life to different extents for different people, and often people may not be aware that certain actions are conditioned by fear. Fear has a ghostly presence. Christian communities in Istanbul live with fear and uncertainty about future protections. Even the denial of genocide carries within it a fear of reprisal. Some people shudder with a feeling of having been left out when they see the motto of the Hürriyet, a widely read newspaper, printed in large letters on a building in Dolapdere, "Turkey belongs to Turks". As Sara Ahmed says, fear aligns bodies (Ahmed, 2004:69). The contact of Süryani-Keldani and majority Muslim create an affect of fear, a historically constructed and socially constituted fear, one that comes from interaction and restricts bodies. Fear is evident when a pendant of a big cross is tucked away while stepping outside, when a European double citizenship is secured, or every time people enter the church in İstanbul, atypical because it was converted from a Greek Catholic church, whose community now hardly exists due to evacuations. Fear aligns bodies as to how to behave. And at times of confrontation fear becomes palpable—as when a conflict between two neighbors turns into a confrontation and cautioning to be "ever more careful because you are a foreigner" recited by a Muslim neighbor in response to a domestic problem.

Numerous members of the Süryani-Keldani community from Turkey have applied to European countries for asylum. There are towns in Germany that consist of people who migrated as a whole village as is demonstrated by Armbruster (Armbruster 2002). "I am going to leave, there is nobody left here" utters a young man in his early 20s, reflecting a sense of despair and loneliness. Earlier I mentioned that jouissance around model minority can crack at its corners and cease to function as jouissance. This intimate

anlatmıyordu. Böyledir böyle... hiç anlatmıyordu. Ama babaannem çok bilmiş bir kadındı, herşeyi anlatıyordu. Allahın yolundan çıkmayın, öyle de anlatıyordu. Yalan söylemeyin, hırsızlık yapmayın, büyüyünce bilmem ne yapmayın, insanları ayırdetmeyin. Eee çalışırsan devletine sadık olun, vergini verin, bilmemne yap.. öyle çok şeyler söylüyordu. Geçmişte ne geldiyse onların başına onu söylüyordu." [Katliama değiniyor. Görüşmemizin başlarında katliamdan bahsetmişti]

community is also affected by discourses of model minority, as people often reiterate their loyalty to the state. However, when economic marginality and social marginality are added onto existing institutional inequalities, and in the presence of a very intimate tie to an active diaspora in forms of immediate family members, this group is less able to form a jouissance around the concept of model minority. Discontented and no longer finding self-affirmation in being a loyal minority group, this group is prone to seeking other methods of engagement, such as migration, political activism or a wider engagement with their ethnic identity.

By their presence as model-minority, Süryani-Keldani presence affirms the romantic multi-ethnic illusion of the Turkish state. From the viewpoint of the state, model minority helps produce ideas of a tolerant Turkish state that harbors people of different religions and ethnicities—as long as they remain reliant. However, the discourse of model minority fails when affronted by the question, what happened to the predominantly Christian population of eastern Anatolia? Where did people go? The rhetoric of model minority, and the fantasies built around it, such as that of a romantic multi-ethnic mosaic of Turkey—cracks in the face of massive out-migration of the Christian population and vocalized discontent of minorities. The extensive migrations abroad are a kill-joy of the Turkish national phantasm because they disrupt the national phantasm of a happy multicultural nation, while serving for "Turkification" as people leave their lands as a result of state policy. Migration disrupts the affective state of a 'happy nation' because it entails that not everyone is aligned with particular narratives of joy, that there are people who feel alienated. Migration is the abandonment of the object around which public joy was constructed (Ahmed 2011:37) and a charged site where the contradictions of the nation become manifest (Cheng: 21-22). It also disrupts mechanisms of self-affirmation of the Süryani-Keldani that remain, which is built around being docile, apolitical, calculatedly cultural selves that identify with the dominant Turkish identity. Migration disrupts the formation of an identity around model minority as content and satisfied. In turn it also creates a need within the community that stays a need to constitute its reasons for staying.

Cracking voices have always existed in the community, resulting in forty years of migration and separation of families. However, recently they are shaping in ways other than migration, as epitomized by Dora's election as a member of the parliament. This

has to do both with the astringent visa procedures of European countries who used to admit Christians as political refugees, as well as activisms for minority rights in Turkey. Through Erol Dora, public has witnessed the discontented voices of Süryani-Keldani, which are dissonant both with the public opinion that imagined a homogenous, peaceful and inclusive Turkish identity, and also dissonant with parts of the Süryani-Keldani community who purported unproblematic existence. Economic underprivileges, challenges to learning the native language, challenges to the integrity of religious establishments, such as lawsuits regarding the property of Mor Gabriel monastery,[55] challenges to one's self-confidence that shatters at finding out a brutal history are factors that continue to alienate people. Below is an excerpt from a young interlocutor's discovery of his Christianity and difference, as well his sense of the changing circumstances:

> "We grew up slowly. In primary school, we were still children, up until 6th or 7th grade. After that you start interrogating yourself, even if you are still just a kid. Of course this [discovery] will be more pronounced in the future. It will…it will take certain solid forms in the future, certain perspectives… Certain things, you know, people set milestones. Milestones about who you are, what you are, where you come from, what you want to do. People start solidifying certain opinions. Even though these opinions may not be a hundred percent set in stone, they can still alter, they are still settling. You especially realize this in middle school. Yes, you are living in the Republic of Turkey. You become aware of your sub-identity, you discover it, that sub-identity… for me, it became especially prominent in the last few years, but I realized it first at school. This sub-identity. Otherwise I could have lost it (laughs)... At first, you are like, what language am I speaking? (laughs) Ok, you are living in the republic of Turkey, but this is not Turkish! So little by little you start interrogating yourself, although of course everybody does it differently. It wasn't only me who did this, people around me, relatives, a lot of people engaged in this kind of self-questioning. Then… okay, we're past middle school, it grew stronger in high school. You learn the laws in the country you live in and act accordingly, but... I found out that my sub-identity has disadvantages in this country. For example I am recently finding out from reading a book about minorities that, as it turns out, I have minority rights in this country as per Lausanne Treaty. Now, if I try to exercise these rights, for example open a school to teach Aramaic language, I think that certain people might automatically view me as a separatist. Do you I want these rights, yes I do want these rights, but I also want the proper

[55] Mor Gabriel is a 1600 year-old Süryani monastery and its land came into dispute in 2009. For reference, refer to Baskın Oran's article at http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalEklerDetayV3&ArticleID=1039217

> conditions to be created for me to exercise these rights, you see? In the future, I don't know, I would like my nephews and nieces, and if I have my own children, to learn my language, culture and history, even though we are living in the republic of Turkey, I would still like to learn…"[56]

