

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

The *Süryani* community, with its (approximately) 25.000 members, is a group defined as one of the “non-Muslim minorities” of Turkey. This thesis focuses on Istanbul, where the majority (approximately 17.000) of *Süryanis*¹ live today. Based on in-depth interviews with the members of the community residing in Istanbul, my research aims to shed light on the experience of being a *Süryani* in Turkey today. By both historicizing the relationship between religious minorities and the central state, and pointing to the way state policies towards non-Muslim citizens shape power structures emerging within the community that are often expressed by a sense of claustrophobia by ordinary young people within or on the margins of the community, I problematize the very definition of “minority”² in Turkey. I seek to show how this “minority position” is produced and how this serves both governing within the community and the governing of the community.

In this thesis I will argue that the *Süryani* have been ruled by a patrimonial type of governmentality since the Ottoman period. This broad statement will be qualified in the following way. I shall argue that the patrimonial rule has been changing over time and that since the 2000’s, it has increasingly come under the

¹ This thesis to a great extent focused on the *Süryani* Orthodox people live in İstanbul. But it is worth to emphasize that, especially considering their limited population, there are widespread kinship relationships between the *Süryani* Catholic, *Süryani* Protestant, Chaldean, Nestorian, Armenian and *Süryani* Orthodox families in Turkey.

² I occasionally prefer to use “minority” in quotation marks for the term usually assumes a straight forward relationship between the numerical majority and the indubitable sovereignty of the Turkish-Muslim population. Such a perception of the minority forecloses the very history of “minoritization” of populations through genocides, massacres, forced deportations, conversion, and assimilation. It also remains uncritical towards the on-going reproduction of the national identity to constantly differentiate between the sovereign majority and the “enemy” or the “tolerated” minority.

influence of multicultural discourses and neoliberal forms of rule that have been propagated by the AKP government.

Süryanis have become relatively visible in Turkey's public sphere within the past two decades, through books, articles, news items, documentaries, and TV shows. However the boundaries of this visibility have often been drawn by a liberal multiculturalist discourse far from problematizing the constitutive violence of the nation-state formation.³

Thus, a new mode of representation of *Süryanis* took shape within the context of Turkey's EU accession process, the Kurdish liberation movement, the struggle of activists against racism and discrimination, the ultra-nationalist and the neo-liberal policies of the state. While the lives of non-Muslim population has been slightly improved in terms of practicing their communal rights⁴ guaranteed by the Lausanne

³ For a detailed discussion, see Bilal, Melissa, *Thou Need'st Not Weep For I Have Wept Full Sore: An Affective Genealogy of the Armenian Lullaby in Turkey*, Phd Dissertation Thesis, The University of Chicago, 2013; Bilal, Melissa. *The Lost Lullaby and other Stories about Being an Armenian in Turkey*, MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004.

⁴ For example, in 2002, with the change that has been made by the permission of the Council of Ministers during the E.U. accession process, community foundations were permitted to hold property in order to fulfill their religious, social, educational, cultural, sanitary, and beneficial needs after long years of waiting. Muzafer İris, *Bütün Yönleriyle Süryaniler*, Ekol Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2003, p.18.

Spiritual leader of the community, metropolitan Yusuf Çetin also relates these changes in relation with the AKP government and E.U. adaptation process: *"Ülkemiz kabuk değiştiriyor, hassas bir dönemden geçiyoruz. AK Parti 11 sene içinde çok büyük açılımlar yaptı. Tabii bunda AB'nin etkisi var."* <http://m2.milliyet.com.tr/Columnists/Article?ID=1777116>

In parallel, the chairman of the Board of the İstanbul Syrian Orthodox Church and Foundation Board of Directors, Sait Susin depicts this as a first in the history of the Republic: *"...vakıflarla ilgili yasalar Cumhuriyet tarihi boyunca ilk defa bizim lehimize oldu"; "...son zamanlarda özellikle AK Parti hükümetinin çıkardığı Vakıflar Kanunu'yla gerçekten cumhuriyet tarihi boyunca görmediğimiz haklar verilmiş oldu bütün azınlıklara"*.

With the democratization package that has been declared in 01.10.2013, judicial obstacle before the education in *Süryani* language has been removed and Chairman of the *Süryani* Community Foundation Sait Susin declared that they aim to establish a primary school in Yeşilköy-Bakırköy district of İstanbul which the community's population is densest. -

http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/suryanilerin_ilk_okulu_aciliyor-1153878

It is also said that the land has reciprocally been promised in return for the community representative's denial of the claims of diaspora for the Assyrian genocide and declaration of the peaceful environment in Turkey. Following the rumours, in March, 2013 the metropolitan of the İstanbul-Ankara *Süryani* community, Yusuf Çetin, together with the president of the Turkish Republic Abdullah Gül, went to Sweden for meeting the *Süryani* and Swedish representatives and they indeed declared the peaceful environment for *Süryani* community in Turkey. -

Treaty and the international conventions Turkey signed in the course of the republican history, the violation of these individual and communal rights and freedoms is still the norm in Turkey.

Moreover, within the context of the ongoing war between the Kurdish guerilla and the Turkish armed forces in the region where a small *Süryani* population still survives in its historical home, a “sterile” narrative of the *Süryani* community, defining it as a religious cultural entity rather than a national one conveniently fit into the discourse of the Turkish state. In this respect, public representations of the community usually functioned to promote an image of “national unity, harmony, and peace” in Turkey. Various non-Muslim groups, including Greeks (*Rum*), Armenians, Jews, Levantines, etc. have become part of this discourse in similar and different ways. Although it is not a comparative project, this thesis can also be regarded as a modest step in understanding the similarities and differences in the way the nation-state governs non-Muslim subjects and the way communities are shaped in relation to that governance.

One of the main purposes of this thesis is to problematize the representations of the *Süryani* population in Turkey as a “closed” (*kapalı*) and mysterious community, with an “ancient” (*kadim*) “culture” that is monolithic and static. I argue that the representation of the minority community as a homogeneous entity and the minority subjectivity as an exception to the norm of national subjecthood is constitutive of the production and reproduction of the myth of a homogeneous Turkish nation. The conceptualization of the community’s deviation as religious and “closed” reproduces the national norm as secular and “modern.” The community is

recognized through these otherizing processes that reproduce the nation's phantasm of a "homogeneous culture". The rigid distinction between "the majority as norm" and "the minority as exception" on the other hand, neutralizes the power relations that govern 'minority' lives in Turkey. The ways of speaking about "minorities" in the politics of Turkey often do not problematize the minority/majority dichotomy and cannot offer a "multi-axial understanding of power."⁵ In order to go beyond discourses uninformed by the lived experiences of the people, what this thesis intends to do is an examination of the *Süryani* identity as multidimensional and criticize its conceptualization as a natural, substantial, homogeneous or deviant category.

I try to reveal the power relations within the community in relation to the power relations regulating the relationship between the community and the state. In doing so, I intend to show the way these two forms of power mutually constitute each other. I argue that defining a threatened *Süryani* identity on the verge of extinction by referring to the long history of *Süryanis* in the region, as one of the most ancient civilizations of the world often shadows any discussion of lived experiences of *Süryanis* in Turkey today and the very power relations within the community itself.

This thesis then, sheds light on the experience of being a *Süryani* in Turkey, and in particular in İstanbul, caught between modernity and identity. Since as a member of this community, the tensions around the issue of identity were always/already known to me the main arguments of this thesis were basically shaped

⁵ According to Avtar Brah, "a multi-axial performative conception of power highlights the ways in which a group constituted as a 'minority' along one dimension of differentiation may be constructed as a 'majority' along another. And since all these markers of 'difference' represent articulating and performative facets of power, the 'fixing' of collectivities along any singular axis is called seriously into question." Avtar Brah, "Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities", in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London: Routledge, 1996, p.186.

in the light of my own experiences. Through this experience, what I want to make visible is the silences of the members of a minority community, which is constructed as “closed” and “docile.” These silences are the remonstrations often articulated among friends and known about, but not “heard” by the community’s ruling elite. I take this uneasy silence to be a response to patrimonial rule in the sense that the latter claims to regulate the daily life of its members, especially by trying by all the means available to it to produce the young to marry endogamously. The “Muslim threat” has an important role to play in this as well. Thus, the thesis argues that under forms of patrimonial rule, the distinction between private and public that define modernist forms of rule do not obtain.

My initial research question was focused on the examination of the way the image of the “Muslim” operated as a technology in the reproduction of power relations within the community. The “Muslim” is used as a “threatening outside” against which the community has to close ranks. I try to link this technology to the governance of the community through patrimonial⁶ relationships, and especially to the way the leaders of the community reproduce the state’s discourse about the community. In other words, I try to demonstrate that this image regulates the governance of the community through patrimonial relations, and the formation of an official discourse by community leaders in line with the discourse of the state on the community.

The ethnographic research I conducted for this thesis led me trace a powerful line of critique to the patrimonial power lineage in the community within the

⁶ The term patrimonial refers to Şerif Mardin’s definition in which the image of Ottoman Sultan perceived as a provident father. Şerif Mardin, “Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?” , *Daedalus*, Vol. 102, No. 1, Post-Traditional Societies (Winter, 1973), The MIT Press, p.173.

narratives of the young generation. In order to understand the historical formation of this patrimonial power, in the next chapter I turn to an analysis of the way non-Muslims were ruled in the Ottoman Empire. This thesis in a way, also traces the pre-republican forms of relationships in governing the *Süryani* as a religious difference in the modern Turkish state.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I focus on an analysis of the narratives of the community leaders. I demonstrate that the community is ruled by an analogy of the family equating the community with a large family, community leaders positioned as the fathers of this family. This, I argue, constitutes the basis of patrimonial/patriarchal power relations within the community.

The traditional mediation of the patriarch, as the only institution representing the *Süryani* as a whole community vis-à-vis the Turkish state, reproduces the patrimonial authority upon the *Süryani* subjects. Besides the religious leader, members of the representative council under the roof of the church act as the fathers of the community. Furthermore, the alternative claims to represent the community which are critical towards the existing representatives reproduce these relations of fatherhood in order to prove their ability to represent the *Süryani*. The representatives as fathers assume the knowledge of the proper ways to relate to the state in order to protect best the community/family. Besides, the fathers of the community, as fathers, try to regulate the reproduction of the community. And, endogamy is seen as the most crucial way of ensuring this reproduction. This produces a strong pressure on individuals who seek forms of self-fulfillment not envisaged by the identity dictated by the community leaders.

I also argue that the dominant discourse which enables the “legitimate” representatives to possess the power as fathers, also defines the “ideal” *Süryani* that is at the same time in accordance with the state’s “proper” *Süryani*. This definition at the same time coexists with intra-community contradictions. Far from the state’s and the dominant community leadership’s definition of the community as homogenous, through the critiques of the community by various *Süryanis* we see how the intra-community divisions continued to be present in spite of the gaze of the threatening outside.

Among these divisions we see the opposition between the ethnicist (*Asuri*) and the religious (*Arami*) definitions of the community. While we see the critical representative candidates with ethnicist tendencies have problems related to the “legitimacy” of their status, representatives under the roof of the church do not seem to have such problems. And, even though the ones, as Erol Dora⁷, are critical towards the “state certified” representatives, we see how they, at the same time, reproduce the power relations they criticize. In particular, the critics of elite rule reproduce patrimonial forms of power by laying claim to regulating marriages. Thus, despite the fact that the *Süryani* community is able to produce alternatives to elite rule and show that power struggles within the community are an important aspect of the community’s life, the very process of defining alternatives seem to reveal the main axis along which power relations within the community are constituted. This axis can best be defined by endogamy, which in the end is a way of regulating the intimate lives of the members of the community, a way of keeping them as members of the community, a way of defining the way they imagine their future and their very

⁷Süryani Deputy for Mardin from BDP (Peace and Democracy Party).

subjecthood. It is, in other words, a personal and intimate form of rule. And apart from this, endogamy is also a way of controlling alliances within the community.

The analysis of the narratives of what it means to be a *Süryani* is a way of analyzing the forms of power within the community. The narratives of the community representatives are crucial in this project for they are central in the production of the *Süryani* as a closed and docile population. The patriarchal representation that recognizes the representatives of the community as the fathers of a large family simultaneously corresponds to the reproduction of a *Süryani* identity that is under the threat of extinction. Thus, more the fatherhood becomes a “legitimate” foci of power to decide on the “proper” ways for the survival of the community/family, more the community becomes closed and docile.

The narratives of what it means to be a *Süryani* articulated by the younger generation and the criticisms of the elites they voice are analysed in the last chapter of this thesis. The contours of the young⁸ *Süryanis*' narratives about the community have been formed through the dominant discourse of the community. For that reason, as members of a community that is on the verge of extinction, their “critical” belonging to the community can also be perceived as a response to their restriction within the discursive limits formed by the patrimonial authority. It is therefore not surprising to find that the most trenchant critiques are leveled against the pressure for endogamy. The pressures for endogamy as a crucial strategy of survival within the context of limited resources for survival as a *Süryani* in Turkey seem to be the major concern of the young generation. Young generation's critical approach to the contradiction presented by the threat of extinction on one hand, and the pressure of

⁸ The term youth is used as a synonym of single (or occasionally newly married), in parallel with the official discourse of the church and the dominant discourse of the community.

endogamy on the other, turns marriage, to a traumatic moment that tests one's belonging to the community. While their distaste for the marriage norms targets the community as "abnormal," "pre-modern" or "excessively interventionist," the *Süryani* youth also feel the need of recognition from the community. Furthermore, while their narratives usually do not side against the minoritising policies of the state, the community becomes the losing side in the "ideological" distinction between "modern" and "pre-modern."

Hence, as "proper" *Süryanis*, the youth criticize the community with regard to the patrimonial authority that forms the community. Thus, they open up a domain to critically belong to the community which, at the same time, necessitates a knowledge of where to remain silent. By bringing their experiences and narratives into the discussion, I aim to theorize the silences that have been shaping the *Süryani* subjectivity within the Ottoman-Turkish policy and to examine the limits of critical belonging to the community in the context of the continuities and transformations of the minority regime in Turkey. This will also be an attempt to understand how a religiously and ethnically different community is made and how this obtains a new character under different forms of governmentality in Turkey.

Methodology

Drawing on Foucault's conceptualization of power, this thesis tackles the questions of power and the formation of subjectivities,⁹ state,¹⁰ sovereignty, and

⁹ Subject has two meanings in Foucault's thought: "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to". Ibid, p.212. Following Foucault's analysis of subject and power, I firstly focus on the narratives of the community representatives which were central in the production of the *Süryani* as closed and docile. The patriarchal representation that recognizes the representatives of the community as the fathers of a large family simultaneously corresponds to the reproduction of a *Süryani* identity that is under the threat of extinction. Thus, the fatherhood becomes 'legitimate' foci of power to decide on the 'proper' ways for the survival of the community/family.

governmentality. His definition of government as ‘the conduct of conduct’, which ranges from ‘governing the self’ to ‘governing others’, offers a view on power beyond a perspective that centers either on consensus or on violence; link technologies of the self with technologies of domination, the constitution of the subject to the formation of the state.¹¹ So, these Foucauldian notions enables me to go beyond the majority/minority dichotomy and examine the way the *Süryani* subject is governed in 2000’s Turkey through maintaining patrimonial forms of power relations. This era also corresponds to the governing of the ethnic/religious differences alongside a liberal, multiculturalist discourse.

By analyzing the narratives of *Süryanis* in İstanbul in relation to these patrimonial power relationships, it demonstrates that controlling marriage and reproduction is regarded as the most crucial power position to be held within the community in order to secure its survival. So, endogamic marriage appears as a crucial domain in governing the community and the term governmentality enables us to perceive this ‘foreclosed private sphere’ as political.

The research I conducted for this project consists of nine in depth interviews with the members of the *Süryani* community of İstanbul. I give place in detail to three of my interviewees who were in the position of representing the community¹²

¹⁰ Resting upon Foucault’s conceptualization of power, I approached the dominant discursive formation of *Süryani* subject in its relation with the state. According to Foucault, “the forms and specific situations of the government of men by other men in a given society are multiple, even though they all, in the modern state, refer to the state in the final analysis, not because they are derived from it but because power relations have come more and more under state control.” The church, as the traditional mediator in governing the *Süryani*, has been the central institution in representing the ‘proper’ *Süryani* so that the narratives of the community representatives held a crucial position in revealing the power relations that relate the *Süryani* subject to the state. - Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power”, in *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. ed. by Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p.224.

¹¹ Thomas Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique,” paper presented at the *Rethinking Marxism Conference*, University of Amherst, 2000.

¹² Sait Susin (Chairman of Foundation Board of Directors of the İstanbul Syrian Orthodox Church), Kenan Gürdal (Vice Chairman of the Church Board) and Erol Dora (Deputy from BDP).

and four belonged to the young generation.¹³ Narrative analysis was the primary methodological tool that enabled me to problematize and analyze the data I collected from diverse sources. In addition to these interviews I also analyzed official declarations and published texts by various civil and religious community representatives. Besides the dominant representatives, I also conducted interviews with the alternative voices within the community as Erol Dora, the BDP (The Peace and Democracy Party) deputy for Mardin. But I should add that the relations between the *Süryanis* in Mardin and their representatives are beyond the scope of this project.

During the interviews, I aimed minimum intervention to the flow of the discourse. Young *Süryanis* communicated their problems and concerns related to the community. The issue of endogamy inevitably occupied a central theme in their narratives.¹⁴ Since that, to a great extent, these were the discomforts that I was acquainted with much before beginning to this work, it can be said that, as a young *Süryani*, this study has at the same time been the reconsideration of my own relationship with the community and the state through an examination of the formation of the *Süryani* subjectivity in Turkey.

¹³ Whose ages differed between 30 and 43 (one single-male, one single-female, one married male and one married female). Throughout the thesis, I keep their real names confidential.

¹⁴ It is worth to mention that considering the fact that *Süryani* population in Turkey is dramatically decreased, the issue of endogamy at the same time corresponds to a numerical limit. According to current verbal statements of the metropolitan Yusuf Çetin, 3000 *Süryanis* in İstanbul has been counted as single while the age-range of this estimation is an ‘unknown’.

CHAPTER II:

THE *SÜRYANĪ* IN THE OTTOMAN-TURKISH POLITY

In this chapter, I aim to define the contours of what I have called patrimonial rule and show that this rule has strong historical precedents. I will argue that patrimonial rule has become an important characteristic of the repertoire of rule available to the Turkish state when dealing with religious minorities. I shall show that patrimonial power is a form of rule that is quite flexible and can be adapted to different forms of governmentalities. Thus I will argue that with the development of a multicultural discourse and a neoliberal form of governmentality, patrimonial rule has continued to be exercised. What has changed has been the type of community patrimonial rule has produced.

I shall first discuss what the Süryani are and how this community has been variously defined, how it has become part of the Ottoman system of government and how it has fared since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Lastly, I will look at how the Süryani have been affected by the multiculturalism of the 2000's.

Terminology

Benjamin Trigona-Harany, in his work *the Ottoman Süryani* from 1908 to 1914, argues that the term *Süryani* is etymologically the accurate one for being a cognate of the community’s self-designation and the name of their liturgical language.

Ottoman Turkish	English	Location	Denomination
<i>Süryani</i>	-	West	All
<i>Süryani-I Kadim</i>	Jacobite	West	Syriac Orthodox
<i>Yakubi</i>	Jacobite	West	Syriac Orthodox
<i>Süryani-iCedid</i>	-	West	Catholic
<i>Nesturi</i>	Nestorian	East	Church of the East
<i>Keldani</i>	Chaldean	East	Catholic
-	Syriac/Syrian	All	All
<i>Asuri</i>	Assyrian	All	All
<i>Arami</i>	Aramaean	West	All

Table 1 – Overview of the terminology¹⁵

According to him, “today, the more common term for the Jacobite Church is the Syriac Orthodox Church. But this name implies some connection with the Greek Orthodox Church which does not exist – either administratively or theologically. At the time, the Jacobite Church also did not normally refer to itself as Orthodox in Ottoman Turkish or in Syriac. Furthermore, *Süryani* may be considered something of a secular or ethnic designation since, in terms of a religion; a *Süryani* may be a Catholic, a Protestant or, more commonly, a Jacobite”.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid, p.8.

¹⁶ Benjamin Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Süryani from 1908 to 1914*, Gorgias Press LLC, 2009, p.7.

On the other hand, “the term ‘Assyrian’ is an overarching term that refers to a group of communities, namely the Jacobites, Nestorians and Chaldeans”.¹⁷ Using Assyrian automatically places oneself to one side of an ongoing debate concerning the historical accuracy of considering the present-day Syriac-speaking Christians as the descendants of the ancient Assyrians.¹⁸ “Assyrian was not a term in common usage prior to the arrival of foreign missionaries, and also, in theory at least, it was used in its most encompassing degree: inclusive of Eastern and Western Syriac Christians alike. It is said that, the sudden adoption of Assyrian identity during the nineteenth century suggests outside influence, and this is usually considered to be

¹⁷ Ibid, p.7.

¹⁸ “The main disagreement was over naming. Some argued for “Assyrian” and connected with the mighty and ferocious Assyrian Empire and thus interpreted their misfortunes as stemming from being perceived as a threat by their neighbors. From history, they emphasized the Ottoman massacres of 1895, the genocide of World War I, the 1933 massacres in Iraq, and the “betrayal” at the Paris Peace Conference that did not give them the state they believed they had been promised. The use of Assyrian is normally explained as an umbrella term for ethnic national identity regardless of sect or dialect. Others argued for “Aramaic” identity and connected with their early adherence to Christianity and the probability that Jesus spoke an Aramaic dialect. Thus they interpreted their modern misfortunes to belonging to a religious minority in a Muslim world. The use of this symbolic term, however, does open for union between the various sects, because it argues that all originally spoke the same language.

Those who insist on “Syrian” or “Syriac” identity connect to the territory of the modern state of Syria, where the Syriac Orthodox patriarch resides, and at the same time it rejects solidarity with similar ethnic groups that belong to other sects. They maintain that the Greek geographic term “Syria” was a translation of the Old Testament “Aram”. They also maintain that once the Christian church was established, the word “Syrian” changed to mean Christian pure and simple. At the same time they argue that there can be no continuity with the ancient Assyrians since they had all died out. Instead they claim that Assyrian was a term invented by the British in order to form the Christian youth into colonial troops in order to support British imperialism in mandate Iraq. The Syriac group plays down its misfortunes and accentuates a continuity of orientation with the Middle East.

The main thrust of the Syriac critique is that Assyrians have territorial ambitions and aim at establishing their own state. In response, the Assyrians accuse the Syriacs of being under the thumb of traditional clan chiefs who keep their underlings in a state of ignorance.

The Syriacs who attempt to preserve their traditional inherited leadership roles from the Middle East as clan or village headmen and higher clerics. Historically, one or two leaders of a large clan would function as the sole intermediaries between their group and the Ottoman or Turkish authorities. For this purpose a few boys from good families would learn Turkish and have some schooling, and would ‘represent’ their people in relation to the rulers. These make up a ‘traditional’ social structure that filters contacts with the outside society and rejects assimilation and supports segregation. To a certain extent the traditionalists have an ingrown advantage since the entire group is accustomed to surviving in isolation within a society in which discrimination is widespread and where the state often turns a blind eye to persecution.” – David Gaunt, “Identity conflicts among Oriental Christian in Sweden”; *Cultural Diversity, Multilingual and Ethnic minorities in Sweden*, International Conference 2-3 September 2009 – Stockholm, Sweden, p.5-6.

that of the Catholic and Protestant missionaries and the intellectual activities they sponsored”.¹⁹

Following the massive immigration to Western countries starting from the end of 60ies, debates about the *Süryani* past exacerbated especially among migrated *Süryani* intellectuals. The ones that are prone to laicist ideologies and civil institutions emphasized the common ethnic origin and its relation with ancient Assyrians.²⁰ On the other hand, the ones that are prone to church and its traditional institutions emphasize the common cultural legacy based on Christianity and institute their view on the term “Aramaean” which encompasses different groups like Chaldeans, Assyrians, Aramaeans.²¹

Finally, there are the two English terms which might have been employed: Syrian and Syriac. In Trigona-Harany’s work, these will be common terms used for the Jacobites and Nestorians and all the derivative churches. “Since the confessional allegiances are essentially geographic, Western Syriacs can be understood to be Jacobites and Eastern Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans. *Süryani* is never used for Eastern Syriacs”²².

A Brief Overview of the Literature on the *Süryani*

Studies on Syriac/Assyrian peoples of Mesopotamia before the nineteenth century were mainly Western-centered and their focus were based on manifesting how pervert this sect of Christianity is and it is said that after the acceleration of

¹⁹ “*The Ottoman Süryani...*”, p.16.

²⁰ Yakup Bilge, *Süryanilerin Kökeni ve Türkiyeli Süryaniler*, Zafer Matbaası, 1991, p.136.

²¹ F.Çakı, Ş. Yılmaz, “Kimlik Tartışmaları ve Süryaniler: Bir Literatür Çalışması,” in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay, 2005, Ankara, p.186.

²² “*The Ottoman Süryani...*”, p.8.

imperialist interest in the Middle East, focus on the Syriac/Assyrian studies shifted towards collecting ‘accurate’ data in terms of “balances of power”.²³

Starting from the 60’s we witness a rise of the works that have focused on *Süryani* religion, civilization, history, culture and ethnic roots. In their publications, the common attitude shared by *Süryani* clergyman (as Priest Cebrail Aydın²⁴, Horeipiskopos Samuel Akdemir²⁵, Horeipiskopos -Bishop- Aziz Günel²⁶, Horeipiskopos Gabriyel Akyüz²⁷, Metropolitan Bishop Dolapönü²⁸) and businessmen like Yakup Tahincioğlu²⁹, Kenan Altınışik³⁰) who live in Turkey, is, their emphasis upon *Süryanis*’ loyalty towards the Ottoman/Turkish state as a religious and “harmless” entity. In this vein, Horeipiskopos (Bishop) Aziz Günel, in his book “History of the Turkish *Süryanis*” displays the language, churches and senior religious men of the *Süryani*. In *Süryani* businessman Yakup Tahincioğlu’s book “*Süryanis Who Live in This Land for 5500 Years with Their Culture and Belief*” handles the history, religion, origin, population, migration, etc. of the community.³¹ *Süryani* researcher Yakup Bilge, in his book, focuses on the origins of *Süryani* people, *Süryani* church, separations from the church and the *Süryanis* of Turkey in order to present the community to the Turkish public, in his own words.³²

²³ “Kimlik Tartışmaları ve Süryaniler...”, p.200.

²⁴ Cebrail Aydın, *Tarihte Süryaniler*, Anka Yay., 1964.

²⁵ Horeipiskopos Samuel Akdemir, *İstanbul Mozağında Süryaniler*, Promat Bas. Yay., İstanbul, 2009.

²⁶ Aziz Günel, *Türk Süryaniler Tarihi*, Oya Matbaası, Diyarbakır, 1970.

²⁷ Gabriyel Akyüz, *Tüm Yönleriyle Süryaniler*, Anadolu Ofset, İstanbul, 2005.

²⁸ Hanna Dolapönü, *Tarihte Mardin*, Hilal Matbaacılık Koll. Şti., İstanbul, 1972.

²⁹ Yakup Tahincioğlu, *Tarihleri, kültürleri ve inançlarıyla 5500 Yıldır bu topraklarda yaşayan Süryaniler*, Butik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011.

³⁰ Kenan Altınışik, *5500 yılın tanıkları Süryaniler*, Altan Matbaacılık, İstanbul, 2004.

³¹ Yakup Tahincioğlu, *Tarihleri, kültürleri ve inançlarıyla 5500 Yıldır bu topraklarda yaşayan Süryaniler*, Butik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011.

³² Yakup Bilge, *Geçmişten Günümüze Süryaniler*, Zvi-Geyik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001.

Prof. Mehmet Çelik, the Turkish historian and Islam theologian, in his work “*Süryani History*”³³ also perceives the Süryani as an authentic religious sect (*mezhep*) of Christianity in contradiction to the “National claims” of the diaspora in the first place and the Western-centered claims for perversion of this sect. What he pursues is a history of the *Süryani* through these concerns.

We see a similar attitude in the works of civil servants of the Turkish state (Military College’s educationist as terror expert Aziz Koluman³⁴, Turkish army doctor Kemal Özbay³⁵ and director general of the Prime Ministry Archives, Mithat Sertoğlu³⁶) again in emphasizing the *Süryanis*’ “loyal”³⁷ history and affinities with Turks. In his book “Political and Social History of *Süryani* Turks”³⁸ director general of the Prime Ministry Archives, Mithat Sertoğlu argues for the Turkish origin of the *Süryanis* with an emphasis on the affinity between Turks and *Süryanis*. Turkish army doctor Kemal Özbay in his text “Ancient *Süryanis* and Their Conditions in Turkey”³⁹ shares his observations on the community during his service in Mardin with his praise on the community’s loyalty towards the Turkish state.

There are also in the 90s and 2000s works which belong to *Süryani* and Turkish researchers that criticize the state’s minority policies. For example, Ömer Ergün, at the end of his article “Notion of Minority in Lausanne and *Süryanis*,”⁴⁰ argues for the recognition of the community’s rights for not giving cause to the foreign pressure groups. Similarly, Ahmet Taşğın emphasizes his article “Last

³³ Mehmet Çelik, *Süryani Tarihi*, Ayraç Yayınevi, Ankara, 1996.

³⁴ Aziz Koluman, *Ortadoğu’da Süryanilik*, Ankara: Asam, 2001.

³⁵ Kemal Özbay, *Süryaniler, Kadim Süryaniler ve Türkiye’deki Durumları*, Baha Matbaası, İstanbul, 1975.

³⁶ Mithat Sertoğlu, *Süryani Türklerinin Siyasi ve İçtimai Tarihi*, Baha Matbaası, İstanbul, 1974.

³⁷ In terms of the *Süryanis*’ loyalty to the Turkish-Muslim governments.

³⁸ Mithat Sertoğlu, *Süryani Türklerinin Siyasi ve İçtimai Tarihi*, Baha Matbaası, İstanbul, 1974.

³⁹ Kemal Özbay, *Süryaniler, Kadim Süryaniler ve Türkiye’deki Durumları*, Baha Matbaası, İstanbul, 1975.

⁴⁰ Ömer Ergün, “Lozan’daki Azınlık Anlayışı ve Süryaniler”, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005.

Süryani Migration” that the migration should be prevented for the sake of Turkish culture and economy.⁴¹

While some of these works base their critiques on grounds of the continuation of the Turkish nation state (*devletin bekası*)⁴², others pose the *Süryani* as a fixed ‘religious’, ‘cultural’, et cetera entity.⁴³ I will argue in the following chapters that these discourses that depict the community as a ‘loyal’, ‘cultural’, ‘religious’, ‘numerical’ ‘minority’ are dependent on the Turkish state’s policies on the community.

Finally, Syriac/Assyrian⁴⁴ anthropologist Naures Atto, in her doctorate study “Orphans in the Homeland, Hostages in the Diaspora: Identity Discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac Elites in the European Diaspora”⁴⁵ relates the emergence of new identity discourses to the settlement of Assyrian/Syriac in Western countries. Even though she also partly focuses on the community in Turkey she does not examine the mediating role of the church in the construction of the *Süryani* in Turkey.

It can be said that, considering the lack of sociological studies on the *Süryani* community in Turkey and İstanbul in particular, this thesis might provide a contribution to the related field of study.

⁴¹ Ahmet Taşğın, “Son Süryani Göçü,” in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005.

⁴² Mustafa Bülbül, *Türkiye’nin Süryanileri*, Tasam Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005.; Ahmet Taşğın, “Son Süryani Göçü”; Ömer Ergün, “Lozan’daki Azınlık Anlayışı ve Süryaniler”, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005.

⁴³ Yakup Bilge, *Geçmişten Günümüze Süryaniler*, Zvi-Geyik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001; *Süryaniler: Anadolu’nun Solan Rengi*, Yeryüzü Yayınları, İstanbul, 1991.; *Süryanilerin Kökeni ve Türkiyeli Süryaniler*, Zafer Matbaası, İstanbul, 1991.; T.Bar Şawme, *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Süryanileri*, Nsibin Yayınevi, Södertalje, İsveç, 1991.; J.Bet-Şawoçe, *Türkiye Mezopotamyası’nda Kerboran Zulmü*, Nsibin Yayınevi, Södertalje, İsveç, 1991.; Mehmet Çelik, *Süryani Tarihi*, Ayraç Yayınevi, Ankara, 1996.

⁴⁴ In her narrative it is the widest definition that encompasses all the related communities.

⁴⁵ Naures Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora: Identity Discourse Among the Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora Elites in the European Diaspora*, Phd Thesis, Leiden University Press, 2011

The Governing of Non-Muslims

Ortaylı says, while the equivalent of the term *millet* in Arabic is community-communitas as a religious entity.⁴⁶ According to Shukkink's research, even before the existence of *millets* there was a kind of social organization in which peoples of the region were usually cooperating in building temples, digging wells, farming, protecting fields or reconciling conflicts. It is said that because of the fact that most of the time it was possible to find an influential mediator with enough reputation, tensions between families or conflicts between villages were usually to be allayed.⁴⁷

In Ortaylı's account, social organization of *millets* and individuals' identification with them corresponds to a state of mind and subjects' view on each other.⁴⁸ *Millet* refers to a form of governance that basically classifies of people according to the religious differences⁴⁹ and a religious belonging under the spiritual, administrative, financial authority of the *millet* section that he/she born into.

The spiritual leader was directly responsible for his community under the Ottoman sovereign. The religious authorities acted as mediators between the state and the populace in a way that the religious institutions functioned as an extension of the Ottoman administration. Spiritual leaders of communities are bounded with

⁴⁶For ethnic connotations of the term *kavm* is a more appropriate translation. - İlber Ortaylı, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Millet", TCTA, c.IV, S.32, 1986, p.996.

⁴⁷Jan Schukkink, *De Suryoye – een verborgen gemeenschap, Een historisch-antropologische studie van een Enschedese vluchtelingengemeenschap afkomstig uit het Midden-Oosten*, Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen, Vrije Universteit, Amsterdam (2003), 58-59 quoted in Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.36-37.

⁴⁸İlber Ortaylı, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Millet Nizamı", A.Ü.H.F. Yay., nr. 498, Ankara, 1995, p.92.

⁴⁹Color of hats and shoes for Armenians should have been red, for Greeks, black and for Jews, blue. Non-Muslims were not allowed to make the sign of the cross at the places that Muslims live. They were not allowed to pray loudly, toll the bell (of the church), carry a gun, ride a horse or their houses should not be taller than Muslims' houses. If a Muslim enters a place where non-Muslims sit; non-Muslims should stand up and show their respect. - Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.34.

regulations of the state and have to move in coordination with the state officials.⁵⁰

The leaders were chosen by their community and were able to take their places only after the sultan's approval. Moreover, they were not dismissed until they "betrayed the country" or "behave against the rules of their own community".⁵¹ However the policies of the Ottoman government profoundly affected the social and economic life of the communities, they did not alter the communities' autonomous religious and cultural activities under their spiritual leader's (patriarch, chief rabbi, et cetera⁵²) control.⁵³

This is how many define what they call the *millet* system. According to this system, "the family was recognized as the foundation of the community as well as the chief institution which preserved and transmitted values and culture to the new generations. The system favored the fusion of the family and the community and thus provided a sound basis for the preservation of the grass-roots ethnic identity and customs of a given group through the family" in Karpas's words.⁵⁴

But on the other hand, it is worth to emphasize that it might not be appropriate to use 'millet system' as a non-conflictual, non-ambiguous term since that the governing of the religious groups in the Ottoman Empire was far from depending on a static, fixed system that the researchers of the topic agreed upon.

⁵⁰ Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek*, Klasik Yay., İstanbul, 2004, p.61.

⁵¹ İbrahim Özcoşar, "Millet Sistemi ve Süryani Kadimler", in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, vol.2, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005, p.213.

⁵² In particular, at the head of the Jacobite hierarchy was the titular Patriarch of Antioch, who always took the name İgnatıyus (İgnatius) upon election. The Patriarch was followed in order of precedence by the ranks of bishop (*episkopos*), priest (*keşiş*) and deacon (*şemmas*). At the top level of ecclesiastical administration came the archbishops or metropolitans (*mutran*), of which there were eight in the late Ottoman period. Today, the archbishoprics in the Republic of Turkey number four: the monasteries of Deyrû'z-Zaferan and Mar Gabriyel (both in the province of Mardin); İstanbul; and Adıyaman. Benjamin Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Süryani from 1908 to 1914*, Gorgias Press LLC, 2009, p.95.