Süryani-Keldani community also is a part of the diasporic and local minority rights claims. The community has especially been affected by Kurdish rights movements, such as BDP, as evidenced by Dora's nomination and ultimate election as a candidate supported by BDP, a mainly Kurdish party that espouses the recognition of minority identities and rights. Orhan Miroğlu, a Kurdish columnist, politician and author, has written perhaps what has been the first popular book about Seyfo in Turkey, *Affet Bizi Marin*. The community is also inevitably affected by the increasing demands for Armenian minority rights that followed Dink's assassination, which considerably altered the image of Armenians within the public sphere. Political activism, such as the one that led to election of Erol Dora as a representative in the parliament and a spokesman for demanding minority rights, as well as other forms of engagement with an ethnic identity—such as shooting a documentary about the situation of Mor Gabriel

[56] "Yani tabi yavaş yavaş büyüdük. İlkokulda hala biraz çocukluk vardı. İlkokul, nasıl diyelim, altıncı yedinci sınıfa kadar diyelim, xxx yavaş yavaş biraz kim olduğunu sorgulamaya başlıyor insan, hani çocuk da olsa. Tabi bu ilerde gençliğe daha çok yansıcak. Biraz daha... kalıplara oturacak yani. Bazı görüşler olsun... Bazı şeyler hani, bazı temel taşları koyuyor insan. Yani kim olduğunu, ne olduğunu, nereden geldiğini, ne yapmak istediğini. İşte görüşleri biraz daha, yüzde yüz kesin olmamakla beraber hani kesinleştiriyor. Iıı... özellikle ortaokuldayken yani hani biraz daha farkına varıyorsun. Evet, türkiye cumhuriyeti devletinde yaşıyorsun hani, alt kimlik, alt kimliğini keşfediyorsun yani, o alt kimliği... yani... ıı.. ben.. ı.. son zamanlarda biraz daha kendi açımdan ön plana çıktı ama biraz daha okuldayken şey oldu bu yani nasıl diyim, keşfettim yani. Bu alt kimliği. Yoksa gümbürtüde gitçekti (gülüyor)... Iı yani bir kere diyorsun ulan ben nece konuşuyorum (gülüyor) yani hani türkiye cumhuriyetinde yaşıyorsun dilin türkçe değil. o yüzden biraz hani ufak da olsa, ufak tefek hani bu kişiden kişiye değişir ama biraz sorguluyorsun kendini. O sorgu seni işte, yani ben değil sadece benim çevremdeki akrabalarım bir çok kişi belki bunu yaptı. Ondan sonra.. evet ortaokulu geçtik, sonra lisede bu biraz daha gelişti. Ama yine de yani sonuçta yaşadığım türkiye cumhuriyetinde yasaları öğreniyorsun ve ona göre hareket ediyorsun ama. Benim alt kimliğim biraz bu ülkede dezavantajı var çünkü işte yeni yeni öğreniyorum, bir kitap okuyorum mesela azınlıklarla ilgili, orada lozandan meğerse haklarım varmış benim. Şimdi ben bunları kullanmaya çalışsam acaba, nasıl diyim sana, hani aramice öğreneceğim bir okul olsun isterim yani lozandan dolayı xxxx kardeşim.. ama bir takım çevreler düşünüyorum yani beni otomatikmen bölücü olarak görücekler heralde böyle bir şeye kalkışsam. İstemiyorum mu isterim ama koşulların da oluşmasını isterim, anladın mı? Yani ileride bilmiyorum hani belki yeğenlerim belki kendi çocuklarım öğrensin isterim yani dilimi kültürümü (geçmiş?)imi her ne kadar Türkiye cumhuriyetinde yaşasak da isterim yani öğrenmek."

monastery as another interlocutor was passionate about—are ways in which Süryani-Keldani are engaging in novel constructions of self and engagements with their ethnicity. These forms of engagement are forms of resistance against discrimination towards Christian and other minority subjects and histories, and hence grind against the national state ideology that imagined a happy multicultural nation.

3.3. Subjectivities

It is essential at this point that I interrupt ethnographic analysis in order to elaborate on the sort of subjectivity that I am arguing for in trying understand this particular community. Brian Massumi describes the subject as being endlessly capable of potential. His subject is one that can always find the "wiggle room" and maneuver difficult situations:

> Your participation in this world is part of a global becoming. So it's about taking joy in that process, wherever it leads, and I guess it's about having a kind of faith in the world which is simply the *hope* that it *continue*... But again, it is not a hope that has a particular content or end point – it's a desire for more life, or for more to life. (Massumi:242)

According to this conception, the subject is endlessly capable of finding new outlets of self-expression and satisfaction. However, I argue that the possibility of jouissance around the concept of model minority or around a political engagement with one's ethnic identity does not entail that everyone can engage in such self-affirming arrangements. People can fall into despair and resentment. Not everyone can do such psychic gymnastics[57]. Hence the subject is not a free-floating self that ceaselessly manages to seek and find jouissance, as Massumi's defines it to be (Massumi: 214).

On the other hand, in "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud describes the subject as being bound by an endless despair:

[57] Yıldırım, Umut

> The complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound, drawing investment energies to itself from all sides…and draining the ego to the point of complete impoverishment (Freud: 212)

This sort of subjecthood describes a subject who has a constant wound, and this wound drains out all the energy so that the subject is not capable of emancipation or jouissance. Instead, I argue that there are instances when people are able to form jouissance and find self-affirmation, as described in many instances through this paper. People doubt their presence every now and then, some more than others, as when a person days "I'm okay in general. But every now and then I feel very strange". And there are people who are not endlessly capable of finding self-affirmation, and become resentful, such as the young man who has no emotional or social ties to Turkey, nor has many chances of moving out while also remaining in a "legal" status. However, people are capable of meaningful constructions that make life meaningful and in which they can find the strength for emancipation.

Diaspora develops for itself new modes of being, thus complicating the ethnic subject of Süryani-Keldani, forming new intimate communities around other forms of jouissance—such as that of an engagement with Seyfo. Whereas people rarely mention Seyfo in Turkey, Seyfo is the beginning, the undercurrent, and the conclusion of inquiries about the Süryani-Keldani identity in the diaspora. People engage with Süryani-Keldani history and identity, therefore Seyfo, in academics, daily life, in art and music. Biner claims that an engagement with Seyfo is made in an effort to assert a transnational unity and to vocalize a history that has been silenced due to the silencing of genocide (Biner: 368). Research and engagement with Süryani-Keldani identity, which was not imaginable in Turkey, becomes a new concept around which desire forms in the diaspora. People from all over Europe, academicians and lay men alike, gather for a conference on Seyfo. The conference itself, as well as its content, is a way of reconciling the past with the present, as they have been unable to do so for a century, and an attempt to understand the close encounter to death, the pain of lost ones, and why they have lived on.[58]

[58] Unfortunately this study only provides a brief overview of the diasporic communities. For more information, refer to Biner 2011.

4 MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

> He says, [referring to Dora] "Süryani community has been living here for 6500 years; they are natives to this land. And they have problems." But the Catholic Keldani and Orthodox Süryani communities belong to different churches. One doesn't know the other. We do not have anything to do with certain individuals.[59]
>
> *Anonymous letter on Bayer's column*

Having presented the ethnography, I would like to return to the anonymous letter that was published in Bayer's column and the pursuant reply with the knowledge of intimate communities in Turkey and the diaspora. The anonymous letter that was published in Bayer's column reflected the sensitivities of an intimate community of Süryani-Keldani that has understood and accepted its position in Turkey as a model minority, and forms its justification around the concept of being a model minority.