⁵³ Kemal H. Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era", in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Holmes and Meier Publishers, New York-London, 1982, p.143.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.143.

It is said that, “in the Ottoman administration the word *millet* did not always have the same meaning that was ascribed to it after nineteenth century. During the Tanzimat years(1839-1876), the system called *millet* became what is familiar from the secondary literature. Prior to this time, the inconsistencies in nomenclature (*cemaat, taife, diyanet* were amongst the terms used) suggests that there were no overall administrative system, structure, or set of institutions in dealing with non-Muslims”.⁵⁵

Moreover, for some historians engaged in the topic, this heterogeneous and semi-mythic system was not the invention of Ottoman rulers. According to one narrative, patriarchate was not an independent institution as Popedom of Roman Empire but was dependent on the Byzantine Emperor. According to this doctrine, head of the church was not the Patriarch but the Emperor. After the Ottomans’ conquest of Istanbul, Patriarch Gennadios, by proxy, agrees with II. (Fatih Sultan) Mehmet for assigning the Greek Patriarchate’s dependency to the Ottoman Sultan and this relationship represented a model for other communities.⁵⁶ “The clergy had control over the church organization, the schools, and the legal and court systems. They administered the extensive church properties, which had the same status as the *vakıf* property. With such economic power, the Orthodox Church enhanced its authority over communities, churches and schools in accordance with its own understanding and interpretation of the original authority invested in it by II. Sultan Mehmet(1451-81).”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Benjamin Braude, “Foundation Myths of the Millet System”, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), p.74.

⁵⁶ Murat Belge, Tarih Boyunca Fener Rum Patrikhanesi, *Birikim*, sayı 71-72, p.162.

⁵⁷ Kemal H. Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era”, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Holmes and Meier Publishers, New York-London, 1982, p.145.

Others emphasize the continuity through Yavuz Sultan Selim's conquest of Jerusalem. According to this doctrine, there was a stable regulation of non-Muslim communities since the rule of Khalif Ömer and the reference to him in the edict that Yavuz gave to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, II.Sarkis⁵⁸ approves this continuity.⁵⁹ Some even relate the existence of the so called system to Sassanid Empire (1500 B.C.).⁶⁰

Tanzimat and the Reform of the *Millets*

With the nineteenth century, the *millets* of the Ottoman Empire experienced the expansion of a centralized unitary form of governmental authority that also reconstituted the relation between the *millets* and the state. The Edict of 1839 was among the corner stones of the evolving relations between the state and the non-Muslims. It “theoretically established a new and direct relationship between the individual and the state based on rights and obligations that stemmed from the individual's status as citizen of the Ottoman state. Ottoman citizenship intended to cut across religious and ethnic boundaries, undermine the *millet's* autonomy and self-rule in cultural and religious matters, which supposed to isolate various ethnic, linguistic and religious communities from the government”.⁶¹

“Now members of millets, above everything else, supposed to be Ottoman citizens whose rights and obligations were determined by the government.”⁶² While

⁵⁸ Since the Greeks left the city after Khalif Ömer's reign, Armenian Patriarch had been recognized as the representative of all the monophysit (Jacobite Syrian, Ethiopian, Copt) communities.

⁵⁹ Canan Seyfeli, “Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslimlerin İdari Yapısı: Süryani Kadim Kilisesi Örneği”, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005, p. 254-257.

⁶⁰ Alford Carleton, ‘The Millet System: For the Government of Minorities in the Ottoman Empire,’ a Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Kennedy School of Missions of the Hartford Seminar Foundation in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1937, p.13-33 – quoted in Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek*, Klasik Yay., İstanbul, 2004, p.36.

⁶¹ “Millets and Nationality...”, p.163.

⁶² Ibid, p.165.

the reforms did indeed bring about the internal reorganization of the millets, they at the same time recognized implicitly that the government was the source of their rights and freedoms. Although, in the old days rights and freedoms were inherent in the millet itself and could not be restricted or changed at will, now these rights and freedoms, even though expanded and guaranteed, were entrusted to the government.

Even though the reform is said to make the millets increasingly subject to governmental control and regulation⁶³, it was a process which also served to bring up further accusations against the government for discriminating and mistreating non-Muslims.⁶⁴ “The millets, in fact, deprived of their traditional autonomy and functions, had become a symbol of dissatisfaction and complaint for the Ottoman government, for the European powers and for many members of the non-Muslim communities, albeit for different reasons.”⁶⁵

Lay Council

According to Karpas “with the Tanzimat, in theory, old practices were to be reformed, but in reality the clergy were by no means stripped of their position. If anything, the *millet* system was reinforced during the Tanzimat and the *milletbaşı*

⁶³ Ibid, p.164.

⁶⁴ After the tolling of the churches’ bell had been set free (which was forbidden except some specific places before) Muslims strongly reacted to it. The anecdote that the chronicler Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi tells, depicts the makeshift state of Tanzimat rules and the Muslim public’s -including state officers- inability to accept the new situation: Christian inhabitants were occasionally bringing some Muslims to the Voyvoda police office in Galata and complaining about the arrested person’s use of the pejorative term *gavur* (infidel) against them. Once the head officer got angry and tells the arrested Muslim man “O son! Could not we tell? From now and then it is forbidden to call *gavur* as *gavur*. I am tired of repeating.” Enver Ziy Karal, *Osmanlı tarihi*, V. Cilt, 1947, p.190 quoted in Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.35.

⁶⁵ “Millets and Nationality...”, p.163.

continued to be the Patriarch, or the Chief Rabbi in the Jewish case, but now with powers backed by law and not merely traditions.”⁶⁶

“Even before the Tanzimat, the laity had had a role in administration whereby the primates –the local wealthy and privileged- were entrusted with providing certain services to the state.⁶⁷ A council of elders (*ihdiyâr heyeti*) had also local responsibilities and helped mediate between the community and the state. At the time, however, the powers of the lay members did not infringe on those of the religious authorities, who were responsible for fundamental matters such as the registration of births, deaths and marriages. In addition, what educational opportunities existed was usually purveyed by the clergy. Besides this civic role, ecclesiastical courts provided a juridical system for matters religious and secular alike, although the local primates would have often been available to mediate disputes before they reached such a stage.”⁶⁸ “Actually, the key feature of the millet reform was to allow laymen, mainly merchants and craftsmen, to participate in the election of their patriarchs and in the administration of the reconstituted millet.”⁶⁹

In Karpat’s view “the nation formation process which reached its acute phase chiefly during the second half of the nineteenth century went hand in hand with the transformation in the concept of authority, together with a series of economic and social changes. Change in land tenure, the administrative reforms, subsequent new responsibilities given to communal leaders, the rise of propertied groups, and a

⁶⁶ Sia Anagnostopoulou, “Tanzimat ve Rum Milletinin Kuramsal Çerçevesi: Patrikhane, Cemaat Kurumları, Eğitim,” in *19. Yüzyıl İstanbul’unda Gayrimüslimler*, ed. Pinelophi Stathis, tr. Foti Benlisoy and Stefo Benlisoy (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p. 9-10 quoted in “*The Ottoman Süryani...*”, p.80-81.

⁶⁷ These local leaders were known as primkur, voyvoda, çorbacı or kocabaşı depending on their location within the Empire and Benjamin Trigona-Harany says that he has not encountered any such terminology that applies to the *Süryani* leaders. “*The Ottoman Süryani...*”, p. 80.

⁶⁸Ibid, p.80-81.

⁶⁹“Millets and Nationality...”, p.164.

certain economic vitality gained by some non-Muslim communities undermined the authority of the clergy and enhanced the power of the lay primates.”⁷⁰ “While the priest acted as the spiritual head of the community and as the intermediary between it and the upper ecclesiastical authorities; the communal leaders at the town level formed the second layer of leadership and enjoyed greater authority and influence. It was not only because of their connection with the higher Ottoman authorities and their own ecclesiastical heads, but also because of their wealth and their responsibility in collecting taxes and supervising the distribution of state lands to cultivators.”⁷¹ “Their power lay in trade and wealth, which they used efficiently, whether dealing with the Ottoman government or with their church and community.”⁷² “They represented the community in its day-to-day dealings with the Ottoman administration and were responsible for order, security, collection of taxes, etc., in the community.”⁷³ “The Christian primates tended to identify themselves with their community and its ethnic culture and religion since their chances for upward mobility into the upper ranks of the Ottoman administration were limited. This situation was a determining factor throughout the centuries and forced the primates to seek achievement and social rewards within their own community.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.143.

⁷¹ Ibid, p.142.

⁷² Ibid, p.158.

⁷³ In the Armenian case, the Armenian Amira class had both an important function and enormous power within the Armenian millet, but these were at the service of the state, and did not enable the amiras to generate policy on their own. Modern Armenian historians, such as Leo, have asserted that “amira capital(ism) constituted a purely Turkish institution, whose raison d’etre emanated from the essential nature of the Turkish Islamic state.” – Leo, *Xojayakan Kapitale ew Nra K’alak’akan-Hasarakakan Dere Hayeri Mej* (Khoja Capitalism and Its Political-Social Role Among the Armenians), Erevan, 1934, p.246.; Amiras’ hope was to preserve the integrity and specific religious-cultural profile of their millet, because their own function within the multireligious and multiracial empire was predicated upon their role as intermediaries between the state and the Armenian millet. To conserve the millet was to conserve the Ottoman Empire, and this in turn guaranteed their own position within the status quo.

– quoted in Hagop Barsoumian, “The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet (1750-1850)”, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982, New York-London, p.180-181.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.154.

Even though they have no place in the official laws of the Turkish republic, the functioning of the laymen and the religious leader as the mediators between the “religious” communities and the state did not come to an end in fact. In contemporary governing of the *Süryani* community in İstanbul, the council of 12⁷⁵, as an institution under the roof of the church, functions in representing the community alongside the Metropolitan. Even though the *Süryani* individuals are directly tied to the state in terms of health, education⁷⁶, taxes, et cetera, they are still represented as *Süryani* through the traditional representative agents recognized by the state. As the church is the sole representative institution that the Turkish state officially recognizes, today this representative position, under the roof of the church, is crucial in mediating the state and also important within *Süryani* community. The church, in its patrimonial form of dependency relationship to the state represents a unique institution in mediating the *Süryani*. And this form of relationship represents an important tradition in governing the community.

But at the same time the community and these representative mechanisms had transformations in their functions which are out of reach of this research. So it is worth to emphasize that the representations of the relations between the community, the church and the state as timeless will be handled as discursive formations throughout the following chapters.

Hamidiye Troops and *Seyfo*

⁷⁵ With its official name ‘Foundation Board of Directors of the İstanbul Syrian Orthodox’. The name of ‘the council of 12’ refers to Jesus’ 12 disciples.

⁷⁶ *Süryani* community at this point represents an exception among the non-Muslim communities of Turkey (namely Armenian, Greek and the Jewish communities). Since it was supposed that the *Süryani* community has not been counted as ‘minority’ in Loussane Treaty, it is deprived of the right on its own schools or hospitals. After recent revelation of the documents of the Treaty and the definition of the ‘minority’ as it encompasses all the non-Muslim groups, a project for the construction of a *Süryani* primary school in İstanbul/Yeşilköy has took start in 2013.

It is said that after the positive response of Western powers upon the prospective Armenia in Berlin Conference of 1878, the Ottoman Sultan II. Abdulhamit gave start for the troops that are composed primarily of Kurdish tribes (and the nomadic Turkmens) to prevent the possibility of a Kurdish uprising alongside the Armenians.⁷⁷ Hamidiye troops are known to commit the wide massacres against the Christian populations of the region.

According to various sources⁷⁸ the genocide was not limited to the Armenians, but included the Syriac Christians living alongside them.⁷⁹ They indicate that in 1915, most of the Christian communities around the region had been massacred, forced to migrate or convert to Islam.⁸⁰ In the memory of the community, the saying “onion is onion” (*soğan soğandır*) refers to the extermination of the *Süryanis* as ‘sweet onions’ together with the Armenians as ‘bitter onions’⁸¹ and *Seyfo*, as the Syriac word for ‘sword’, is a metaphor which encapsulates their

⁷⁷ Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.30.

⁷⁸ İlhan Erdost, Şemdinli Röportajı, 1987, p.39 ; Faysal Dağlar, “Aşiret Alayları”, *İkibine Doğru Dergisi*, sayı 46, 12 Kasım 1989, p.8-13, – quoted in Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, Ayrıntı Yay., İstanbul, 2012, p.45 ; Benjamin Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Süryani from 1908 to 1914*, Gorgias Press LLC, 2009, p.20.

⁷⁹ According to Trigona-Harany, The fate of the Nestorians of Hakkari cannot be said to be part of the same story; for the tribes there did actively participate in the revolt against the Ottoman government in parallel –if not in cooperation–with the Armenians of Van. The close relationship between the Assyrian nationalist and the genocide historiography, however, has contributed to these two separate events being considered as one. The Chaldeans, who live primarily in Iraq and escaped the First World War largely unscathed, did not experience genocide of their own but with a shared Assyrian identity they experience victimhood vicariously through the suffering of the Nestorians and the Süryani in the north.

Not all Chaldeans inhabited in Iraqi provinces of the Ottoman Empire, however. There were Chaldeans in Diyarbakır, Bitlis and Urfa, as well as in Persia. These Chaldeans did share the same fate as the Jacobites and Nestorians, but they were a small demographic minority in comparison. Moreover, the post-war era saw a continuation of fighting in the mandate of Iraq, where Christians fleeing both Persia and the Ottoman Empire had settled; many Chaldeans as well as Nestorian refugees lost their lives. Benjamin Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Süryani from 1908 to 1914*, Gorgias Press LLC, 2009, p.20.

⁸⁰ Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.45.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.45-46.

killings by ‘Muslims’ in the period 1914–1918, primarily in the provinces of Diyarbakır, Bitlis and Mamuretü’l-Aziz and in the sancak of Urfa.⁸²

Indeed, the memorandum that the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Mor İğnatios İlyas III. sent through his delegate Mor Severius Afram Barsaw to the British Foreign Affairs Minister Lord Curson in 1920, says 90.000 Nestorian and 90.000 Syriac Orthodox has been killed by the Hamidiye troops during the I. World War years.⁸³ It is also said that with *Seyfo*, number of Syriac Christians has been decimated by two-thirds.⁸⁴ According to Zerrin Özlem Biner’s study in Mardin, today ghostly memory of the *Seyfo* massacre operates as ‘public secrecy’⁸⁵ in differently ‘defaced’ ways⁸⁶ by Kurds, Arabs and Syriac Christians in a so called ‘multicultural’ era.

Lousanne Treaty and the Status of the *Süryani* Community

Even though, the definition of minority has been specified as ‘non-Muslim’ in Lausanne Treaty, *Süryani* community has not been recognized as a minority group in practice. The minority rights recognized by the Turkish state for Armenians, Greeks and Jews, have not been recognized for the *Süryani* community. Although it is said

⁸²“*The Ottoman Süryani...*”, p.20.

⁸³ Elif Keser, *Tur Abdin*, Tarih Vakfı yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, p.18.

⁸⁴ Naures Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora: Identity Discourse Among the Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora Elites in the European Diaspora*, Phd Thesis, Leiden University Press, 2011, p.84.

⁸⁵ Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

⁸⁶ Describing the indispensable relation of secrecy to power, Taussig argues against the oppositional dichotomy between secrecy and truth. In his view, “there is no such thing as a secret, but it is public secrecy that lies at the core of power.” Taussig refers to the notion of “know[ing] what not to know” and “know[ing] what not to speak.” In his view, “public secrecy stands for a limit vital for the survival of the subjects in their dependency on power and thus, maintains a borderline where ‘the secret is not destroyed through exposure but subject to a different revelation’, while leading to a form of concealment. This way of arrangement of the discourses, she argues, is a way of entering the symbolic discourse of the nation state. Despite their use as strategic tools, these discourses are not only based on meta-narratives; but also on fragmented, contradictory and repetitive narratives that move between past and present, revealing the connections between the unresolved issues of the past and the current power relations between the communities and the state. Zerrin Özlem Biner, “Acts of loss, memory of defacement”, in *History&Memory*, Vol:22, No.2, (Fall/Winter 2010).

that the rights of Chaldean and Nestorian communities –besides above mentioned non-Muslim groups- have been mentioned at sub-commissions during the meetings, there were no records on any discussion on *Süryani* community.⁸⁷ There are rumors about a confidential circular note belongs to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

According to this notice, although they are non-Muslims, *Süryanis*, Chaldeans, Nestorians have not been recognized as minorities.⁸⁸

One narrative on this non-recognition is based on the friendship between Mustafa Kemal and the *Süryani* Patriarch III. İğnatios İlyas: In 2nd of May 1919, when the commander of the French forces Franchet de Esperey asks for the requests of the minority community's spiritual leaders *Süryani* patriarch stands up, hits his stick on the floor and says that “for more than 600 years we lived brotherly with our Turkish compatriots. Favors of the Turks, flow in every particle of our blood. What can we want from them? Their destiny is our destiny too.” Later on, in the opening of the first parliament of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal invites III.İlyas and praise *Süryani* community in his name.⁸⁹ According to some sources, upon Mustafa Kemal's request III.İlyas recalls his minister, metropolis Barsawm from Lausanne.⁹⁰ It is also said that the community leadership declared their loyalty in terms of demanding minority even before the Lausanne.⁹¹ The stories in common represent

⁸⁷ Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.53.

⁸⁸ Baskın Oran, *Küreselleşme ve Azınlıklar*, 4.baskı, Ankara, 2004, p.155. quoted in “Lozan'daki Azınlık Anlayışı ve Süryaniler”, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005, p.250.

⁸⁹ Aziz Koluman, *Ortadoğu'da Süryanilik*, Ankara: Asam, 2001, p.68-69. p.93;

The yearbook of Mardin (Mardin İl Yıllığı 1967: 87 in Dolapönü [Dolabani] 1972: 102) mentions the approving words Mustafa Kemal had to say about Patriarch Elias: “During the Independence War, as a true son of this country, the *Süryani* Patriarch İlyas III, has shown that he is one of its heroes by having taken a combatant stand against the aggressors.” – quoted in Naures Atto, “*Hostages in the homeland...*”, p.93.