The anonymous author of the letter was uncomfortable about the fact that Dora will join BDP, a predominantly Kurdish party: "A member of the parliament chosen by the proponents of BDP"[60], because s/he feared being cast in the ranks of the Kurdish rights movement. Even though the political party of BDP has many members that are ideologically against violent Kurdish guerilla attacks, the author is afraid that demonstrating support for BDP could be interpreted as being implicated in an armed guerilla struggle, and hence cause disdain, hatred, and incur nationalist racisms from a big part of the nation. S/he fears being cast as divisive people, which was the

[59] "Süryaniler bu bölgede 6500 yıllık tarihleri olan yerli bir halktır. Dolayısıyla onların da sıkıntıları var' diye konuşuyor. Oysa, Katolik Keldaniler ve Ortodoks Süryaniler ayrı kiliselere bağlıdır. Kimin ne olduğu bilinmez. Bizim şahıslarla ilgimiz olamaz."

[60] "BDP yandaşları tarafından seçilen bir milletvekili"

precondition that justified Seyfo in the eyes of the administration. This is why s/he ends the letter by reiterating loyalty to the nation of Turkey, stressing national unity of the Turkish republic, saying that they are content with the liberties in Turkey, and outsourcing what she deems to be the divisive discourse of Dora to the diaspora in Sweden, a community that cannot be persecuted by courts of Turkey.

Hence s/he reflected the fears of a sizeable Süryani-Keldani population, even though s/he disregarded the problems of others, especially those who voted for Dora, and those in Istanbul who might have voted for a similar stance such as Dora's had there been a candidate espousing multicultural rights for the Süryani-Keldani in their electoral districts. In this way, the letter contradicted more actively political modes of existence, and undermined efforts and conditions leading to a call for increased rights, as it reproduced what I have been referring to as the "model minority discourse", conditions and implications of which I tried to explain in the previous chapter. It is also noteworthy that the author currently lives in Sweden. S/he has access to multicultural rights, and still rejects them. Hence s/he expresses the concerns of a group of Süryani-Keldani, whereas that particular community s/he represents is so cautiously apolitical that it chooses not to speak for itself, at least not publicly, but someone who lives in Sweden feels impelled to speak in their place.

Bartuma replied to this letter with an accusation: "Nobody would want to represent these people who doubt their Süryani identity." This reply reflects concerns of yet another community. Compared to the linguistic unity and cultural vibrancy of the Süryani-Keldani community in Europe, certain groups of Süryani-Keldani might appear assimilated. Nevertheless, such an accusation that blames certain Süryani-Keldani for a lack of cultural and ethnic feelings misses out on all the circumstances that lead to assimilation, and denies other forms of Süryani-Keldani identities that have formed around different desires, thus dictatedly insisting on a single identity that might be inconceivable or unrealizable in other circumstances. Therein is evident a shortcoming of multiculturalism and multicultural policies. An attempt to hierarchize people's allegiance to a Süryani-Keldani identity inevitably disregards the desires, self-justifications, and political, economical, and psychological circumstances that lead to different formations and constitutions of self as Süryani-Keldani. Furthermore, when Bartuma criticizes the author for willingly acting as a slave to the Turkish government,

Bartuma does not take into consideration the dangers, uncertainties, the fear, and self-sacrifices that will come along with such rights-claims, and disregards the fact that many people like himself have chosen to leave Turkey instead of staying and getting persecuted while demanding multicultural rights. Such an accusation also forgets that people in Turkey do not have the flexibility of movement abroad that Süryani-Keldani had at one point, and thus might be compelled to justify the reasons for staying by creating a discourse of well-being.

Erol Dora expresses a need for multicultural rights. This was perhaps the first time such a need was announced publicly in Turkey, for and by the Süryani-Keldani population. It was certainly the first time such an issue was addressed by a member of the parliament as a concern of the Süryani-Keldani population. As I have argued before, model minority dynamics have curbed such claims by assuming both a rhetoric of complacency and unproblematic, exemplary citizenship. In order to understand why subdued presence of a model minority contradicts the tenets of multiculturalism, I first refer to the theoretical bases of multiculturalism.

4.1. Multiculturalism

Marshall's theorization of citizenship in terms of political, civic, and social rights (Marshall 1964) assumes a homogenous society and fails to account for cultural rights. Cultural rights often take the form of a desire to learn, speak, publish, broadcast and educate in one's native language, or the freedom to observe and practice one's faith, customs and traditions. Cultural rights are values that a community considers as core values. Often times the inrecognition of these rights creates social and structural problems for the community, such as when kids who have been speaking their native languages at home begin their formal education at schools, in a language they do not understand, which makes them fall behind from the curriculum. The curriculum, shaped by the interests of the majority, presupposes a basic working knowledge of a language that some students may not know. This creates both structural and psychological setbacks. Similarly, curbing of other cultural rights create wider social, economic and political inequalities.

Kymlicka offers the concept of multiculturalism. The main idea underlying multiculturalism is that certain groups need special rights in order to sustain equality. Multiculturalism, as offered by Kymlicka, consists of group-differentiated rights that aim to eliminate the inequalities that arise as a result of cultural difference, which lead to disempowered forms of citizenship—such as failure to be involved in or active discrimination from civic, political, economical and social systems (Kymlicka, 1995:37-8). Multiculturalism dislocates a deterministic materialistic approach that describes proportional assimilation with increasing capital. Kymlicka claims that material wealth fails to ensure the integration of certain groups into the common culture, hence necessitating minority rights and differentiated group statuses in order to overcome existing inequalities and to ensure democratic citizenship (Kymlicka&Norman 4). Multiculturalism also rests on the acknowledgment that the laws and institutions of states are generally geared towards and by the interests of the majority, hence disadvantaging certain minority groups. Multiculturalism demonstrates an attentiveness to the needs of minority groups, who can never have a majority in order to make their voices heard, hence espouses a different understanding of democracy that does not insurordinate minority groups who cannot make their voice heard through majority representation. Multiculturalism stands for the existence of group-differentiated rights for minority groups, who cannot have a majority population in order to address their values and concerns in a democratic system of majority representation.

Multiculturalism defends the existence of a multiplicity of canons, languages, and rights for self-determined groups. It is based on the premise that traditional citizenship, which has been applauded for increasing equality between citizens and through the nation, is not a concept that regards people's rights equally, but rather recognizes and propagates rights of certain groups more than, and at the expense of, other group rights. Some criticisms of multiculturalism are about its tendency to ratify divisions and inequalities along the lines of ethnicity, and thereby dividing the society further, inciting religious and ethnic violence. Nevertheless such a criticism disregards that the current rampant assimilatory practices of citizenship also create widespread inequalities and often result in violence, alienation or migration. Another criticism of multiculturalism, one that concerns this thesis the most, is its tendency to essentialize ethnic identity. This mainly stems from a particular understanding of "culture," which reifies linguistic and ethnic

unity. Essentialization of "culture" in this way results in a hierarchization of the ethnic group, and essentially recreates within the minority community the evolutionist notions of high culture that multiculturalism had initially set out to avert. The hierarchies created as a result of this essentialization caused certain groups to feel alienated in response to Dora's remarks, and therefore claim "Erol Dora is not our representative". It is also this essentialization that gave rise to a notion of high culture that enabled the accusations of "assimilated" and "those who doubt their Süryani identity" in response to differing notions of presence conditioned by differing social, political and economic circumstances.

4.2. Multiculturalism's discontents

Responses surrounding Dora's call for multicultural rights, epitomized by the anonymous author and Bartuma's reply, demonstrate that there are conflicts within the community as to what a Süryani-Keldani identity entails. I have argued that the conditions that lead to conflicts, and therefore the varying conceptions of a Süryani-Keldani identity, are not arbitrary, but are embedded in the historical present, and are guided by psychological, institutional and economic structures. Herein is a critique of multiculturalism as it tends to essentialize group identities in demanding group-differentiated rights. Multiculturalism is a demand for differentiated group rights, and in doing so it assumes ethnic communities to be coherent wholes, which they rarely are. I adopted the concept of intimate communities in order to demonstrate the different points of views and methods of self-affirmation within the community, and referred to theories of affect in delineating the mechanisms at play in the constitution of intimate communities.

In calling for multicultural rights, certain communities hierarchize ethnic identity by creating a vision of a "proper" ethnic subject, hence casting other communities as "lacking", thereby occluding the institutional and psychological circumstances that have lead to the appearance of certain communities as "lacking". A claim for equality spoken in the language of multicultural rights celebrates a particular ethnic identity, one that possesses and defines itself through these ethnic attributes—and creates inner conflicts with people of other Süryani-Keldani intimate communities that have formed

their self-arrangements in alternate ways, thus hierarchizing ethnic identity. This paper attempted to show the multiple formations of ethnic identity that do not always line up with expectations about the definition of a proper ethnic subject. A call for multiculturalism that is premised solely on rights that are due for the restoration of the proper ethnic subject at best neglects, and often accuses other intimate communities for being "assimilated," whereas the reasons for their fall-from-grace is state policy of manipulation in the first place (Povinelli: 48).

My attempt to create an understanding is not meant to equate all existences. People in Turkey might benefit from increased freedoms. Model minority discourse is a discourse of fear. Imaginings of a good, untroubled, unmarked life are a method of survival through creation of jouissance, but they are also a calculated method of fitting in, of staying reliant in the presence of a Turkish ethnographer and in the face of a minority presence in Turkey, and ultimately self-contradictory. People might act and form differently if they were not living in an environment of perpetual fear.

In the first three-quarters of 2011, there have been four threats or attacks aimed towards Christians and Christian establishments in Turkey: In January a group of people protested in Trabzon about the display of a cross, and threatened the church to "take down the cross, or we will take it down". In April, a person threatened a church in İzmir by firing ammunition into the air. Again in April, two people raided a church in Adana, armed with knives, attempting to kill or injure the priest. In May, a farmer attacked a priest for trespassing. This is the precarious environment in which Christians in Turkey find themselves.

Parla points to how recourse to ethnic privilege by post-nineties Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria in their demands for citizenship rights in Turkey hierarchize migrant groups and hampers possibilities for a wider engagement with injustice (Parla 2011b: 82). Similarly, a recourse to construction of a proper ethnic subject in demands for minority rights by an intimate community of Süryani-Keldani hierarchize the Süryani-Keldani community at large, by creating an ideal "Süryani-Keldani" image, and thus undermining subjects who do not live up to its ideal, and bypassing possibilities for a wider engagement against manipulation and subordination that keep Christian and Jewish subjects perpetually uncertain about future safeties.

Dora's election as a candidate is monumental—he is the first Süryani-Keldani ever to be present in the parliament in the history of the republic of Turkey who is outspoken about ethnic rights and ethnic disadvantages. All other minority representatives were nominated on the grounds that they were marked subjects only so far as to advertise Turkey as a happy multicultural nation, and on the account that they do not speak of Turkey's past crimes (Bali: 64). That makes Dora even more important a presence. It might be a step in remaking what it means to be a cultural, religious, and ethnic identity, and an attempt to alter the stigma and suspicion attached to Christian and Jewish populations of Turkey. However, in doing so, one needs to be aware of how ethnic minority rights claims can oppress people even within the same community while trying to emancipate others.

5 FIELDWORK AMONG EXPERTS AND THE CONCEPT OF PARA-ETHNOGRAPHY

- How do you deal with the difficulties of being an outsider?
- By always thinking about it, but also by talking to you.

In a conference regarding the Süryani-Keldani community in the Netherlands, I presented a paper about the difficulties of access while doing research in the Süryani-Keldani community in Turkey by drawing attention to the fact that Seyfo rarely ever occurred in the fieldwork in Turkey, which contrasted significantly with the Süryani-Keldani community that had gathered for a conference in Rijssen to speak specifically about Seyfo. I was having difficulties of access both due to the environment of fear, and also as a result of my position as an outsider to the community. One of the participants in Rijssen asked me how I dealt with the difficulties of being an outsider. Prior to the conference, which was a fieldwork on its own as I was a participant-observer among the Süryani-Keldani academicians from different European countries, all I could do about my outsider status was to keep thinking about it and factor it into my analysis from what I could glean from certain interlocutors. I was vociferously critical of the state in my interactions in Istanbul in order to assure people that I am not working for the government, and also to make them feel safer confiding in me a history that by its nature is an act of resistance. However, presence in the conference in Rijssen, the Netherlands, where people were not afraid to voice and research what had merely been silences or declarations of loyalty to the state in Istanbul, was the most significant method by which I started overcoming the difficulties of being an outsider. I could use what I learned in Rijssen in order to fill in the silences and omissions in the field of Istanbul, as earlier attempted to do while analyzing Dora's speech. Participating as an academician, albeit only one of the couple of non-Süryani-Keldani participants, I was

already an insider in Rijssen. In this chapter I would like to explore the differences of the ethnography conducted in Rijssen, and its contributions to analysis.

Participation in the conference organized by the Inanna Foundation in the city of Rijssen contributed significantly to my research, both by illuminating what had been an elusive history and also by helping me frame my arguments. Inanna Foundation was established in the Netherlands in 2005, with the aim "to contribute to the educational, social, cultural and political development of Assyrian/Syriacs worldwide, with a special emphasis on those in Europe."[61] The conference in 2011 was named "Intergenerational Approach to the Study of Genocide" and specifically intended to document, further research, explore and deal with the political, psychological and social implications of Seyfo. There had been other conferences about Süryani-Keldani culture, language and ethnicity before, but this was the first conference that specifically concentrated on Seyfo. I was anxious to learn about a topic that nobody wanted to mention or talk about in Turkey, or even if mentioned, was followed by declarations of loyalty to the state, a desire to forget, and a sense of surrender: "it shouldn't have happened, but it did, what can we do"[62]. I wanted to hear more about Seyfo from the perspective of Süryani-Keldani, and I was especially curious to hear about the academic research about Seyfo.