⁹⁰ Yakup Bilge, “Süryaniler ve Türkiye'deki Durumları”, *Birikim*, sayı.71-72, p.167.

⁹¹ According to Patriarch's secretary Zakaria Shakir, Patriarch Elias III had three meetings in Ankara with Mustafa Kemal. On 9 February 1923 – prior to his meeting with Mustafa Kemal –Patriarch Elias III was interviewed by Celal Nuri, the owner of the newspaper *İleri* and an MP who was very close to Mustafa Kemal. In this interview, the Patriarch made a statement about his stand on the future position of his community in the Turkish Republic: “So far, the issue of minority rights has entered

the loyalty of the *Süryani*'s spiritual leader to the Turkish state in the name of his community. Through the recognition of the legitimacy of the Turkish state and of the religious leader as the representative of the community, the narrative points out the community as a religious entity with regard to the state's discourse on the community. This also refers to an exceptional position in the sense that the community has neither benefitted from the minority rights nor treated as 'equal citizens'.

It is said that the community representatives 'mistakenly' did not use the minority rights⁹² but it is also argued that the referred refusal was a survival strategy through remaining 'invisible'⁹³. Narration of the story of *Süryanis* in Turkey, in line with the Turkish state, was in parallel with the comparative invisibility of the community among the non-Muslims of Turkey.

Indeed, even though according to the 39th article of Lausanne agreement the non-Muslim citizens have the same civil and political rights with the Muslim citizens, history of the modern Republic witnessed discriminatory practices towards the non-Muslims of Turkey⁹⁴ that led to non-Muslims dramatic disappearance and make the mentioned invisibility strategy intelligible.

neither the minds nor the dreams of the community I represent. We shall protest this very vigorously. I, on behalf of my community, did not make any such demand, nor do I make it now, nor shall I in the future. *Süryaniler* are the minority of the people who live within the boundaries of the *Misak-i Milli* [National Oath]. They merely wish to live together with the majority [Turks] in good times and in bad and to enjoy the benefits of this." - in "Hostages in the homeland...", p.92.

⁹² "Lozandaki azınlık anlayışı ve Süryaniler," p.244.

⁹³ "Hostages in the homeland..." , p.96-97.

⁹⁴ Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.56.

Süryani Migration

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, it is said that ¼ of the country's population and 80 villages of the region called Tur-Abdin⁹⁵ were exclusively composed of non-Muslims.⁹⁶ While non-Muslim population in Turkey today is estimated around 100.000 in total, they are counted with a few thousands in the mentioned region. Even up until the beginning of the 1960ies, it is said that the 90 percent of Mardin's population was composed of Christian populations.⁹⁷

In particular, while in 1985 23.546 *Süryani* residents were living in Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia, in 2001 their population was 2.010⁹⁸ in the region and 15.000 in Turkey.⁹⁹ And today, according to latest numbers 25.000 *Süryani* live in Turkey while around 17.000 of them reside in Istanbul.¹⁰⁰

According to resources as Organisation for Protecting the Peoples Under Threat (*Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker*), *Süryani*'s first arrival to Istanbul was around I. World years. Same resources express the number of *Süryani* population during the II. World War years with a few hundred people. After the 60ies, *Süryani* migration to Istanbul, from Mardin (in the first place), Diyarbakır, Adıyaman, Elazığ, Urfa, Malatya, Antakya, and Siirt got accelerated.¹⁰¹ Their numbers in İstanbul increased from 2000 in 1963 to 14,000 in 1984. Most of them lived there only for a couple of

⁹⁵ Tur Abdin, known as the historical motherland of *Süryanis*, is a region of south east Turkey incorporating the eastern half of Mardin Province, and Şırnak Province west of the Tigris, on the border with Syria. The name 'Tur Abdin' is from the Syriac language meaning 'mountain of the servants (of God)'. - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tur_Abdin

⁹⁶ Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, Ayrıntı Yay., İstanbul, 2012, p.37.

⁹⁷ Murat Öztemir, *Yezidiler ve Süryaniler*, Ekin Yayınevi, 1998, p.36.

⁹⁸ Ahmet Taşgın, "Son Süryani göçü", in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005, p. 78.

⁹⁹ Yakup Bilge, *Geçmişten Günümüze Süryaniler*, Zvi-Geyik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p.99.

¹⁰⁰ M.Şimşek&M.Cengiz Yıldız, "Süryani Cemaatinde Kadın Olmak", in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005, p.231. But it is worth to note that the real numbers is an unknown. According to oral declaration of the general secretary of the Tarlabaşı Süryani Orthodox Church, as the official numbers are unreliable, the church can not claim an exact number either.

¹⁰¹ Bar Sawme, *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Süryanileri*, Nsibin Yayınevi, İsveç, 1991, p.7.

years.¹⁰² According to Bar Şawme, while most of the families with rural origin (Midyat in the first place) later on migrated to Western countries from İstanbul, most of the *Süryani* population in İstanbul today is Mardin (city centre) originated.¹⁰³

The daily language of the *Süryanis* who reside in the city center of Mardin or related villages is the Mardin dialect of Arabic. On the other hand, those who live in Midyat, Nusaybin and İdil speak *Turoyo*¹⁰⁴ dialect of Syriac language as their mother language. In İstanbul, Arabic-speaking *Süryanis* from Mardin stopped speaking Arabic through generations. Except the older generation, Turkish usually became their first language. According to Atto, the *Süryanis* from Mardin probably attached less symbolic value to Arabic than the *Süryanis* who spoke *Turoyo* (or *Suryoyo*) and who nurtured it as their mother tongue.¹⁰⁵

It is also said that most of them are also competent at speaking Kurdish owing to the fact that in some villages of Midyat, the daily language is Kurdish. Although trade and craft are counted as the traditional professions of the *Süryanis* in cities, the ones in villages are said to earn their living with agriculture¹⁰⁶ and animal husbandry.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Naures Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora: Identity Discourse Among the Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora Elites in the European Diaspora*, Phd Thesis, Leiden University Press, 2011, p. 158.

¹⁰³ Ibid, s.9.

¹⁰⁴ *Turoyo*, *Suryoyo* or *Surayt*, is a variety of Aramaic traditionally spoken in eastern Turkey and north-eastern Syria by the Syriac people. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turoyo_language

¹⁰⁵ Atto says, “upon arrival in İstanbul, the first priority of Assyrians/Syriacs was to master the Turkish language quickly. This was among other things an attempt to diminish the chance that they could be picked out as being different from the Muslim majority population and an important precaution against discrimination. Another motivation for learning Turkish was that they associated it with being modern and related to an urban life-style. Those who returned to their village from İstanbul liked to show off their knowledge of the Turkish; displaying their contact with the modern world.” – “*Hostages in the Homeland...*”, p.160-161.

¹⁰⁶ Vinegrowing has an important place within these productions.

¹⁰⁷ Abdurrahim Özmen, *Süryaniler Örneğinde Etnikleştirme ve Etnik Kimlik Görünümleri*, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yay., Ankara, 2005, p.164.

According to *Süryani* researcher Bar Şawme (who also migrated from Mardin to Sweden), *Süryani* people with urban origin were equipped better in terms of hiding their identity and adapting to the metropolitan conditions of İstanbul. In his account, the ones who lived as majority in the provinces and did not get used to hide their ¹⁰⁸ *Süryani* identity experienced far more difficulties under the new metropolitan conditions. The more they could not get used to the new conditions in İstanbul, they formed their expectations with regard to the calls of their relatives who live abroad.¹⁰⁹ But to get used to did not necessarily correspond to economical well being. In one of his interviews with a *Süryani* man who produces plumbing materials, Bar Sawme asks “why does not he go further in his investments in the field of production”? According to Bar Şawme, his answer is a kind of disprove to the correlation between economical status and the migration:

*We do not intend to take root here. We are thinking of to leave just after reaching an economical power that will be sufficient in the places that we will go. So, we are investing our efforts intensely to the areas that can immediately be liquidated when necessary.*¹¹⁰

Bar Şawme’s interpretation of his answer relates migration to the provincial *Süryani* population’s deprivation of the equipments that are necessary to hide their identity as *Süryani* and get adapted to İstanbul. In parallel, Taşğın argues that the real reason for the *Süryanis*’ migration is not the economical prospect but rather the

¹⁰⁸ “*Dünden bugüne...*”, p.21.

¹⁰⁹ Sweden, Germany, USA, Canada, Australia, Argentina, Holland are the countries that today’s Syriac/Assyrian diaspora reside most. The largest number of Syriac/Assyrian diaspora lives in Sweden. According to the estimations more than 100.000 Assyrians live in Sweden including around 40,000 living in Södertälje (Stockholm), which is also known as Mesopotälje (after Mesopotamia). - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Sweden

¹¹⁰ “Bizler burada kök salma niyetinde değiliz. Gideceğimiz yerde bize yetebilecek belli bir ekonomik güce eriştikten sonra, elimize geçen ilk fırsatta gitmeyi düşünüyoruz. Bu nedenle faaliyetlerimizi, gerektiğinde hemen tasfiye edebileceğimiz alanlarda yoğunlaştırıyoruz.” - “*Dünden bugüne...*”, p.21.

hidden contract that assigns the Muslims as superior¹¹¹, so that the non-Muslims cannot ‘take root’.

Even though, in official declarations of the Turkish State the reason for the *Süryani* migration is mainly economical, according to several researchers their relative wealth refutes this argument.¹¹² For example, according to Bar Sawme’s research in 1991, while 60 percent of the *Süryanis* in İstanbul work in their own work place, at least one member of 40 percent of the families work in somebody else’s work place.¹¹³ Same research classifies 5 percent of İstanbul’s *Süryani* population as upper class, 50 percent as upper-middle class, 29 as middle class and 16 percent as lower class in comparison with Turkish average standards.¹¹⁴

Minorities of Turkish Republic

According to the foundational constitution of the Turkish Republic, the definition of Turkishness is as following: “*The people of Turkey regardless of their religion and race would, in terms of citizenship, be considered Turkish*”¹¹⁵. The additional expression, ‘in terms of citizenship’, was something absent in the constitutions before 1924. In Mesut Yeğen’s account, the mentioned surplus becomes clear with a close reading of the official minutes of the time.

The first version of the mentioned article offered as “*The people of Turkey regardless of their religion and race would be considered Turkish*”¹¹⁶. Then Yozgat (Bozok) deputy Ahmet Hamdi Bey opposed to the idea of a Turkishness that includes

¹¹¹ Ahmet Taşğın, “Son Süryani göçü”, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient yay., Ankara, 2005, p.84.

¹¹² Fahri Çakı, Şefik Yılmaz, “Kimlik Tarışmaları ve Süryaniler: Bir Literatür Çalışması”, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Ankara, 2005, p.194.

¹¹³ “*Düünden bugüne...*”, p.9.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p.10.

¹¹⁵ “*Türkiye ahalisine din ve ırk farkı olmaksızın vatandaşlık bağı itibarıyla Türk ıtlak olunur*”- Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk’ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler*, İletişim yay., 2006, p. 99.

¹¹⁶ “*Türkiye ahalisine din ve ırk farkı olmaksızın Türk ıtlak olunur.*” Ibid, p.99.

everyone in Turkey and offered to put the article as “*The people of Turkey who accept Turkish race is called Turkish.*”¹¹⁷ In Yeğen’s words the legislation did not consent for a Turkishness that can be possessed through citizenship. Later on, Hamdullah Suphi, as one of the leading figures of the Turkist current, intervened in the debate:

*It may be an objective to call everybody within our political borders Turkish. Yet, as you see, we have just got out of a very difficult struggle and none of us is in the view that this struggle is over. We say: The subjects of the state, of the Republic of Turkey, are all Turkish. Yet, on the other side, the government strives to fire the Greeks and the Armenians working in the organizations established by the foreigners. When we intend to fire these people for they are Greeks or Armenians, how would you reply if you were told; no, according to the law enacted by your Assembly these are Turkish? The word subjection [citizenship] is not adequate to remove the objective which exists in minds, which exists in hearts. Verbally, we may find an expounding. Yet there is a truth. They can not be Turkish.*¹¹⁸

In the end, the above mentioned formula got accepted just in the same way as Hamdullah Suphi offered.¹¹⁹ It can be said that, even though since the beginning of Republican era, Turkishness could never be ethno-culturally specified, exclusion of the non-Muslim was a precondition and there were no possibility for the non-Muslims to become Turks.¹²⁰ Indeed, during the exchange of populations in 1920ies

¹¹⁷ “*Türkiye ahalisinden olup Türk harsını kabul edenlere Türk ıtlak olunur.*” Ibid, p.99.

¹¹⁸ “*Bütün siyasi hudutlarımız dâhilinde yaşayanlara Türk unvanını vermek bizim için bir emel olabilir. Fakat görüyorsunuz ki, çok müşkül bir mücadelenin içinden çıktık ve hiçbirimiz kalbimizde mücadelenin tamam olduğuna dair bir şey taşımıyoruz. Diyoruz ki: Devletin, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin tebaası tamamıyla Türk’tür. Bir taraftan da hükümet mücadele ediyor, ecnebler tarafından tesis edilmiş olan müessesatta çalışan rumu, ermeniye (sic) çıkarmaya çalışıyor. Biz bunlar rumdur ermenidir diye çıkarmak istediğimiz vakit bize hayır Meclisinizden çıkan kanun mucibince bunlar Türktür derlerse ne cevap vereceksiniz? Tabiiyet kelimesi zihinlerde ve kalplerde mevcut bulunan bu emeli izale etmeğe kifayet etmez. Lâfzen biz bir tefsir bulabiliriz. Maddeye tefsir ile geçilebilir, fakat bir hakikat vardır. Onlar Türk olamazlar.*” Gözübüyük ve Sezgin, 1924 Anayasası Hakkında Meclis Görüşmeleri, p.437 quoted in “*Müstakbel Türk’ten...*”, p.102-103.

¹¹⁹ “*Müstakbel Türk’ten...*”, p.103.

¹²⁰ For Akçam, Turkification was an active process that has been designed by the organizers of the Tanzimat movement, even during Tanzimat (1839-1876) years.¹²⁰ Indeed, according to Ziya Gökalp, by his own definition, the person who brought theoretical base to the Turkist movement: “Leaders of Tanzimat movement wanted to veil the face of Turkishness... None of the elements believed in this lie... After the II. Meşrutiyet more importance has been given to this “eyewash” and non-Muslim elements started to declaim against Turkification. Indeed, Policy of Ottomanisation was nothing but a hidden start of Turkification.” – Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, İstanbul, 1988, p.39-40, quoted in, Taner Akçam, “Hızla Türkleşiyoruz”, *Birikim* 71-72, İletişim Yay., p.23. Moreover, for Bora, the effort to define Turkishness in reference to Islam was a function against a

while the Christian Turks¹²¹ have been sent or were not accepted as newcomer immigrants, the Muslim Greeks have been permitted to settle in Turkey.¹²²

For Bora, in the first years of the republic, rather than an apparent ideological enmity, official ideology's attitude was prone to deny, forget or exceptionalize the non-Muslim minorities.¹²³ On the other hand, through the debates on the constitution of 1924 and after, the perception that has been reflected on to the CHP (Republican People's Party) program was defining the Turkish national identity in relation with "Turkish language" and "Turkish culture" as main components. In his declaration for the newspaper *Vakit* (27th of April, 1925) prime minister İsmet İnönü: "Our mission is to make everyone who lives in Turkish land homogenously Turkish. We will cut and throw away the elements which oppose to Turks and Turkists. If they are to serve the country, the quality we are looking for is Turkishness and Turkism."¹²⁴

Starting from the beginning of the Republic, no non-Muslim citizens have been hired by state offices and through the 788 numbered law on public service, Turkishness became a precondition for being a government official in 1926.¹²⁵ With the law published in 1936 it became possible to levy the properties belong to non-Muslims by the Department of Foundations of that time and it has become forbidden for the foundations of non-Muslim communities to have new properties¹²⁶ and until

possible Kurdish uprising and especially after the Şeyh Sait uprising in 1925, the emphasis upon Turkishness had increased. – "Ekaliyet Yılanları...", p.911.

¹²¹ While Turkish speaking, Christian Turks of Karaman were among the ones who has been forced to migrate out of the country; migration of Turkish speaking, Christian Gagavuz population to Turkey has not been allowed. - Tanıl Bora, "Ekaliyet Yılanarı: Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Azınlıklar", *Birikim* 71-72, İletişim yay., İstanbul, 1995, p.912.

¹²² Taner Akçam, "Hızla Türkleşiyoruz," *Birikim* 71-72, İletişim yay., İstanbul, 1995, p.18.

¹²³ Tanıl Bora, "Ekaliyet Yılanarı: Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Azınlıklar," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 4. (Milliyetçilik), İletişim yay., İstanbul, 2002, p.911.

¹²⁴ Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Füsun Üstel, Karin Karakaşlı, Ferhat Kentel, *Türkiye'de Ermeniler: Cemaat, Birey, Yurttaş*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yay., İstanbul, 2009, p.17.

¹²⁵ Later on the precondition in the same sentence has been changed as "being a citizen of Turkish Republic".

¹²⁶ Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.59.

1940ies non-Muslim citizens have been registered in the “foreigners” section of the citizenship records.

In 1941, non-Muslims have discretely been recruited for the troops called precaution (*ihtiyat birlikleri*).¹²⁷ According to Bora, together with the institutionalization of the (CHP’s) one-party regime, the authoritarian-fascistic tendency gave rise to ethnicist-essentialist vein of nationalism and reached its apex with the Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*) in 1942.¹²⁸ State bureaucracy and industrial bourgeois targeted the non-Muslims as a result of extraordinary profits of the trade bourgeois during the war years. With the application of Wealth Tax in 1942, non-Muslims and converts¹²⁹ forced to pay much more than their Muslim counterparts or to pay their debts through working in camps either.

With the rising tension around the “Cyprus case” in 1950ies, the term Greek (*Yunan*) became valid for using against all non-Muslims in a pejorative sense.¹³⁰ Events of 6/7th of September in 1955 were another apex of the pogrom against all non-Muslims. During the days of political crisis between Greece and Turkey on the issue of Cyprus again in 1965, the prime minister of the time, Suat Hayri Ürgüplü threatened the Greece via non-Muslims of Turkey¹³¹: “Today if one Turk will be

¹²⁷ In the recruitment also known as *20 Kur’a nafıa*, they have been recruited for isolating the risk of their probable ‘betrayal’ in a possible participation of Turkey to the World War II. During the war years they have been used in the construction services. During the service their religious men were responsible for their unity and needs. *Suryanis* were gathered in Manisa, Akhisar. During the 4 off months, most of them fled out of Turkey and this is showed among the important reasons for Süryani migration. Haşim Erdoğan, “Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikalarından Birisi Olan İhtiyat Askerliğinde Süryani Kadimler”, *International Journal of Social Science*, Volume 6, Issue 6, June 2013, p.1422.