Among the participants were genocide scholars, historians, psychologists, philosophers, artists and linguists involved in Seyfo or genocide studies from different countries. The workshop was filmed by SuryoyoTV, a news channel that reports mainly on issues regarding Süryani-Keldani, in order to be broadcasted in the near future in a documentary format. I wanted to be there to find out information that might be relevant for my thesis and also conduct ethnography within the community who live in various European countries. However, the ethnography in Rijssen turned out to have a very different quality than most of the ethnography I had conducted in Turkey.

In Rijssen, we talked about Süryani-Keldani history and issues even over 15 minute coffee breaks, over lunch and dinner, as well as during the conference. People freely and easily confided in me their stories of migration or traumatic experiences they had in

[61] http://www.inannafoundation.org/aboutus.html

[62] "Olmaması gereken birşeydi ama oldu, napalım"

Turkey. They were readily talking and asking about my knowledge of Seyfo, which was minimal. Several people there told me that they were banned from Turkey due to the precarious area of research they conducted, such as engaging in activism around the recognition of Seyfo or being involved in archival projects that found documents that were contradictory to the state narratives of the nation of Turkey.

Nearly everyone was a Süryani-Keldani. I was surprised to find out that even those participants who were born in Turkey and lived there until their teenage years had never returned for a visit, nor had a desire to visit Turkey. It was a sort of ethnography, and quite a condensed one too, as I often refer to it as "thesis camp" because I learned so much in such little time, and noted down a wealth of resources, such as articles on language, history, or knowledge of the existence of MARA, the Modern Assyrian Research Archive, the sort of information that I had not been able to glean from fieldwork in Turkey, and find out about the implications of Seyfo on the population, which was the subject of the conference.

The field in Rijssen was significant in many ways, one of which was the nature of the interlocutors. People who participated in the conference and whom I talked to contributed to the analysis by enlarging its scope and theory. The ethnography that I conducted by participating in this conference was a type of fieldwork that Marcus describes as "para-ethnographic".

5.1. Evolution of Ethnographic Thought and Para-ethnography

In order to see the distinction of the fieldwork I conducted in Rijssen, it is important to review main tenets of anthropology and the evolving concepts of interlocutors, ethnographer and the field over the years. The discipline of anthropology has not ceased to re-evaluate its methodology. Ethnographic inquiry began with the experiential account in which the anthropologist had ultimate ethnographic authority, enabled by her removal from the scene of encounter which legitimized an observational distance that was deemed necessary for ethnographic accounts. The anthropologist, being unfamiliar with the methods of the so-called "natives" observed their actions and tried to deduce the meaning underlying actions. The experiential account was problematic

because it failed to account for the positionality of the anthropologist, whose nature was defined as a tabula rasa by profession. It did not account for the internal meaning-making mechanisms within the community, let alone the influence of political, historical and economic circumstances. Ethnographer's account had ultimate authority.

Geertz introduced the concept of interpretive turn by pointing out the significance of "thick description" (Geertz 1973). He claimed that an experiential account was lacking because at best it saw and noted an eye blink, but it failed to tell apart a wink from a twitch, thus drawing attention to the contextual social information that was needed in order to interpret the meanings of actions. Interpretive analysis was an attempt to attach meaning to the observational data that was specific, circumstantial, and contextual. It tried to understand the meaning of actions in their specific contexts, instead of making claims as to their meanings as experiential anthropologists tried to do. It desired to understand the hierarchy of meaningful structures that guided people's actions. It was able to account for context and meaning. It involved a constant tacking between the emic and etic point of view—isolation of gestures and their contextualization within the community. However, even though it expanded analysis, it still confirmed the authority of the ethnographer as she was still the sole arbiter of culturally meaningful data, and had the ultimate authority to decide what aspects will get recorded into an ethnographical analysis and what aspects shall be discarded.

Interpretive analysis was also lacking because while concentrating on the semiotics of meaning within the community, it failed to account for wider phenomena, such as economic, political and historical circumstances. There was also the problem of accuracy. In 1980s, Clifford criticized interpretive analysis by pointing to its failure inhabit the plurality of voices within the field, and its tendency to reduce experience into the authority and voice of a single observer. According the Clifford, the interpretive technique failed to exhibit the dialogic and intersubjective nature of the experience, and reduced a complex world to serve the purposes of the anthropologist, hence creating a problem of verifiability (Clifford 1983). Clifford thought that there were many other contradictory voices within the field that needed to be voiced, leaving the reader to arrive at her own conclusions, thus challenging the ethnographer's authority. The writing of ethnography needed to reflect the dialogical and polyphonic

aspects of experience, in order to open up the text to multiple interpretations beyond that of the ethnographer.

Marcus describes the characteristics of the last two decades of ethnographic analysis that followed Clifford's intervention of dialogy and polyphony as messy baroque (Marcus 2007). He uses this term in order to demonstrate that recent research has stretched the boundaries and constantly contested the limitations and problems within the discipline of anthropology, however it has failed to overcome the notions that it finds problematic through experimentation. In fact, Marcus demonstrates the similarities of the last two decades of ethnographic writing, and their desire to abide by a "highly symbolic aesthetic" (Marcus 2007:1129) and hence their failure to be experimental in form. For example, the concerns with ethnographic authority that created concepts of dialogy and polyphony have not given rise to a novel way of writing ethnography in which anthropologists share the authority, but rather have given rise to another form of "exemplary" ethnography in which the authority still rests with the ethnographer, an even though multi-sited, it is still the ethnographer that defines and finds the fields of research.

Marcus also is critical of the way anthropology has often tended to look for knowledge by pushing itself into cultural history research and archives, rather than delving farther into the field. Marcus sees a need to pay attention to the networks arising out of the field. Even though messy baroque works describe "amazing dynamic tableaus", according to Marcus, these works often fail to beckon the reader to argue with the ethnographer. Marcus says that these works are not "good tools to think with" (Marcus 2007:1130).

The problem with messy baroque arises not from the fact of textual representation, but from the problematic of research design. Marcus's amendment to what he refers to as messy baroque is an abandonment of the fetish of "being there", by paying attention to other forms of knowledge-production that occur around the field, and also by carrying and finding the off-stage work of archival research in the field. The research design has to embrace globality not simply by being multi-sited, but also by paying attention to the networks of knowledge and knowledge-production that occurs around/about the field. Marcus calls this new research design para-ethnography.

According to Marcus, para-ethnography is an ethnography done among a field of experts in which the traditional interlocutors play a more significant role than merely fitting in or resisting analysis as subjects. Instead of being interlocutors whose function is to be "thickly interpreted" by the anthropologist, in para-ethnography, interlocutors become active participants who engage in their own para-ethnographies, whose authorities, ideas and input shape and contribute to the research design itself, thus altering the nature of the relationship between the ethnographer and the interlocutors. In para-ethnography, the interlocutors become sources of information for the anthropologists, similar in their function to archives and other textual resources that have often served as "data". "Data" has generally been treated as factual sources that ground, accompany, contradict or justify the ethnographic analysis in what Marcus refers to as messy baroque, hence different in their nature to ethnographic subjects that need to be thickly interpreted. Validity of data might be challenged or approved, ideological assumptions might be pointed out, but its epistemic nature is unlike that of an ethnographic subject in the messy baroque. Para-ethnography is an attempt for ethnography to develop its ideas within the field itself instead of through other sources that have traditionally served as data:

> Current messy baroque genre finds its depth offstage not in the space/time of fieldwork, which still gives it traditional authority, but in the archive, in historical material, or accounts that pre-exist it. What I am advocating is to return this source of entanglement with material to fieldwork itself more so than to historical sources, given the interest of anthropologists in working in the contemporary and the temporality of emergence into near and unknown futures. (Marcus 2007:1131)

Marcus says that para-ethnography is possible in a field where the ethnographer and the interlocutor share a "mutual interest of curiosity" (Marcus 2007:1137) and are engaged in a similar process of knowledge production. As an example to para-ethnography, Marcus and Holmes give the example of conducting ethnography in the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) in a collaborative study (Holmes&Marcus 2005).

FOMC is a body of individuals who make key decisions regarding the well being of the market, such as setting interest rates, by acting on a number of quantitative and qualitative data. Marcus and Holmes claim that the FOMC needs to engage in an

understanding of the market itself in order to act on it, and hence key decision-makers in the FOMC are engaged in sort of ethnography of their own field from which they draw important policy decisions (Holmes&Marcus: 246). When an anthropologist enters this field of experts who are engaging in a para-ethnography of the field, she becomes one among many people who are seeking data in order to reach a level of understanding about the field, be it a market or a group of individuals. Hence she is not the sole seeker of knowledge as often happens in messy baroque. Marcus and Holmes claim that this emplacement radically changes the dynamics between the ethnographer and the interlocutor. Interlocutors become key players of knowledge dissemination, similar in their nature to reference books or archives. Interlocutors of para-ethnographies are also seeking knowledge, and not merely presenting themselves to the anthropologists, thereby sharing similar purposes with the anthropologists. Marcus and Holmes refer to this partnership as "epistemic partnership".

5.2. Para-ethnography in Rijssen

The component of my research in Rijssen, among a community of Süryani-Keldani experts who had gathered for a conference about Süryani-Keldani history and particularly the genocide, is para-ethnographic, because it was an engagement with Süryani-Keldani academicians about furthering knowledge about Süryani-Keldani language, history, identity and politics. What marks the difference of this space, as opposed to the rest of the research in Turkey, is the expertise of the subjects on topics regarding specifically Süryani-Keldani. Sometimes expertise is marked by an academic distinction, such as a PhD, and at times by the intuitiveness, reflexiveness or involvement of the subject in the matter of concern.

Fieldwork in such a setting helped me build the foundations of the historical component of the thesis by providing me with a list of resources regarding history of the Süryani-Keldani from their own perspective, which was hard to come by through archival research in Turkey. My conversations with a linguist both helped me clarify the different linguistic trends within the community and its shaping throughout history, as well as the different meaning language has come to represent for the Süryani-Keldani

community in Europe, such as its importance in being a tool of ethnic unification. Another conversation seemed to resolve the ambiguities I was having about the proper way to refer to the community, as I have elaborated in the second chapter through referring to Efrem Yildiz, who thought the proper referral should be "Assyrian-Chaldean", and I argued that "Süryani-Keldani" is a better way to refer to the community in Istanbul, especially because of the connotations the term Assyrian has come to portend. Yildiz's comments made sense and fit in the analysis; however, the field in Istanbul required a further interpretation of Yildiz's method, giving rise to the depiction that I have come to employ in this thesis. This exchange of information with what had traditionally been an interlocutor defines a para-ethnography, an ethnography that drastically alters the nature of the interlocutor, as well as of the information. By its nature, the para-ethnographic information accorded to me by an epistemic partner was already thickly interpreted and contextualized within the political and social field. For example, the centrality of language to the diasporic community happened in the juncture in which the church was blamed for the institutional power struggles that caused ethnic separations. Hence, language had become the medium for claiming an ethnic unity. Equipped with the para-ethnography of a linguist, I could then find more signs that point to the centrality of language to the diaspora—such as the language training course that will be implemented by the Inanna Foundation in 2012, or the distinctiveness of a 17 year old in writing a book in Assyrian.

The para-ethnography of the linguist expert was informative in providing me with an insight into the community. Integrating his analysis into my analysis that arose out of fieldwork in Turkey, I found out that there were major differences between the two communities. First of all, the community in Turkey very much described itself through ecclesiastic membership, such as "a member of the Chaldean Church". The secular, non-religious feeling of being Süryani-Keldani in Rijssen did not exist to the extent that it did in Turkey, because people in Turkey felt a need also to identify with a Turkish national identity. Since religion is the only realm in which certain half-complete liberties are accorded to the community in İstanbul, religion had become the only legitimate basis of claiming any sort of distinction. The rhetoric of model minority clashed with the self-definitions of the community in Rijssen. Para-ethnography allowed me to understand these two basic contrasts between the population in İstanbul and the population in Rijssen. Since the two communities contrasted significantly, the

outspoken desires of a part of European community for an ethnic unification of all Süryani-Keldani worldwide, including the Süryani-Keldani in Turkey, was destined to clash at a certain point.

This impending clash made itself apparent through the reactions towards Dora's election, "Dora is not our representative" versus "Nobody would want to represent people who doubt their Süryani identity." The thesis attempted to describe the community in İstanbul, since that is where most of the fieldwork was conducted. However, knowledge of the outspoken claims of a part of the diaspora, which are real and have a hold in Turkey to some extent, had to be factored into a description of the community in İstanbul. In the fourth chapter I tried to situate and understand both of these remarks, "Dora is not our representative" and "Nobody would want to represent people who doubt their Süryani identity" while also pointing out the ways in which they were both insufficient in speaking about the community at large. It was the para-ethnography that ultimately made such a viewpoint possible.

However, para-ethnography is not simply yet another perspective, or yet another site for the conduct of multi-sited ethnography. Para-ethnography is not just a method of finding analysis in the field, but it also claims the necessity of inserting analysis back into the field. According to Marcus, one of the most fundamental limits of what he often refers to as messy baroque has been the limits of its function. Marcus proposes that the new ethnographic project needs to weave reception back into the field, and develop positions of cultural critique from the emplacement of ethnography within the field (Marcus 2007, p.1133). This move allows ethnography to go beyond being a mere "analytic description for an archive or a reportage for an academic audience" (Marcus 2007, p.1133). Hence ethnography develops a new role, that of mediation between different perspectives. This is essentially why I have persistently referred to the para-ethnography in Rijssen as having been central in developing my ideas and framing arguments for the thesis. It was eventually the conflicting viewpoints and conceptions of what it means to a Süryani-Keldani (or Assyrian, from the perspective of the diaspora) that were made evident by the disagreements over naming and the previously noted dispute. This thesis not only situated itself on these conflicts, but also resolved to put back into the field a kind of knowledge by way of presenting the ethnographic findings of fieldwork in İstanbul to the ethnographic field of the conference in Rijssen.