¹²⁸ Tanıl Bora, “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar”, *Birikim* 71-72, İletişim Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1995, p.37

¹²⁹ People who converted to Islam from other religions.

¹³⁰ Tanıl Bora, “Ekaliyet Yılanları: Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Azınlıklar,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 4 (Milliyetçilik), İletişim yay., 2002, p.913.

¹³¹ It is said that 59% percent of the damaged workplaces belonged to Greeks, 17% to Armenians and 12% to Jews. It is also said that the shops of the Belarussians, who converted to Islam, have also been looted. - http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/6-7_Eyl%C3%BCI_Olaylar%C4%B1

killed or shed blood in Cyprus, I cannot guarantee what will happen in İstanbul.

Police took the necessary measures to prevent such possible events but such measures have been taken before and I am afraid of another 6-7th of September.”¹³²

The constitutions of 1960 and 1980 were also not exempt from terminological inconsistencies in relation with the definition of Turkishness and citizenship.¹³³ The expression ‘every citizen’ in ordinary article left its place to the expression ‘every Turk’ when it came to the articles about public service and the right to vote and to be voted. According to the 5/j article of the regulation of “protection against sabotages” that has been released in 1988 and remained until 1991 ‘people with foreign race and native foreigners that live in the country’ have been counted among the elements that could sabotage.¹³⁴

Throughout the unending campaigns of ‘national unity and solidarity’ that started from the midst of 40’s, accelerated with anti-communist Cold War ideology and strengthened by the military coup of 1980 and the Kurdish movement, minorities have been continuously marginalized and perceived as powerful enemy figures.¹³⁵ And in Navaro-Yashin’s words, “though each classified minority in Turkey had its own configuration of fate, the non-Muslims always experienced each other’s discrimination by the Turkish state, as they were similarly categorized as ‘non-Turkish’ or ‘foreigners’ in popular discourses”.¹³⁶

All these violent practices led the non-Muslim populations to gradually leave Turkey. In David Gaunt’s chronology, “the first out movement of the non-Muslims

¹³² Rıfat N.Bali, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Azınlıklar Politikası”, *Birikim* 71-71, İletişim Yay., İstanbul, p.84.

¹³³ “Müstakbel Türk’ten...”, p.105.

¹³⁴ “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar”, p.34

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.34.

¹³⁶ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*, Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2012, p.xiii-xiv.

coincided with a large demonstration and a commercial blockade against Christian shops in 1964. This was sparked when NATO warned Turkey not to intervene in the Cyprus crisis, which corresponded to a great anti-non-Muslim reaction in Turkey. The demonstration was organized by local public servants and included military in civilian clothing. Posters were printed saying: ‘This shop belongs to a non-Muslim’¹³⁷ and ‘Turks, don’t shop here’. The anti-non-Muslim sentiments grew into a mass movement in the wake of the escalating Turkish-Greek conflict over Cyprus, the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war 1975, and the declaration of martial law in the military campaign against the PKK guerilla, the military coup of 1980 - all of which intensified the latent anti-non-Muslim sentiments. An attempt to inventory the murders of Assyrians¹³⁸ came to 62 during the period from 1976-2004¹³⁹, of which 12 murders took place in 1990 and 10 in 1993. The victims included six village headmen”¹⁴⁰.

To sum up, the non-Muslims of Turkey were never perceived as elements to be assimilated as the Muslim populations¹⁴¹ but rather they have continually been

¹³⁷ Witnesses of those days also tells that it was written ‘Either half of Cyprus or wife of Bitris’ on the shop of a Süryani man whose name is Bitris. (*Ya Kıbrıs’ın yarısı, ya Bitris’in Karısı*)

¹³⁸ The term ‘Assyrian’ is used by David Gaunt in a way to embrace *Süryanis*, Chaldeans and Nestorians all together.

¹³⁹ According to Gabriel (from Mardin, Midyat)’s account, the state was directly the responsible for the murders: 1989, Fehmi Yazar. “*Bu insan sara hastasıydı ve bu insanı öldüren polisti. Kendi eşinin ve çocuklarının önünde kafasına sıktılar adamın. Kapısının önündeydi, çocuğu da omzundaydı hatta. Midyat’ta öldürdüler. Karısı da çocukları da görüyor vurani. Hatta o polis etrafa da silah sıkıyor. Resmî açıklama: ‘PKK’lı teröristlerle girilen çatışmada Fehmi Yazar şehit oldu.’ Cenazeyi evden çıkardığımız zaman taburdan asker geldi, havaya ateş açtı. Manga töreni yapıldı. Şehit ya...’*”; “*...Bu sırf mesaj vermek içindi. Her ölümün ardından onlarca aile göçtü. Bir yerde de devlet kolaylık sağlıyordu Süryanilerin çıkışına. Bugünkü şartlarda bile pasaport bir günde verilmiyor. O gün torbalarla getirildi pasaportlar. Seyfo’yla bitmeyen halk sessizce çıkıp gitti. Birileri de hızlandırıyor gidişlerini. Uçaklar, otobüsler bizler için çalışıyordu. Onlarca köyümüz vardı. Şimdi boşalmayan üç tane köy kaldı. Üçünde de jandarma karakolu vardı.*”; “*...Öldürülenlerin hiçbirinin mahkemesi yapılmadı*”. Özlem Yağız, D. Yıldız Amca, Emine Uçak Erdoğan, Necla Saydam, *Malan Barkirin: Zorunlu Göç Anlatıları*, Timaş Yay., İstanbul, 2012, p.134.

¹⁴⁰ David Gaunt, “Identity conflicts among Oriental Christian in Sweden”; *Cultural Diversity, Multilingual and Ethnic minorities in Sweden*, International Conference 2-3 September 2009 – Stockholm, Sweden, p.8.

¹⁴¹ According to Mesut Yeğen with the rise of Kurdish movement, starting from the 1990’s, state’s discourse on Kurdishness has been switched from an assimilationist optimism (*müstakbel türk*)

marginalized and forced to leave their homelands.¹⁴² Moreover, as the principle of ‘constitutional equality’ even legitimized the violation of their positively discriminatory rights originated from Loussane treaty, they could not fully and equally benefit from the citizenship rights neither.¹⁴³ They lived as asylum-seekers in between the statuses of minority and citizen. They have been perceived by the state as foreign elements to leave the country sooner or later. And, as a matter of fact, they did it to a great extent.

Governance of Minorities in the era of 2000’s Liberal Tolerance

In his article “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies”, Nikolas Rose basing himself on Foucault’s theory of governmentality, explores the notion of advanced liberal governing. According to Rose, the strategies of regulation that have made up our modern experience of "power" are ... assembled into complexes that connect up forces and institutions deemed "political" with apparatuses that shape and manage individual and collective conduct in relation to norms and objectives but yet are constituted as "non-political".¹⁴⁴ Describing the forms of advanced governmentality in Europe, Rose seeks to differentiate these from the previous forms of governing under a welfare regime: “Although strategies of welfare sought to govern through society, ‘advanced’ liberal strategies of rule ask whether it is possible to govern without governing society, that is to say, to govern through the regulated and accountable choices of autonomous agents -citizens, consumers, parents,

character to an excluding frustration (*sözde vatandaş*). - Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler*, İletişim yay., 2006.

¹⁴² Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Füsun Üstel, Karin Karakaşlı, Ferhat Kentel, *Türkiye’de Ermeniler: Cemaat, Birey, Yurttaş*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yay., İstanbul, 2009, p.21.

¹⁴³ Çağatay Okutan, *Tek Parti Döneminde Azınlık Politikaları*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yay., İstanbul, 2009, p. 298-299.

¹⁴⁴ Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘Advanced’ Liberal Democracies”, in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, ed. by Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, Nikolas Rose, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.37-38.

employees, managers, investors- and to govern through intensifying and acting upon their allegiance to particular ‘communities’.”¹⁴⁵ I take the Süryani community of the 2010’s to be a community in this new sense.¹⁴⁶ It is a community made up of “... the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfillment. Individuals are to be governed through their freedom, but neither as isolated atoms of classical political economy, nor as citizens of society, but as members of heterogeneous communities of allegiance; as ‘community’ emerge as a new way of conceptualizing and administering moral relations amongst persons”.¹⁴⁷

The “advanced” liberal society that I describe for Turkey has slowly come into existence with the assumption of power by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) . When we come to 2000s AKP government, we witness the rise of a discourse that is called ‘liberal conservative’ in a similar way that Rose describes the ‘advanced liberal’ society of Europe. It takes the traditional family/community as the basic unit of the nation to govern the autonomous agents through their regulated and accountable choices. It is the autonomous subject of the nation who is divorced from the welfare state and becomes an ideal citizen not through society but through the allegiance to family/community. Individuals are expected to maintain self-actualization and self-fulfillment within the communities which are expected to reproduce harmonious subjects within the webs of governance. Normalization of the subject and the community became possible through the subjectivation of the family/community in 2000s ‘advanced liberal’ era.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.61.

¹⁴⁶ I assume the mentioned process takes place in time.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p.41.

In this sense, the patrimonial power that we see exercised by the ruling elites of the Süryani community in the present is a form of patrimony that is contemporary. Patrimonial power has been to use the phrase coined by Rose, ‘assembled’, into a complex that includes defining the Süryani as a relic good for tourism, a public/private dichotomy that serves to deny that endogamy is a political issue, and Turkey as a multicultural entity belonging to the world of today.

Members of the *Süryani* community, whether critics or representatives, also emphasize a change in governing minorities in Turkey in relation to globalization and the E.U. accession process. According to one critic, BDP’s independent *Süryani* deputy for Mardin, Erol Dora¹⁴⁸:

*... The world has changed, Turkey is changing, and it has to change. In globalized world, Turkey is a candidate of European Union, making negotiations.*¹⁴⁹

*... we have to recognize these changes and we should also change. We should change in that form of denying ourselves. We should not deny ourselves, we should defend our mother tongue.*¹⁵⁰

*... if we are not exposed to change there would not any benefit to our country, there would not be any benefit to us, too, is the way I think.*¹⁵¹

*... They are living within 1970’s mentality. That is why while we defend our rights it seems like we are against the state. Constitution committee is formed today, sending letters to everyone. Cemil Cicek is crying on the TV: ‘Please come, whether individuals or society institutions, come. What do you want?’*¹⁵²

For Dora the former invisibility policies of the dominant representatives of the *Süryani* community are outdated in the contemporary globalized political

¹⁴⁸ Erol Dora entered parliament in 2011 as the first non-Muslim deputy since 1964 and as the first *Süryani* deputy in the history of the Turkish Republic.

¹⁴⁹ “... dünya değişmiş, Türkiye değişiyor, değişmek zorunda. Globalleşen dünyamızda Türkiye Avrupa Birliği’ne adaydır, müzakere yapıyor.”

¹⁵⁰ “... bizim bu değişimleri algılamamız gerekir ve biz de değişmeliyiz. Ne için değişmeliyiz? Kendimizi inkâr etme anlamında değişmeliyiz. Kendimizi inkâr etmememiz lazım, anadilimizi savunmamız lazım.”

¹⁵¹ “... değişime uğramazsak Türkiye’ye de bir faydamız olmaz, kendimize de bir faydamız olmaz diye düşünüyorum ben.”

¹⁵² “...onlar hala da 1970’lerin zihniyetiyle yaşıyorlar. İşte biz haklarımızı talep ettiğimizde sanki devlete karşı geliyoruz gibi. Bugün anayasa komisyonu oluşmuş, herkese mektup gönderiyor. Televizyondan Cemil Çiçek bar bar bağıyor: ‘Lütfen herkes bireyler olsun, sivil toplum kuruluşları olsun gelin. Ne istiyorsunuz?’”

conjuncture. Now we are face to face with a state that is able and willing to recognize the *Süryani* language and rights. It is possible to struggle for the community's rights in such a state that interpellates its citizens as free individuals. It is argued that such a struggle for the community rights would also benefit Turkey and the democracy besides the community. The new state is not incompatible with the community's rights anymore but rather a struggle for them represents a way of liberty that is harmonious with the state. This state according to Rose's framework corresponds to the advanced liberal government through the free individuals' allegiance to their communities.

The dominant representatives under the roof of the church reproduce the state in similar ways with Dora. For Susin the reason behind the relative improvements on minority rights is just about the 'apertura' (*açılım*)¹⁵³ of Turkey. Turkey for E.U. is on the way to get rid of its exclusive Sunni-Muslim-Turkish identity that excludes the non-sovereign identity systematically:

*Only aperture which is in Turkey... for the issues of European Union negotiations, which Turkey complements unilaterally, the policies which Turkish Republic as Sunni Muslim country has implemented so far, annoyed not only minorities, also Alevi and some of ethnic groups. Turkey attempts to overcome this and step by step continues. They listen to us but they do thing which is likely to happen. For instance, just now, in the sample of that historical book we have not got result so far but it does not mean we would not unless we struggle, raise our voice... I think it is not right to blame only the state here. We also did not raise our voices so far but only for not intend to be known by anybody. We are a closed society. We still see as a closed society. Nobody will interfere to us... Policies which were implemented so far are in that way. But now, people are speaking and telling their nuisances, we start to introduce ourselves, the state start to recognize us.*¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ The term '*açılım*' refers to the constitutional changes in 2010 (that also called democratization package) belong to the era of AKP government.

¹⁵⁴ "*Sadece Türkiye'deki açılım... Avrupa Birliği müzakereleri konusunda Türkiye'nin tek taraflı olarak uyguladığı, Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin Sünni Müslüman devlet olarak şu ana kadar güttüğü politikalarından yalnız azınlıklar değil, Aleviler de, bir takım etnik grupların hepsi rahatsızdı. Bunu aşmaya çalışıyor Türkiye ve adım adım gidiyor. Bizi dinliyorlar ama olabilecek şeyler yapılıyor. Mesela biraz önceki tarih kitabı örneğinde şu ana kadar sonuç alamadık ama bu alamayacağız demek değil mücadele ettiğimiz, sesimizi yükselttiğimiz sürece... Burada yalnızca devleti suçlamak da bence doğru değil. Şimdiye kadar biz de sesimizi çıkarmadık aman kimse bilmesin diye. Kapalı bir toplumuz.*

In Susin's¹⁵⁵ account, the state started to recognize the *Süryani* community in the new era and recognition of the community by the state is the responsibility of the community rather than vica versa. He reminds the responsibilities of the community in its relationship with the state. Thus, Susin's narrative reintroduces the community's dependency to the state through the representative.

His example about the 'books' reiterates the notion of loyalty, a term which defines the relation between a subordinate community and a dominant state. According to the new history books for high schools, the *Süryanis* have not been the victim of the 1915 genocide and what happened was legitimate under the conditions of war since that they have been the enemies of the state as Russia's collaborators.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, they argue that now the *Süryani* community in diaspora becomes an instrument of the enemies of the state through the recognition of the Assyrian genocide.¹⁵⁷ In Susin's account, they, as the representatives of the community, tried to remove this passage from textbooks but they were not successful in their attempt. In his explanation of their inability it was something that 'cannot be done'. In that sense, the Turkish state in his account is an absolute ruler to decide "what can be done" despite the fact that it has victimized the community. Even though the state portrayed as increasingly libertarian, it is at the same time an unquestionable

Hala kapalı bir toplum olarak görüyoruz. Kimse dokunmasın işimize gücümüze bakalım... Şimdiye kadar güdülen politikalar bu şekildeydi. Şimdi artık insanlar konuşuyor sıkıntılarını anlatıyor, biz kendimizi tanıtmaya başladık, devlet bizi tanımaya başladı, görmeye başladı."

¹⁵⁵ The chairman of the Board of the İstanbul Syrian Orthodox Church and Foundation Board of Directors. The board, also known as council of 12. Name of the council is in reference to Jesus' 12 disciples. Since the church is the community's only representative institution recognized by the State, together with the Metropolitan, chairmans of the council represent the community before the State.

¹⁵⁶ For the news about the history books:

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalEklerDetayV3&Date=26.9.2011&ArticleID=1064418&CategoryID=77&CMessageID=909023&CRes=1#>

¹⁵⁷ Assyrian genocide was officially recognized by the Parliment of Sweden on 11 March 2010 (alongside with the Armenians and the Pontic Greeks) and recognized by the Australian Parliament on 1 May 2013(alongside with the Pontic Greeks).

sovereign that the community representative asserts the necessary knowledge to ‘translate’ it.

So, considering the narrative of the President of the Church’s Foundation as the community’s ‘legitimate’ representative, it becomes possible to argue that the traditional dependency relationship of the church to the state is articulated with the liberal, multiculturalist discourses. It is an advanced liberal discourse that still governs through the representative’s reproduction of his community’s loyalty to the state.

Moreover, Gürdal¹⁵⁸, who throughout his narrative reproduces the traditional loyalty to the state, is, meanwhile content with the new discursive tools that provide him the possibility to become publicly a proud part of a mystical and antique culture that adds color to the country:

In addition to this, because of the fact I am a Suryani, everybody started to say “tell me about Mardin”, “Bring me to Mardin”. This is a distinctive proud for me. When I took my friend to Mardin, when he breathed that mystic smell of Mardin, that mystic smell of monasteries, they were very impressed. And nowadays Suryani is not a society to cover itself. On the contrary, when they talk about it, when they bring themselves into forefront, they are seen as inheritors of a five thousand-year old culture. It is as if one looks at an antique statue in a museum. They cannot keep their eyes off you when you come to stage as member of an antique people, not as an antique religion.¹⁵⁹

Recognition of the depoliticized, dehistoricized or ‘sterilized’ cultural rights simultaneously provides a public domain for the *Süryani* representatives to speak

¹⁵⁸Vice President of the Board of the İstanbul Syrian Orthodox Church and Foundation Board of Directors. It is worth to mention that the surnames of all the ‘dominant’ representatives take place in this thesis (Gürdal, Susin, Tahincioğlu, Altınışik, et cetera) can be counted among the elite families of the community.

¹⁵⁹ “*Bunun yanında Süryani olduğumdan dolayı herkes bana Mardin’i anlat, bizi Mardin’e götür demeye başladı. Bu da ayrı bir gurur verici bir durum benim için. Birçok arkadaşımı Mardin’e götürdüğüm zaman Mardin’in o mistik kokusunu, manastırların o mistik kokusunu böyle teneffüs ettiklerinde çok etkilenerek geldiler. Ve bugün günümüze geldiğimizde Süryaniler artık kendini gizleyecek bir toplum değil. Aksine anlattıkları zaman kendini ön plana çıkardığı zaman o kültürün, beş bin yıllık bir kültürün mirasçısı olarak bir gözle bakılıyor. Yani bir müzeye gidersiniz, antik bir heykele nasıl bakıyorsanız antik bir inanç değil antik bir kavmin bir temsilcisi olarak karşınıza çıktığınız zaman size bakmaya doyamıyorlar.*”

within a multiculturalist position which assumes the *Süryani* identity as a source of pride and as an ancient value to be protected. While Gürdal throughout his narrative portrays the community in harmony with the nation state, he defines the *Süryani* as an ethnic culture that is in accordance with the state's discourse of a unified nation. The multiculturalist discourse that furnishes the *Süryani* identity with an antique background to proudly exhibit to foreigners, at the same time forecloses the historicity that led the identity under the conditions to be conceptualized as a museum-like being.

It can be argued that the mentioned pride in Gürdal's narrative can be viewed as a tool of what Rose calls advanced liberal governing that regulates through the accountable choices of autonomous agents as members of the community. It is an advanced governing, in Rose's words, which puts the *Süryani* subject under the surveillance of the state through the subject's own reproduction of a multicultural discourse that embraces the state in allegiance to the community.

On the other hand, it is worth to mention that during the E.U. accession process, the 'protection of minorities' was still at the top of the issues that have been met with resistance by state officials because of "historical reasons"¹⁶⁰ or that Hrant Dink's murderers have still not been punished. In the same multicultural atmosphere, Prime Minister Erdoğan could repeatedly state 'single religion' among the indispensable principles of the state.¹⁶¹ Simultaneously, the anti-semitic, anti-Zionist

¹⁶⁰ According to Erdem, 'there is a mythic and settled mistrust reflected upon the image of non-Muslim related to the Greeks and Armenians' relation with the 'Western powers' especially in the last years of the Ottoman state.' Fazıl Hüsnü Erdem, "Türkiye'de Azınlıklar Sorununun Vatandaşlık Kavramı Bağlamında Genel bir Analizi", in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient Yayınevi, Ankara, 2005, p.280.

¹⁶¹ He counted 'single religion' besides single nation, single state and single flag as the other indispensables. Even though it has been declared that it was a tongue slip, he repeated the same principle in the next two days at Maraş congress (04.05.2012) and at Adana congress (05.05.2012) respectively. - http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/tek_din_dil_surcmesi-1087304

discourses towards Jewishness or perception of Christian minorities as the vanguards of cosmopolitan corruption or as new-crusaders with the face of cultural imperialism keeps reproduced¹⁶² in daily practices of the nation state together as well as with the liberal discourse of tolerance. It is possible to witness the traces of this ‘Islamist tolerance’ towards non-Muslims in the church and synagogue visits the prime minister Erdoğan’s contemporary and former Islamist political parties¹⁶³ periodically undertook. It represents a tolerance in reference to the multicultural Ottoman Empire which the Muslims assumed to be the dominant *millet* (*Millet-i Hakime*).¹⁶⁴

The folkloric interest on minorities leads to the reproduction of the sovereign identity through the discourse of tolerance¹⁶⁵ which subtly reproduces its antagonistic other and renders the social, economic, political depth and historicity of ethno-religious oppression and discrimination invisible. In Žižek’s words, “the multiculturalist respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority”.¹⁶⁶ The assumed reason behind tolerance is the superiority of the tolerant, so even letting them live as museum objects in protected spaces is being presented to them and the outside world as a favor.¹⁶⁷ Such a view that leaves open the transition from tolerance to contempt becomes dependent on the ‘other’s

¹⁶²Tanıl Bora, “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar,” *Birikim* 71-72, İletişim Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1995, p.49.

¹⁶³ ‘*Refah Partisi*’ (Welfare Party) and ‘*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*’ (Justice and Development Party)

¹⁶⁴ The naming of Muslims as *Millet-i Hakime* (the dominant *millet*) and non-Muslims as *Millet-i Mahkume* (captive *millet*) represented the superiority of Islam over other religious communities in the Ottoman Empire. - Mutay Öztemiz, *Süryaniler*, p.34.

¹⁶⁵Tanıl Bora, “Ekalliyet Yılanları: Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Azınlıklar,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 4 (Milliyetçilik), İletişim yayınevi, İstanbul, 2002, p.918.

¹⁶⁶ According to Žižek, “multiculturalism is a racism which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist, he doesn’t oppose to the Other the *particular* values of his own culture), but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged *empty point of universality* from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) properly other particular cultures.” Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism,” in *The Universal Exception*, Continuum, New York, 2006, p.171.

¹⁶⁷ Abdurrahim Özmen, “Süryaniler Örneğinde Etnikleştirme ve Etnik Kimlik Görünümleri”, in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, Orient yay., Ankara, 2005, p.169.

loyalty.¹⁶⁸ And since the non-Muslim subject does not belong to 'us', the expected loyalty is at the same time something that can never be achieved. The positing of the non-Muslim's impossible relation to loyalty also coincides with the state's traditional averseness towards the constitutional protection of minorities.¹⁶⁹ To tie their destiny to the temporary promises of the sovereign, rather than to constitutional rights keeps them under the control of the sovereign within a continual state of exception.¹⁷⁰ The minorities as the potential traitors of the state should be supervised, but at the same time they should be represented in a way to manifest cultural harmony and national unity. This reproduction of the nation at the same time coincides with the manifestation of the superiority of tolerant Turkish-Muslim sovereign identity.

At the same time the mentioned ambiguity on governance of the minorities not just empowers the sovereign state against the minorities, but at the same time bestows a certain power to the state certified representative institutions. The *Süryani* church in our case as the traditional representative of the community becomes capable of interpreting the mentioned ambiguity in a way to possess a patrimonial form of power upon the community/family.

Turkey is a modern state that governs its minority citizens by adapting its pre-modern apparatus of power, the use of the mediation of the representatives as fathers in the name of church/community/family, to the new forms of governmentality developed by Turkish nation-state. This mediation allows the elites to rule as fathers of the minority community. This constitutes a power relationship that corresponds to

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p.170.

¹⁶⁹ Constitutional rights did not necessarily correspond to the protection in practice either.

¹⁷⁰ According to Carls Schmitt's definition the sovereign is 'he who decides the state of exception'. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985, p.5.

the governance of *Süryani* and the institution of the state, the church, the community and the family all at once.¹⁷¹

The *Süryani* individuals, who are immediately subject to the power of the modern state, in terms of health, education, taxpaying, military duty, as members of the *Süryani* community, are to be represented before the state through the mediation of the representatives as patriarch. One of the most important functions of the representative, as father of the community, is to maintain the survival of his family together with the reproduction of the discourse of loyalty to the state, vital for the existence of the community as a distinct community. Alongside the daily public discourse on minorities, representatives help the members of the minorities remember what might happen to them if the state stops protecting them and he places himself a mediating position to guide the community to survive. In other words, his discourse places fatherhood in a vital relationship with the reproduction of the community that is at all moments at the throes of being extinguished. So, the ‘modern’ *Süryani* subject has become regulated through the discourse of fear¹⁷² that the state certified community patriarch reproduces. Likewise, as it is mentioned, we witness the state’s traditional tendency to leave the destiny of minorities in between

¹⁷¹ According to Foucault, “*in contemporary societies the state is not simply one of the forms or specific situations of the exercise of power -even if it is the most important- but that in a certain way all other forms of power relation must refer to it. But this is not because they are derived from it; it is rather because power relations have come more and more under state control (although this state control has not taken the same form in pedagogical, juridical, economic, or family systems). In referring here to the restricted sense of the word ‘government,’ one could say that power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions.*” – Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.8, No.4, Summer, 1982, p.793.

¹⁷² Indeed, *Süryani* interviewees still assume exile or a pogrom can still befall on them. Even if it is not expressed directly, it is possible to witness it as a latent assumption which appears in their narratives on establishing proper relations with the state or on nightmares of ‘Muslim attacks’. According to Gabriel “*Türkiye’de hiçbir Hristiyan’ın hayatı garanti değildir, yarını yoktur. Ama kalanlar kaçışın da çare olmadığını biliyor, ondan kalıyor. Burada hiç olmazsa kilisemize bağlıyız, varlığımızı sürdürüyoruz. Avrupa’da o da yok.*” His narrative also represents his identification with the *Süryani* as Christian and loyalty to the church as the minimum precondition for the perpetuation of his identity. - Yağız, Özlem; Amca, D. Yıldız; Erdoğan, Emine Uçak; Saydam, Necla (eds.), *Malan Barkırım: Zorunlu Göç Anlatıları*, Timaş Yay., İstanbul, 2012.

the lips of the state representatives. Until today, the community fathers have exclusively been recognized by the state as the legitimate representatives that might provide recognition of the community.

In this respect, community representatives as fathers, claims providing protection from the state. In the modern domain where ‘the myth of equal modern citizenship renders the traditional dependency relations invisible’¹⁷³, minority citizens are also to blame since they have not to date spoken up in the name of their rights. Through this liberal discourse of 2000s, seeking minority rights is far from being in contradiction with the state’s interests anymore. To make the state aware of such rights is at the same time correspondent to the proper citizenship of the democratic state. Gürdal puts it as following:

*In that case we do not need to hide, there is no necessity to be secretive. On the contrary we should tell about ourselves honestly in every possible opportunity and place not as if harvesting such a benefit from the state or running after certain benefits while doing politics. Within nationalism of Turkey, not Turkish nationalism, through the measurements of being a citizen of Turkey, every door of the state is open to us as long as we tell about ourselves as the loyal, honest and exemplary citizens of this country. We have experienced and seen all of these in the face of the president of the republic up till a janitor working in the lowest level. We have never been rejected at anywhere and our demands have always been actualized. But these demands were just and honest. But regarding certain singular issues, we have never taken a dislike to anybody as a society. In each and every society different people may emerge, there may be complications; but these people do not represent us. When we go to any state mechanism on behalf of Assyrian society, it is for the sake of representing Assyrian people not for our own sakes. What we achieve is reflected on Assyrian society. Therefore to be an Assyrian really makes us proud. Saying this aloud especially with emphasis at everywhere recently fill me with further proud.*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Nükhet Sirman, “The Making of Familial Citizenship in Turkey” in *Citizenship in a Global World – European Questions and Turkish Experiences*, (eds.) Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İçduygu, London: Routledge, 2005, p.164,166.

¹⁷⁴ “Artık böyle olduktan sonra biz niye gizlenelim, niye kapalı kutu halinde kalalım? Aksine kendimizi her noktada her yerde anlatalım, dürüstlüğümüzle anlatalım. Devletten böyle bir menfaat kopararak veya siyaset yaparken de bir takım menfaatler peşinde koşarak değil. Türkiye milliyetçiliği içerisinde, yani Türk milliyetçiliği değil Türkiye milliyetçiliği içerisinde, Türkiyeli olma ölçülerinde, bu ülkenin sadık vatandaşları, dürüst vatandaşları ve örnek vatandaşları olacak şekilde kendimizi anlattığımız sürece devletin bütün kapıları bize her zaman açıktır. Cumhurbaşkanı’ndan en alt kademedeki bir hademeye kadar, bunları da yaşamışız, bunların hepsini de gördük. Hiç bir yerde de geri çevrilmedik, her talebimiz her zaman da yerine gelmiştir. Ama hep haklı taleplerimiz ve dürüstçe olan taleplerimiz

The discourse that posits the father as representative, as a proud *Süryani* and a minority citizen loyal to the state, excludes the non-loyal *Süryani* and places him out of protection. The rights discourse as a way of harmonizing community-state's relations, exclude the 'non-loyal' while simultaneously recognizing the legitimacy of the modern nation state and the community representative that has been appointed by the state. The sovereign thus makes the non-Muslim a recognizable political entity with some rights through the mediation of fathers as representatives. They might enjoy these rights to the extent that they are loyal to the state which is defined by keeping within the limits of the myth of modern equal citizenship in the era of 2000's AKP's liberal tolerance.

To sum up, it is a relationship that corresponds to the patriarchal empowerment of the representatives as fathers and the submission of *Süryani* subjects. The church, as the only state certified representative institution, keeps its position as the traditional mediator and the highest authority to assign the *Süryani* identity. The community elites and the church that are in mutual dependency¹⁷⁵ relationship play a central role in reproducing the discourse of the 'ideal' *Süryani*.

Moreover, the same 'fear' that forces the construction of the *Süryani* subject's identity as a *Süryani* in dependence on the family/community simultaneously enforces endogamy as the prominent way for the reproduction and survival of the community/identity. Under the guidance of a discourse that delimits the conditions of survival for the *Süryani* as *Süryani*, endogamy appears as a vital domain of power

yerine gelmiştir. Onun dışındaki münferit işlerde biz hiçbir zaman toplum olarak soğumadık. Her toplumda bir takım farklı yapıda insanlar çıkabilir, pürüzler çıkabilir ama bunlar bizi temsil eden insanlar değil. Biz Süryani toplumu adına devletin herhangi bir mekanizmasına gittiğimiz zaman Süryani toplumunu temsilen gidiyoruz ve yapılan işler şahsımıza değil, Süryani toplumuna geri dönmektedir. Bu yüzden de bizim için Süryani olmak hakikaten gurur verici bir ölçektir. Bunu son zamanlarda özellikle de her yerde vurgulayarak söylemek bana ayrıca gurur vermektedir."

¹⁷⁵ I will briefly touch upon this relationship in the following chapter.

relations within which the patriarch plays a key role. Endogamy, that is vital for ensuring identity, becomes dependent on the norms that are reproduced by the dominant discourse of the community that simultaneously reproduces the ideal *Süryani*. A ‘modern’ *Süryani* subject is thus placed between the uncertain future of exclusion and the dependency webs of the Church’s community.

CHAPTER III:

BEING LOYAL TO THE STATE

In the previous chapter I tried to give a brief account of the non-Muslim communities and the *Süryani* community in particular, in terms of their relations with Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. In this chapter I will try to focus on the ghostly effects of the past violence and potential danger of extinction in terms of the constitution of power relationships within the *Süryani* community in İstanbul.¹⁷⁶ In other words, I will try to perceive the way that *Süryani* identity in İstanbul today is subjectively experienced in relation to the Turkish State's views on the community. I will argue that the mentioned experience can best be defined as an identity that is supposed to be under the danger of disappearance. What this research is particularly interested in are the victimizations that rendered invisible through the use of such a state of danger as a technology of power. For this purpose the dominant discourse of the community will be examined in terms of the reproduction of power relationships within and without the community. It is a discourse of fear that constructs the subjective experience of being a *Süryani* in Turkey today.

i - Reactions to the State of Danger:

To illuminate the above mentioned experience, firstly the discursive strategies to avert and to make use of such a state of danger will be examined through the community's civil and religious representative's speeches towards the Muslim majority and the sovereign state. Representatives function as fathers of the community who are supposed to know the best ways for the survival of the

¹⁷⁶ According to the İstanbul Süryani Orthodox Church's official declarations, approximately 15.000 of 25.000 Süryani in Turkey live in İstanbul today.

community. In accordance with the state's discourse on the community they reproduce the community's loyalty to the state as a way to protect the community.

Loyalty and Recognition

Kenan Gürdal is the owner of the biggest jewelry shop in a shopping arcade that is predominantly held by *Süryani* jewelers. He is also the vice president of the Council of the 12¹⁷⁷ and a member of a former ruling party for 13 years. Throughout his narrative we recognize him as a middleman between the community and the state representatives such as ministers, governors, mayors, chiefs of police, military officers, et cetera.

For him I was a young candidate to represent the community to the public through the publication of this thesis. Since he knows me through my father, throughout the interview, in a way, he was transmitting the 'proper' representation of the community through performing the proper ways of being a *Süryani* in public. Transmission started even before the interview as we were waiting for the call to prayer to finish.

His definitions of relations with the state were based upon the loyalty to the state:

*If we introduce ourselves as being from Turkey, as faithful, honest and admired citizen within Turkey nationality, not in a sense within Turkish nationality, the all doors of the state will always open to us.*¹⁷⁸

According to Sirman, "the building of a national sovereign state is always the product of discourses of the identity of the nation in the process of constituting the

¹⁷⁷ With its full name, the 'Foundation Board of Directors of the İstanbul Syrian Orthodox Church' is the representative institution under the roof of the Church. Since it is the community's only representative institution recognized by the State, together with the Metropolitan, Chairmans of the council represent the community before the State.

¹⁷⁸ "Türkiye milliyetçiliği içerisinde, yani Türk milliyetçiliği değil Türkiye milliyetçiliği içerisinde, Türkiyeli olma ölçülerinde bu ülkenin sadık vatandaşları, dürüst vatandaşları ve örnek vatandaşları olacak şekilde kendimizi anlattığımız sürece devletin bütün kapıları bize her zaman açıktır."

nation-state as a specific kind of polity. These discourses simultaneously construct the identity of the proper citizen. Consequently the citizen is endowed with a particular package of rights and duties, made the subject of specific operations of power and of particular moral subjectivity that differs according to these constitutive discourses”.¹⁷⁹

In the case of the Turkish State we see the proper minority citizen has been expected to continually prove his/her loyalty to the state as if he/she owes something to the nation and the state that he/she does not have. Since he/she did not have the necessary quality of being born as a Turkish/Muslim, the non-Muslim citizen is always/already a suspicious one as a potential traitor to the country.

Since they are non-Muslims, there is no possibility of making them identify with the national identity. Rather than sacrificing themselves for the nation’s interests, at best they are the ones who easily prefer to flee even if they do not collaborate with the enemies of the state.¹⁸⁰

While Kenan Gürdal’s narrative places the nationalism of Turkey in contradiction with the nationalism of Turkishness and embracing the former; his discourse demands to get recognized as a loyal, proper, honest (not traitor) citizen of the Republic in order to not to get annihilated, exiled or discriminated against as non-Muslim. Such a discursive domain does not just construct a loyal, legitimate, proper

¹⁷⁹ Nükhet Sirman, “The Making of Familial Citizenship in Turkey” in *Citizenship in a Global World – European Questions and Turkish Experiences*, (eds.) Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İçduygu, London: Routledge, 2005, p.148.