This was a means of integrating analysis into the field, only to get it back again in the form of a field. Through the ethnography conducted in İstanbul and presence as an expert in the conference in Rijssen, I challenged conceptions of Assyrianism and why they may not be possible in a place such as Turkey, an issue that I have also tried to explain in this thesis. On the other hand, my presence within a field of experts informed me about issues that are central to my own analysis, yet those that I failed to hear, theorize and understand through ethnography in İstanbul, such as the centrality of Seyfo, that made para-ethnography indispensible as a method. It is this complex nature of feedback, challenges and mediations that para-ethnography ultimately stands for.

I did not only learn from these epistemic partners, but I also discussed issues in order to confirm or challenge my knowledge arising out of fieldwork, as well as challenging the field in Rijssen about their ideas of what it means to be a Süryani-Keldani. Unlike the generally one-way information exchange that happens in a messy baroque, my presence in the field of the conference in Rijssen, and presentation of my ethnographic findings was essentially a para-ethnography through the method it emplaced a field within another field, and through its presence it both challenged the field in Rijssen and in turn challenged the field in İstanbul, by factoring each into one another, hence enabling thicker descriptions than what were possible earlier. It was through these meditations that I was able to theorize and situate reactions to Dora's election.

The interaction that took place in Rijssen went beyond mere co-presence and had further implications in terms of knowledge-production. Through her presence within a para-ethnographic field, the expert develops and evolves her ideas, which in turn is reflected in her work. This was the case with me, as what I learned from experts significantly altered this thesis. For example, I understood the differing meaning and significance of language and church, and learned about the ways in which minority rights claims made in the diaspora defined a proper ethnic subject that failed to coincide with the subjects in İstanbul. I learned about the underpinnings of Seyfo that were never vocalized. This was also the case with the other expert participants to the workshop, who learned from what I had to say, such as the conditioning of fear in Turkey and the dynamics of being a "model minority," issues that they no longer need to deal with and hence might not integrate into their analysis while constructing and defending a particular Süryani-Keldani ethnic identity. Hence the distinction between

anthropologists (me) and interlocutors (Süryani-Keldani experts) was made completely murky, as we both taught and learned from each other, and as we all influenced each other's work. The relationship was rather that of an epistemic partnership, each growing her knowledge through the knowledge of the other, each challenging and enlargening the fields of the other, and each factoring one another into the expansion of analysis.

Marcus warns the ethnographers of complicity while doing para-ethnography. Even though the interlocutors and the ethnographer might be interested in knowledge production, they might have different intentions for doing so. Being engaged in knowledge production with experts, it is possible that the ethnographer become too complicit within the agendas of the experts, which in this case is the definition and restoration of an Assyrian identity. I argue that ethnography in İstanbul allowed me to see through the ideological perspectives of the experts within para-ethnography. The experts are implicated within social, political, historical and psychological fields themselves. Intentions of the experts and ethnographers might differ. Experts in Rijssen ultimately shared desires of a certain form of national, ethnic or linguistic unification, a desire that has political connotations, directs research in a particular direction and charts a particular prototypical Assyrian subject. Due to belonging to different churches and living in different countries, language had become the most defining character of being an Assyrian—even though Assyrianism is propounded to be something bigger than language—an ethnicity, a culture, a way of living. Such a view of the proper ethnic subject clashes with the self-imaginings of the community in İstanbul as I studied through ethnography, which is one of the central concepts that this thesis situates itself on, that is, the problems associated with creating prototypical ethnic subjects that often occur in attempts at multiculturalism.

If I had only conducted fieldwork within the community of experts in Rijssen, I would have failed to assess the conditions of the population in Turkey. In wanting to bring into the expert discussions in Rijssen something that they are not thinking of or living under—conditioning of state repression and ensuing environment of fear—I took on a different role, and decided to share my knowledge of the conditions of fear and repression that continue to frame the existences of Süryani-Keldani in İstanbul, by drawing attention to ethnography, such as the fear of bombs, or fearing unfamiliar faces

in church due to the threat Christian subjects of the nation live under, and the numerous attacks on Christian establishments. Most people carefully listened to the things I had to say about the community in Istanbul, and perhaps realized and appreciated the liberties they have abroad. Someone said, "I never want to go back to Turkey again. There are things you cannot say there. I cannot live with that anymore." I looked at the camera and thought that people would fear being framed for their opinions, especially about Seyfo, in Turkey. I tried to explain the conditions that lead to certain modes of behavior, such as reluctance to speak language or insist on minority rights, which eventually lead to forms of existence that an outsider might have defined as "lacking" or even "assimilated" if she failed to realize the affective conditions of the historical present. It is this sort of information that attempted to affect the ideas of the expert field.

The ethnography I conducted in İstanbul was crucial in seeing through the political projects of the experts in Rijssen; meanwhile the para-ethnographic fieldwork with experts in Rijssen helped me understand the ways in which a Süryani-Keldani identity could develop if it had not been for the specific circumstances of Turkey, and more specifically İstanbul. Experts' unified version of what it means to be an Assyrian did not jive with those of others due to extensive political, historical, economical and psychological conjectures, and ethnography in İstanbul allowed me to separate myself from being too complicit within the ideologies of experts, meanwhile helping me understand the ways in which people in İstanbul are restricted as a result of their circumstances. In this way, the experts in Rijssen played a much more different role than being simply interlocutors.

Despite the danger of complicity, para-ethnography was extremely useful in overcoming the difficulties of being an "outsider". Often times in fieldwork in İstanbul I realized that the passage of information was being interrupted as a result of my position as an "outsider" to the community, that is my lack of personal and inherited ties to the church and the community. This was pronounced in the choice of pronouns in people's speeches. The fact of being an outsider has been a constant concern and had to be factored into any exchange. Para-ethnography in Rijssen allowed me to discuss certain things that I had not been able to discuss before. Para-ethnography among experts allowed a professional, as well as contextual and psychological distance to

topics that had been too intimate or political for people in İstanbul to talk about. The workshop I attended in Rijssen was centered around Seyfo. The director of the Inanna Foundation began his introductory speech about the conference by quoting the following excerpt from Primo Levi,

> "Never forget that this has happened.
> Remember these words.
> Engrave them in your hearts,
> When at home or in the street,
> When lying down, when getting up.
> Repeat them to your children.
> Or may your houses be destroyed,
> May illness strike you down,
> May your offspring turn their faces from you."
>
> Primo Levi, *If This is Man*

Seyfo underpins and imprint every sort of scientific inquiry into Süryani-Keldani in Rijssen. This particular perspective on Seyfo was incredibly useful for me because it told me that I need to talk about, discuss and situate Seyfo into my thesis, even though most people in İstanbul had been completely quiet about it. Due to the history of fear and state oppression, and uncertainties about future securities, topics such as Seyfo, a history telling that goes against the national history telling and by its secrecy and inrecognition inevitably are acts of resistance that not everyone wishes to engage in, especially to a person who is not from the community. However, para-ethnography allowed me to situate myself as an academician among other academicians, therefore allowing me access to knowledge production around Seyfo. I could also ask and talk about questions such as, "what does it mean when somebody denies that Seyfo took place?" or "which communities were effected and upon what basis?" Para-ethnography allowed me to deal with the obstacles of having been an outsider by allowing access to information that had not been revealed in fieldwork, but was revealed by the same people's relatives living abroad.