¹⁸⁰ According to the report named ‘internal threat to Turkey’ that has been given to Kenan Evren three months before the military coup of 12th of September 1980; even though the *Süryani* community was described as the least dangerous one among the listed (‘terrorist and minority’) groups, they still were not exempt from the suspicion of the state. It is said that “there is no detected destructive activity attributed to this group. Nevertheless, it should be expected that this minority will be indifferent to our national problems”. - http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/12_eylul_raporunda_tarikat_yorumu_gittikce_buyuyen_bir_ic_tehdit-1141575

minority citizen, but at the same time opens up a status as a legitimate middleman to be recognized by the community.

Referring Foreign Powers (*Dış Mihraklar*)

It is known that the nation state often applies the specific term foreign powers (*dış mihraklar*) to refer the ‘enemies of the state’. It can be defined as a technology of power that constructs the nation as opposed to ‘internal powers’ (*iç mihraklar*) as well. It is a technology for lend to the dominant community representative in order to reproduce his power within the community together with the maintenance of the community’s loyalty to the state.

After the decision of the court for the Muslim villagers’s right on the part of a land belongs to Mor Gabriel monastery for long years, the case of the monastery became an issue that the *Süryani* organizations in diaspora strived for its international recognition. During the interview with the chairman of the council of the 12, Sait Susin was complaining about the activities of the ‘outsiders’ against the state’s and thus the community’s interests.¹⁸¹ He argues that the controversies about the land property of Mor Gabriel monastery has come to an impasse since the ‘outsiders’ intervened:

*The issue of Mor Garbirel has been spread outside too much, made a lot of sensations, witnessed interventions from outside. It can be discussed whether if it is good or not, but in my opinion all issues would be solved better unless the outsiders did not intervene.*¹⁸²

For him, involving outsiders might provoke the state’s suspicion on the minority’s collobration with the external powers, so the issues between the *Süryani*

¹⁸¹ Through the activities of the Assyrian diaspora, the Swedish parliment recognized the Assyrian holocaust in 11th of March, 2010.

¹⁸² “*Mor Gabriel konusu dışarıya da çok yayıldı, çok sansasyon yapıldı, çok fazla dışarıdan müdahaleler oldu. Bu iyi mi oldu kötü mü oldu tartışılır tabi ama benim görüşüm, dışarıdakiler bu kadar ortak edilmemiş olsaydı bu konulara bence daha iyi olacaktı daha kolay çözülecekti.*”

community and the Turkish state should be solved in between two actors through the conviction of the state representatives. For Gürdal, aims of the *Süryani* communities in Turkey and Diaspora are fundamentally different:

*... they have ideological mentalities, and we have peace in Turkey.*¹⁸³

While the *Süryani* individuals live outside Turkey or the internal ones in relation with them are critical towards the Turkish state, and so are ‘ideological’; we have to protect the peace through submission to the state’s rule. Gürdal continues:

*In case we are thinking to persue neither for land nor we eager to have conflict with the state. But there are some groups supported by foreign powers attempt to diffuse into us and eager to destroy us by us. When we came to create a unity between us a few others stayed alone.*¹⁸⁴

In her study ‘State, Village and Gender in Western Turkey’ Sirman argues that ‘the depiction of politics as something to be associated with and practiced by outsiders, and that of the village as politically neutral, is a way of informing the state that there is no need for its repressive apparatus, and the gendarmerie in particular, to take an active interest in the affairs of the community’.¹⁸⁵ Through the use of a discourse upon foreign powers (*dış mihraklar*), Gürdal points the *Süryani* communities in Diaspora that struggle for the recognition of the Assyrian Genocide and emphasize the ‘loyal’ union of his community in reference to the unity of the state. His narrative that assures the state for the community’s loyalty, at the same time hails the *Süryanis* under the church’s, and so his, guidance through instituting

¹⁸³ “... onların ideolojik zihniyetleri var, bizim de Türkiye’de bir huzurumuz var.”

¹⁸⁴ “Yani biz ne bir toprak peşinde olmayı düşünüyoruz, ne de devletle aramızın açılmasını istiyoruz. Ama bazı gruplar vardır ki, dış destekli mihraklar, bizim içimize sızmaya ve bizi birbirimize parçalatmaya çalışıyor. Biz bir bütün olarak, biraraya gelip kenetlendiğimizde bu üç-dört kişi yalnız kaldı,”

¹⁸⁵Nükheth Sirman, “State, Village and Gender in Western Turkey”, in *Turkish State, Turkish Society*, A. Finkel, N. Sirman (eds), London: Routledge, 1990, p.2.

the approaching fear object as the outsider.¹⁸⁶ Through the dominant discourse of the community that the representative reproduces, the source of fear turned to be the loss of unity rather than the state of conditions that leads such a unity.

At the same time, Gürdal's warning against the poster upon the AKM (Atatürk Cultural Centre) building during the days of the Gezi demonstrations can be given as an example to the father's warning through referring the state. It was written "Do not touch my Mor Gabriel Monastery – Çapulcu Suryoye"¹⁸⁷ on the flag and Gürdal warned through his 'facebook' account:

*That porter should not be there! We should not be in an action that might take reaction, in case it makes the reach of our aims more difficult and will turn back in a negative way. Anyway, the reason why the issue of Mor Gabriel was remain unsolved is explained very well by Mr. Davutoğlu. "Nobody attempt to impress us! [meaning the ones at outside]. We are trying to create formula to solve the issue of Mor Gabriel but we would not defer to outsiders' oppressions." Now, this will be subbing salt in the wound that is you should be aware.*¹⁸⁸

Gürdal's warning positions himself as the translator of the state's language and the legitimate representative, as father, who knows the ways to get related to the state and guide the community. In Gürdal's translation it is a state which denies international support to its minority citizens and threats punishing them if such a support appears. In his mediation, the more fearful the state becomes, the more powerful becomes the representative.

¹⁸⁶ According to Ahmed, "fear responds to what is approaching rather than already there". - Sara Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Routledge, New York, 2004, p.65.

¹⁸⁷ Suryoye means Süryani in Syriac language. And Çapulcu means plunderer in Turkish. Prime minister used it as a pejorative term against the protestors during the Gezi resistance.

¹⁸⁸ "O pankart orada olmamalı! Tepki çeken bir eylemin içinde olmamalıyız, amacımızı zora sokar ve tepkisi bize negatif olarak geri döner. Zaten Mor Gabriel'in çözüme ulaşamamasının nedenini sayın Davutoğlu bize çok güzel açıklamıştı: 'Hiç kimse bize baskı yapmaya kalkışmasın [yurt dışındakileri kastediyor]. Biz Mor Gabriel'e çözüm için formül üretmeye çalışıyoruz ama dışarıdan yapılacak baskılara da boyun eğecek değiliz'. Şimdi bu da tuzu biberi olur haberiniz olsun."

Differentiating from the Armenians

"Keep out of movements which trespass on Ottoman sensitivities, such as composing music... Movements like those which imitate the Armenians... who demand independence." ... "My Sons, we have not yet reached the point in politics the Armenians have. Be careful." ... "Be careful of movements which impinge on the sensitivities of the Turkish State." ... "I see the Turkish State through the officials with whom I am in contact. They regard the Armenians with extremely caution and through a finely focused microscope." ... "So, do not bring this tight scrutiny to bear on us"¹⁸⁹

Throughout the unending state of emergencies, with regard to the 'national security', Armenianness appeared among the most popular historical enemies of the Turkishness in the official publications and the public media.¹⁹⁰ Considering the state's distrust of the non-Muslim minorities in general and the Armenians in particular, differentiating oneself from the Armenians, as the most crowded¹⁹¹ and popular Christian population in Turkey, appeared as a way of constructing the trust between the state and the *Süryani* community as the second greatest Christian group in Turkey. Gürdal says:

¹⁸⁹ According to witness of the Patriarch's secretary, Zakaria Shakir, Patriarch Elias III fatherly warned the pioneer of the Assyrian nationalism, Naum Faik after 1915. In Shakir's account, Patriarch's words continued as following: ...*"Let us proceed step by step..."* ...*"You delight me when you raise awareness of the denomination and when you make progress,"* ...*"and are aware that you are a millet,"* ...*"and to know that you have an entity and that you have a nation" ... "and you have an ancient history which you have to reinvigorate. Do your best, but the movements with which the State works are still those of the old tradition; the denominations haven't yet turned to music, therefore if you were to use music (this is as if you are imitating the Armenians) because the Armenian Tashnaq Party, has been the first to use music."* – quoted in, Naures Atto, "Hostages in the Homeland...", p.90-91.

¹⁹⁰ Throughout the intensified activities of the Armenian lobbies in 1970s and the Armenian armed forces (ASALA) in 1980s the negative attitude against Armenianness reached to its peak. - Rıfat N. Bali, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Azınlıklar Politikası", Birikim, İletişim Yay., p.87.

¹⁹¹ It is said that today approximately 50.000 Armenians live in Turkey.

If you look at respective weight people in this society we can see how important Suryanis are, also we can see clearly what Armenian society do things and how they humiliate themselves. If you look generally to the relationship between Armenians... and Turkish nation... even if they try to connect themselves with the Turkish state... with the issue of genocide... See even if they say 'we are brothers or anything else' as like olive oil and water do not mixed each other it is impossible for them to mix (with Turkish state). Why do Süryanis live in Turkey more peacefully? Süryanis just do their works and businesses. They never have had questions with the state... there have never beend such land equations.¹⁹²

Gürdal's narrative takes the norms of the state as his norms for evaluating the Armenians. Since the *Süryani* individuals engaged in business instead of questioning the state's violence they are respectful citizens of Turkey in comparison to the Armenians. Such a respect can be instituted at the cost of re-silencing the past violence and reproducing the state's domination over the minorities. Moreover, for Gürdal this respectful positioning is not without practical rewards:

... When I send any of them to the state office and sit and talk with him/her... since he has Armenian identity, his/her all words are analysed by the bureucrat and he has been looked with suspicions like: ' what is behind that? what he/she wants from me? What if he/she talks about me after he/she leaves?'. But they never look with suspicion to a Süryani. My friends even as member of Turkish Nationalist Party, which are nationalist, do not look at me with suspicion. That is to say, our minds never agree with each other but due to they like and respect me when I ask something from them they make it with enthusiasm.¹⁹³

According to Gürdal's narrative, to be in any connotation of disloyalty towards the state corresponds to hypocrisy as a characteristic feature belongs to the minority group. Therefore, any association with Armenianness is enough to be

¹⁹² "Bu toplum içindeki itibarlı şahsiyetleri masanın üzerine bir açarsan Süryaniler'in ne kadar ağırlıkta olduğunu, Ermeni toplumunun da ne tür işlerde ve ne noktalarda kendilerini küçük düşürdüklerini çok rahat görebiliriz. Ermeni toplumunun devletle olan ilişkileri bile genel anlamda baktığın zaman... Türk ulusuyla... İşte soykırım meselesine zaten ne kadar da birleştirmeye çalışsalar da kendilerini... Türk devletiyle... İşte 'biz kardeşiz, bilmem neyiz' deseler de zeytinyağıyla suyun birbirine karışmadığı gibi karışması mümkün değildir. Süryaniler niye Türkiye'de daha rahat karışabiliyorlar? Süryaniler işlerinde güçlerindedir. Hiçbir zaman devlet sorunları... şey toprak sorunları olmadı."

¹⁹³ "... onlardan herhangi birini bir devlet dairesine gönderdiğim zaman oturup konuştuğumda o bürokrat bir Ermeni kimliğinden olduğu için onun istediği her kelimeyi analiz eder; 'acaba bunun altında ne yatar, acaba benden ne ister, acaba benden çıktıktan sonra aleyhimde ne yapar' diye bir Ermeni'ye şüpheyle bakar. Ama bir Süryani'ye asla bu şüpheyle bakmazlar. Benim MHP'li arkadaşlarım bile bana şüpheyle bakmazlar ki Türk milliyetçisi insanlar. Yani onlarla kafamızın uyuşması mümkün değil ama beni o kadar çok sever sayarlar ki onlardan bir şey istediğim zaman canla başla yapıyorlar."

accused by Turks as hypocrites. Hypocrisy is the accusation because minorities who are afraid of the state have to cover in front of the state employees. And following the guidance of the representative/father's narrative corresponds to the protection of the *Süryani* identity from the negative connotations and its negative consequences.¹⁹⁴

Speaking to Islamic Tolerance

Besides the nation-state, speaking to Islam, as a supposed reference for the violence against non-Muslims, is another way of striving to evade the danger of annihilation. Horeipsikopos Samuel Akdemir's¹⁹⁵ speech at the conference named "*Süryani Society (Süryani toplumu)*", which was held at İstanbul Moda Church in 1996, later on, upon the request of the mayor of İstanbul of the time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has been read at another similar activity in order to introduce Syriac Christians. Some pieces from the text are as following:

Süryanis, in response to tolerant behaviours of the conquerers of the Islam, had said this historical saying: 'fortunately we got rid of Byzantine cruelty. We met just and merciness of fair Muslims'.¹⁹⁶

According to this narrative, let aside collaborating with the Christian powers outside, we *Süryanis* are loyal to the rule of Islam's sovereignty. The narrative invites the Muslim rulers to be just and merciful towards the *Süryani* community. Such an understanding of justice in reference to tolerance does not assume equality but mercifulness towards the inferior non-Muslims. The same text of the

¹⁹⁴ But it is worth to mention that the affinity between the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the *Süryani* identity can be labeled as an exaggeration. It is rather a rhetorical device that Gürdal uses in order to emphasize his affinity with the state.

¹⁹⁵ In 1976 Samuel Akdemir assigned by Patriarch III. Yakup as Horeipiskopos and the spiritual representative of the Patriarch. Between 1976 and 1986 he was the religious leader and the representator of the *Süryani* community in İstanbul. Horeipsikopos Samuel Akdemir, *The Syrian Orthodox Community in the Mosaic of İstanbul*, Promat Basım Yayın, 2009, p.24.

¹⁹⁶ "*Süryaniler, İslam fatihlerinin hoşgörülü davranışları karşısında, tarihe geçen şu ünlü sözleri söylemişlerdir: 'Çok şükür ki, Bizans'ın zulmünden kurtulduk. Adil Müslümanların adalet ve merhametine kavuştuk'*. Horeipsikopos Samuel Akdemir, '*Barış içinde yaşamak*', Resim Ofset, İstanbul, 2008, s.36.

Horiepiskopos also demands tolerance in reference to the words of the prophet of Islam:

Resuli Ahidname which Prophet Muhammed, in the second year of the Hejira, gave to Suryanis for the all Christians locates in our patriarchate monastery. In this important document there are some articles for Christians: 'Do not disturb a priest who cloisters himself in a monastery or on top of a mountain. Do not disturb an immigrant. Do not destroy churches and monasteries; do not use their object in a mosque and in your homes. Do not enroll Episkepos and its priests to armed services. Do not impose Islam to anybody since there is no intimidation in religions'. The document finishes with these sayings: 'Whoever ever betrays this Resuli Ahitname, even it may Sulatan, whoever it, He/she will be against God's document and the Prophet's agreement and will be cursed.' The Prophet Muhammed's important document, without doubt, is the clearest evidence of high morality, compassion and just.¹⁹⁷

Such a discourse of tolerance recognizes the superiority of Muslim rule as far as Christians have not been killed for being non-Muslims. It can be said that, the text tells the Muslim sovereign that the superiority or divinity as a just Muslim will not be recognized if he annihilates the non-Muslim as 'other'. Institution of the tolerant Muslim can be interpreted as a discursive strategy against the danger of annihilation. Recognition of the Islam's superiority is also institutionally recognized by Christianity through keeping the record of the oath in the monastery. It corresponds to the recognition of Islam's as the last, uncorrupted and superior religion in return for sparing Christians.

On the other hand, the warnings attached to the Christian priests, monasteries and churches refer to the fact that the same rules are not valid for civilians and their properties. Their destiny has been tied just to the pity of particular Muslims. When

¹⁹⁷ "Hz. Muhammet'in, Hicret'in 2. Yılında Süryanilerin şahsında tüm Hristiyanlara yönelik verdiği Resuli Ahidname patrikhane manastırımızda bulunmaktadır. Bu önemli belgede Hristiyanlarla ilgili bazı maddeler vardır: 'Manastır ya da dağ başındaki bir mağarada inzivaya çekilmiş bir rahibi rahatsız etmeyin. Seyahate çıkmış yolcuya dokunmayın. Kilise ve manastırları yıkmayın, eşyalarını camilerde ve evlerinizde kullanmayın. Episkepos ve rahipleri askerlik hizmetine almayın. Onlardan vergi almayın, vergiye tabi olanlara insaflı davranın. Kimseyi İslam dinine zorlamayın. Zira dinde ikrah yoktur.' Belge şu sözlerle tamamlanır: 'Her kim bu Resuli Ahitnameye hıyanet ederse, Sultan olsun, kim olursa olsun, Allah'ın Ahdine ve Resulünün misakına karşı durmuş olur ve lanete maruz kalır.' Hz. Muhammet'in bu önemli Ahitnamesi, kuşkusuz yüksek bir ahlakın, şefkat ve adaletin en belirgin kanıtıdır." - Ibid, p.37.

we consider the presence of Muslim state officers (including retired judge from Mardin, Edip Ergün) at the conference, the definition of such an unequal condition as ‘highly moral, just and compassionate’ does approve the contemporary existence of the rule that value the citizens according to their religion and makes this speech legible.