There are experts in Turkey as well, even though they may not have academic titles or

be conducting research about Assyrians in a public way. During my conversations with a Süryani-Keldani who had spent a lot of time in a monastery and researched into the historical and religious past, he mentioned how "there are two different communities as you will notice. People who have moved to Istanbul earlier on and the community that moved to Istanbul very recently". I had made a similar observation earlier on, but to hear it confirmed ethnographically by someone from the community also made my ethnographic authority to talk about that distinction within the community stronger. This is also a perfect example of the changing dynamic in the field of ethnography, while as an anthropologist I rely on the interlocutor's confirmation of the authority of my ethnographic findings, hence redefining interlocutor as an epistemic partner.

5.3. Looking Ahead

I would like to take an aside at this point and engage in some observations and comparisons between the Süryani-Keldani population in İstanbul and Süryani-Keldani population in Rijssen, as well as a preliminary analysis of the hierarchies among minorities in Istanbul. It is important to realize that the following thoughts are musings and possible venues of further research rather than ethnographic findings. In particular, I would like to draw attention to the interaction between and within the community in Europe at large and the community in Turkey, how they induce changes in one another, how they evolve within purview of one another albeit within their own conditions of possibilities, as well as the quintessence of multi-sited research within an interactive community of diasporic populations.

Group of experts in Rijssen have an effect in influencing the community in the diaspora as much as their positions are defined by the conditions of the diaspora. Even though I have not conducted extensive ethnography in the diaspora, the internet searches, websites and online magazines are filled with the Assyrian flag and revived ancient symbols (http://www.nineveh.com/, http://www.bethsuryoyo.com/). The community in Rijssen, even though heterogeneous in itself, is much more vocal about ethnic identity than the population in İstanbul and often imagine mythological ties to the Assyrian empire of Mesopotamia. "I am named after one of the kings of Assyria" This feeling of being heir to the Assyrian empire exists in İstanbul to some level as well, even though it

is not a central part of self-definitions. The secular community in Rijssen often centers unification claims in their possession of a heritage to the Assyrian Empire which is manifest in their allegiance to the language of Suryoyo. The group of experts within which I conducted fieldwork often blamed the historical religious divisions for the ethnic fragmentation of the community, hence were trying to develop a sense of community that is based on language and a unified sense of ethnicity. Lack of religiosity in a part of the community in Rijssen contrasted significantly with the community in İstanbul, where religion was generally quite central to definition of self as Süryani-Keldani, primarily because that is the only cultural right that is accorded to the community officially, also being the basis on which most institutional discrimination centers itself.

Community in the diaspora and community in İstanbul and Turkey influence one another. There is a passage of information, in the form of internet forums and the presence of strong ties to the diaspora in the form of families, and recently in the conference about Süryani-Keldani that is going to be held in Mardin in April 2012 in which experts from Turkey and abroad are going to interact. The exact nature of this passage of information and interaction will only be possible through further multi-sited and para-ethnographic fieldwork. It is this variety of connectedness and embeddedness within the historical present that results in the various and contentious self-depictions, such as Assyrian, Süryani, Süryani-Keldani, or Asurlu.

The community in Turkey also needs to be conceptualized within the context of the ethnic Kurdish movement and active Armenian communities. Several people have voiced the importance of the Kurdish nationalist movement to Süryani-Keldani activism. The Armenian activism regarding the genocide is crucial to the Süryani-Keldani as they have also suffered genocide. Endorsement of Erol Dora by BDP, a Kurdish party, also attests to the unified efforts of ethnic representation on both fronts. However, there are also hierarchies between minority populations. There is resentment within the Süryani-Keldani community about the lack of global knowledge of the Süryani-Keldani component of the massacres of Christians in 1915, and this resentment was especially prominent during the conference in Rijssen. Surely, there is local knowledge of the massacre of Süryani-Keldani, but it has failed to have a global reach such as the Armenian genocide. This is yet another component of how ethnic

hierarchies are created from within, and adds yet another layer to the discourse of model minority. It is important to be cognizant of these networks and hierarchies in ethnographic research, and these hierarchies create an interesting site for further fieldwork. In her work entitled "Retrieving the Dignity of a Cosmopolitan City", Biner talks about the present manifestations of historic inter-communal relationships in the city of Mardin, providing a fascinating account of inter-communal relationships between Muslims, Kurds, Armenians and Süryani-Keldani.

While doing research in İstanbul, I met a few people who were actively involved in the issues of ethnicity and ethnic unity, in a way that went beyond church attendance, and impelled them to take an active role in advancing ethnic rights. Mostly I did not have access to these people, who are either subdued, under cover, or elsewhere. I imagine this attitude to be more pronounced in Midyat and Mardin, who eventually elected a Süryani-Keldani as a member of the parliament[63]. However, in the diaspora in Rijssen I met people who are actively involved in attempting to build an ethnic identity. The widespread applications in Europe to assume the local last names which were changed to Turkish ones by the state of Turkey, and the overt attempts to recover and restore the native language attest to the desire to sustain and build an ethnic identity. In the fieldwork in Rijssen, I gained an understanding of these efforts at ethnic revival, and also developed a sensitive ear to similar attempts in İstanbul, albeit within their own conditions. Hence the fieldwork in Rijssen was informative in helping me lend an ear to such brewing claims and desires in Turkey. Süryani-Keldani community is inevitably influenced by minority rights claims of Kurds. Even though these connections remain unexplored in this thesis, the endorsement of Dora by BDP, a predominantly Kurdish party that represents the need to recognize and democratically engage with minority rights claims, and his election by mainly Kurdish votes—since there aren't enough Süryani-Keldani to elect a member of the parliament of their own—attest to the interactions between these communities.

A multi-sited research with ethnographic and para-ethnographic components allowed me to discern firsthand the globalization and networking of ideas, enabled by the

[63] Election of Erol Dora was possible through his endorsement by BDP, the Kurdish party. Otherwise there are not enough Süryani-Keldani in Mardin to elect a member of the parliament on their own.

internet, travel, geographic and ideological proximity, and the inevitability of a multi-sited ethnographic and para-ethnographic research design to ethnography.

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