Indeed, there have been reports lately on the state’s codification of the citizens according to the religious identity of their ancestors. According to the declaration of the head officer of the ‘Directorate General of Population and Citizenship’, the state keeps these records since the Ottoman Empire. The records are said to function to recognize the ‘converted’ ancestors for the purposes related to ‘security’ and the registration of non-Muslims to the minority schools.¹⁹⁸ According to these records, the categories of Greeks, Armenians, Jews, *Süryanis* and ‘the others’ has respectively been codified as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Call for Civilization

In his book “Süryanis Who Live in This Land for 5500 Years with Their Culture and Belief”, the former Chairman of the Council of the 12 and the president of the Board of Directors of a nationwide company Yakup Tahincioğlu¹⁹⁹ says:

*... Accepting the most important social responsibility of current civilized people as antecedent evolution of primitive period of human and also today fair, equal, approaching in a manner of brotherhood to his/her own land and to other’s land, religions, liberty, without harassing, living brotherly, creating a social cognition which is proper to world culture is the way we are thinking.*²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Radikal Gazetesi, İsmail Saymaz Arşivi ; Güncelleme Tarihi: 2 Ağustos 2013
<http://suryaniler.com/haberler.asp?id=1027>

¹⁹⁹ It is worth to mention that Tahincioğlu family is known as the wealthiest family of the community and members of the family held the chairman seat of the board for 13 periods as a record with far distance.

²⁰⁰ “... *bugünün medeni insanının en önemli toplumsal sorumluluklarının geçmişi insanlığın evriminin ilkel dönemi olarak kabul etmek ve bugünü de adil, eşit, kendi toprakları ile başkalarının*

Through his invitation for accepting the violence as an experience that belongs to an already passed period of the evolution of humanity, he defines a rupture that invokes a safe present. Refusal of continuity also guarantees a domain in which there will be no need to face with or do justice about the past. Such an evasion from the past and justice corresponds to the acceptance of the continuity of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. But in return for the historical denial, he demands protection of the faith and properties belonging to non-Muslims. In other words, his narrative demands recognition of his Christian identity by the sovereign state. A state which recognizes another religion, in his account, would be upholding the universal values of civilization and would therefore show its culture to be a world culture. Such a modern, secular, neutral state might protect the non-Muslims against a possible Muslim threat.

In the context of Turkey's adaptation process to the European Union, the above mentioned values of civilization come to be related to EU. Even though Erol Dora, from the BDP, is critical towards the dominant representational camp under the roof of the church, his arguments show similarities. As the only non-Muslim representative in the parliament, Dora puts it as follows:

... we should work as catalyzer for making of constitution, democratization of Turkey and mostly important after those happens, immediately Turkey's entering European Union. In other words we tell this: 'we do not recognize European Union as an Christianity club. We are also Christian.' That is to say I discuss this in Europe with Europeans. If Europe does not observe the principle of pacta sunt servanda it means that she humiliates the agreements she made. In condition that Turkey realizes her missions and responsibilities, we also support Turkey for

topraklarına, inançlarına, özgürlüklerine, tecavüz etmeden kardeşçe yaşayacağı bir dünya kültürüne uygun bir toplumsal bilinç yaratmak olduğu kanaatinde olduğumuzu belirtmek isteriz.” - Yakup Tahincioğlu, Tarihleri, Kültürleri ve İnançlarıyla 5500 Yıldır Bu Topraklarda Yaşayan Süryaniler, Butik Yayıncılık, 2011, p.346.

*entering European Union, and that direction we serve our support in our speeches, writings, in every respects. It is very important project for us.*²⁰¹

According to Erol Dora's narrative, we, as Christians, who already possessed the values of the European civilization, are ready to mediate between the Turkish state and the EU with the precondition of the democratization of Turkey. As the only Christian representative in the Turkish parliament, Dora's desire for democracy includes protection of minorities in the first place. Through the claim to undertake a position as mediator between the civilized E.U. and the Turkish Republic, he seeks a non-Muslim capacity for sanctioning upon the Turkish state in order to get protected. Such a view assumes the more Turkish state engages in the Christian European Civilization, the less will the minorities of Turkey become vulnerable. On the other political wing of the community, Gürdal expresses a similar correspondence between the EU and the Christian minorities in the column that belongs to Yalçın Bayer of Hürriyet newspaper:

We are a handful of people loyal to ones' family and state, living a modest life in Istanbul. We are members of the Turkish Süryani Community. We want to build a salon by rearranging an outlying building belonging to our church, in order to ensure the integration of our community leaving the church and within the boundaries of the law, in our homeland where we worship freely. The building we will build is not even a meter breaching the laws. We have received uncountable help from the Municipality of Bakırköy and the Metropolitan Municipality; they were mobilized to ease our work. And they sent us to Council of Monuments, as they handled rapidly the bureaucratic procedures to ease our work. We feel obliged to thank both municipalities in your presence. Nevermore, the individuals named Özer Erenman and Zekiye Yener from the Council of Monuments have almost tormented us these for two years. We assume that, they are never handling our issue because we are Christians. We can understand clearer why we responsible Turks, who want to enter the EU, cannot become European, by looking at the impediments on our way

²⁰¹ "... anayasanın yapılanmasında, Türkiye'nin demokratikleşmesinde ve en önemlisi de bunlar gerçekleştikten sonra bir an önce Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne girmesi yönünde de aynı zamanda katalizör görevi göstermemiz gerekir. Yani biz şunu söylüyoruz: 'Avrupa Birliği'nin bir Hristiyan kulübü olduğunu biz kabul etmiyoruz. Biz de Hristiyan'ız.' Yani bunu Avrupa'da Avrupalılarla da tartışıyorum. Eğer Avrupa da bu konuda ahde vefa ilkesine uymuyorsa o zaman imzalamış olduğu anlaşmaları ihlal ediyor demektir. Türkiye'nin de kendisine düşen görev ve sorumlulukları yapması koşuluyla, biz de Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne girmesini destekliyoruz ve bu konuda da konuşmalarımızla, yazılarımızla her açıdan destek sunuyoruz. Bizim için çok önemli bir projedir bu."

*erected by the individuals with those mindsets. Our complete file is postponed to the next meetings, each time the issue arises. Why, what do these people aspire to?*²⁰²

The reason behind the lived hardships for the meeting room is the marginal mentalities. The cost of the anti-Christian tendencies of these mentalities for the modern Turkish state is the exclusion from the EU as the symbol of civilization. Elimination of these ‘non-civil’ marginalities will not just benefit the non-Muslims but all modern Turkish citizens. While his narrative calls the Muslims to be fair against the non-Muslims, it reproduces a discourse of Turkishness that corresponds to a non-discriminative definition of the equal citizenship of the modern state.

Even though they remain in different camps in terms of the definition of the *Süryani* identity’s relation with Christianity; together with Dora, Gürdal also emphasizes Christianity in relation with civilization. Through her intention to join the EU, the civilized Turkey to come might eliminate the anti-civil and anti-Christian tendencies within itself and might not discriminate non-Muslims. Such a discourse of protection also institutes the already civilized Christian citizen to guide the Muslim on the way to civilization.

ii - The Ideal *Süryani*:

According to Foucault, “power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him

²⁰² “Biz İstanbul'da yaşayan, ülkesine ve devletine sadık, kendi halinde bir avuç insanız. Biz Türk Süryani Kadim Cemaati mensubuyuz. İbadetimizi özgürce yaptığımız bu anavatanımızda, kilisemize ait bir müştemilatımızı yeniden düzenleyerek, kiliseden çıkan cemaatimizin birbiri ile kaynaşmasını sağlamak amacıyla ve yasalar çerçevesinde bir salon yapmak istiyoruz. Yapacağımız yerin yasalara bir metrelik aykırılığı dahi yoktur. Bakırköy Belediyesi'nin ve Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin sonsuz yardımlarını gördük, işlerimizin aksamaması için seferber oldular. Ve kısa sürede bürokratik prosedürleri yerine getirip işimizi kolaylaştırarak bizi Anıtlar Kurulu'na gönderdiler. Her iki belediyeye de huzurunuzda teşekkürü borç biliyoruz. Ancak Anıtlar Kurulu'nda Özer Erenman ve Zekiye Yener isimli kişiler, iki senedir bize adeta kan kusturdular. Tahmin ediyoruz ki Hıristiyan olduğumuz için bizim işimizi bir türlü ele almıyorlar. AB'ye girmek isteyen biz sağduyulu Türklerin neden Avrupalı olamayacağımızı en kolay, bu zihniyetleri taşıyan insanların bize çıkardığı engellerden anlayabilirsiniz. Eksiksiz olan dosyamız, sorun her gündeme geldiğinde bir sonraki toplantıya bırakılmaktadır. Neden; bu kişiler neyi amaçlıyor?” - <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=88906>

to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to."²⁰³

In this vein, what will be elaborated in this part of the work is the *Süryani* identity in relation with the previously mentioned power relations. The *Süryani* subject is tied to the dominant representation of the *Süryani* identity that, in Butler's words, "acts on the subject's body by forcing the subject to approximate an ideal, a norm of behavior, a model of obedience"²⁰⁴. Features of this ideal constructed by the dominant discourse of the community will be examined in relation to the state's constitutive discourses on the proper minority citizen. It is an ideal that is, in Ahmed's words, 'an effect of the process of idealization, which elevates some subjects over others'²⁰⁵ and reproduces the power relations within and without the community.

Christianity

In May of 2004, at the 'Platform for the Dialogue Between Cultures' in Mardin, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Moran Mor Ignatios I. Zekka Ayvas as the highest religious authority of the Syriac Christians declares the loyalty to the state as the precondition of being a believer in the God.

²⁰³ Michel Foucault, *The Subject and Power*, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Summer 1982, p.781.

²⁰⁴ Judith Butler, '*Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*', Stanford University Press, 1997, p.84-85.

²⁰⁵ Sara Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Routledge, 2004, p.131.

For one to be a true believer, one should be a good citizen first. It is not possible for a man to be a true believer if he is not loyal to his country.²⁰⁶

Former representative of metropolitan Yusuf Çetin²⁰⁷, the deceased Horeipsikopos Samuel Akdemir, in his book ‘Living in Peace’²⁰⁸, supports this argument with a quotation from the bible:

*Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted.*²⁰⁹

The discourse that equates the loyalty to the state with loyalty to the God implies the evasion from the dangerous ideas to the state not just as a precondition of being a believer but also a precondition of being a real *Süryani* as an authentic Christian. According to this discourse, the ideal *Süryani* subject is attached to the God, Christianity and the state holistically. And such a definition of *Süryani* identity excludes any political connotation that might threaten the state’s claim of a ‘unified nation’. Horeipsikopos Samuel Akdemir, reproduces this politics of docility in relation to Christianity:

*Süryanis became less politicized once they adopted Christianity, they started being more oriented towards the church.*²¹⁰

Through his historical construction, *Süryani* identity becomes a religious but not a political entity. The definition of Christianized *Süryani* as non-political assures the state for a docile *Süryani* subject who will ‘turn the other cheek’ in the face of a

²⁰⁶ “Bir müminin, Allah’a iyi bir mümin olabilmesi için ilkin iyi bir vatandaş olması gerekmektedir. Kendi vatanına sadık olmayan bir müminin, Allah’a da iyi bir mümin olması mümkün değildir.” - Gabriel Akyüz, ‘Tüm Yönleriyle Süryaniler’, Mardin Anadolu Ofset, 2005, s.457.

²⁰⁷ In an interview with Yusuf Çetin, he defines prayer for the rulers due to their Christian faith: “İncil diyor ki; ‘Sizi yönetenler için dua edin’. Devlet büyüklerimize de dua etmek inancımızın gereği.” <http://m2.milliyet.com.tr/Columnists/Article?ID=1777116>

²⁰⁸ Samuel Akdemir, *Barış İçinde Yaşamak*, Resim Ofset, İstanbul, 2008, p.35-36.

²⁰⁹ “Herkes, altında bulunduğu yönetime boyun eğsin. Çünkü Tanrı’dan olmayan yönetim yoktur. Var olanlar Tanrı tarafından kurulmuştur. Bu nedenle yönetime karşı direnen Tanrı’nın düzenlediğine karşı gelmiş olur.”

²¹⁰ “Süryaniler Hristiyanlığı kabul ettikten sonra siyaseti bırakıp kiliseye dönük bir toplum oldular.”

possible violence. There is no need to destroy such a religious identity which is assured to be free from political claims and is harmless to the state's interests.

The dominant representation of the *Süryani* community in Turkey today is strongly colored with the images of Christianity and the *Süryani* Orthodox Church is recognized as the only legitimate representative of the religious *Süryani* identity. The discourses around the price of the survival of the community and Christianity are interwoven with the narratives about Jesus', saints', priests' sacrifice but not with the victims of the Muslim violence. Emphasis upon such religious figures sterilizes the historical narrative of the community from any possible relation with the state's violence. While such narratives remind the community of their debts, they keep hailing *Süryani* subjects to sacrifice for the identified *Süryani* identity without placing the identity in contradiction to the state. The mentioned debt to the religious ancestors helps to tie the *Süryani* subjects to the ideal of the state, the church and their community. It is the ideal *Süryani* who is loyal to the state, its church and the community through the exclusively religious identity.

Yakup Tahincioğlu, as the Chairman of the council of the 12 of the period and president of the Board of Directors of a countrywide food company, finishes his book named "*Süryanis Who Live in this Land for 5500 Years With Their History, Culture and Belief*" with a quotation from the International Symposium of Foundations in 2003, at Ankara. He complains about the levied properties of the community as a reaction to the War in Cyprus, in terms of the rule of reciprocity (*mütekabiliyet esası*). He was expressing his complaint by defining his *Süryani* identity as exclusively a religious one:

... this citizen right here is a pure Turkish citizen. We plead he is tried in accordance with the rules of the constitution. Forgive me, but you cannot discern my

*name or the names of my children from Turkish names. I went to school with my muslim friends, I've done business with them, I still have muslim work partners and I am happy to work with them. It's been like this for ages, my whole family lived like this. Please don't lump me in the same bag with Greeks, this reciprocity thing or whatever. I feel so sad...This talk of seperation, it saddens us beyond measure. I am a Turkish citizen. I'm like everybody else save my religion and I can convert if you wish.*²¹¹

Placing his *Süryani* identity in contradiction to other Christian identities that has some other 'dangerous' differences except religion is another way of submitting to the state's assumed rationality that codifies the non-Muslim as a potential traitor. To say in other words, he constructs a *Süryani* identity that is all assimilated apart from the religious difference. The religious difference at the same time corresponds to the source of the victimization in Gabriel (from Mardin, Midyat)'s narrative:

*As Christians, we feel happy to suffer the way Jesus Christ did. But as ordinary people, we can't help ourselves but ask the ones who are attacking us: 'Why? What have we done to deserve this?' For god's sake, tell us, when did Süryani rebel? Have they murdered a single cop? Or a soldier? When did Süryani make plans about separation or their own flag? Have they not accept the hat reform? Can anyone with their righteous mind claim that an Assyrian person made designs to defile another family's honour? Or steal from them? Use abusive language? Just tell us, what's our fault? Let me tell you, our fault is being Christian. We know it is so. But it all comes with Christianity anyway. You have to live through this. If you're not up for the task, then don't be a Christian.*²¹²

²¹¹ "... Buradaki vatandaş has be has Türk vatandaşdır. Anayasanın ilkelerine göre lütfedip işlem görülmesini arzu ediyoruz. Beni başışlayın, benim adıml, çocuklarımlın adını, hepsini Türk adından tefrik edemezsiniz. Ben Müslüman kardeşlerimle okudum, onlarla ticari hayatın içinde yaşıyorum, halen Müslüman ortaklarım var ve mutluluk içinde iş görüyorum. Geçmişte de böyle, dedem böyle, sülalem böyle. Lütfen, bana Yunanlılarla, bilmem neyle, mütekabiliyet esasına göre muamele göstermeyiniz. Çok üzüliyorum... Bu ayrılık kelimesi, inanın bizi haddinden fazla üziyor. Ben bir Türk vatandaşım. Anayasa ilkelerine... Bir tek farkım, dinim farklıdır. İsterseniz onu da değiştireyim..." - Yakup Tahincioğlu, *Tarihleri, Kültürleri ve İnançlarıyla 5500 Yıldır Bu Topraklarda Yaşayan Süryaniler*, Butik Yay., 2011, p.395.

²¹² "Ruhen bir Hristiyan gibi düşündüğümüz zaman, Mesih İsa'nın acılarına ortak olduğumuz için seviniyoruz. Ama bir Hristiyan gibi değil de bir insan gibi düşündüğümüz zaman soruyoruz bize o saldırıları yapanlara: 'Neden? Ne yaptık biz sana?' Ya Allah aşkına çıkın deyin ki, 'Bu Süryanilerin filan tarihte ayaklanması var.' Bu 90 yıllık tarihte çıksın desin ki birisi, 'Bir Süryani bir polisi öldürdü. Bir asker öldürdü. Bir harita düşünüyör. Bir bayrak problem var. Şapkayı takmadı.' Bir şey desin ya! Bu insanlar da desin, komşumuz da desin. 'Bir gün birisi bizim namusumuza göz dikti, malımızı çaldı, hırsızlık yaptı, bize küfür etti, hakaret etti' desin. Bir şey, bir şey Allah aşkına ya! Nedir bizim suçumuz? Hristiyan olmaktır. Biz biliyoruz bunu. Ama Hristiyanlık yolunda bu vardır. Bunları yaşayacaksınız. Bunu göze alamıyorsan zaten Hristiyan olma!" - Özlem Yağız, D. Yıldız Amca, Emine Uçak Erdoğan, Necla Saydam, '*Malan Barkirin: Zorunlu Göç Anlatıları*', Timaş Yay., İstanbul, 2012, p.138.

Gabriel's definition of the *Süryani* identity corresponds to the proper citizen as loyal to the law of the modern nation state. According to him, a *Süryani* is the one who stays loyal to the state and simultaneously resilient against the hardships in order to remain a Christian. As it is in Tahincioğlu's implicit preference to leave²¹³ the country rather than giving up Christianity, the religious difference appears as the last castle of the *Süryani* identity. Accordingly, the ideal/real *Süryani* is an assimilated, but at the same time a resistant Christian subject that does not convert to Islam²¹⁴. Since that giving up Christianity as the last castle means giving up the *Süryani* identity, a *Süryani* flees or resist hardships for not getting converted to Islam and remaining a Christian. An ideal *Süryani* is a Christian who is loyal to the patriarchal authorities including the state and the church.²¹⁵

Belonging to the Modern State

According to Wendy Brown, "the invocation of tolerance, as a discourse of depoliticization, inflects the 'practices and beliefs' with a religious quality and reaffirms the conceit that the tolerating body -whether the state or an unmarked identity- is neutral or secular. All otherness is deposited in that which is tolerated, thereby reinscribing the marginalization of the already marginal by reifying and opposing their difference to the normal, the secular, or the neutral"; and since "tolerance requires that the tolerated refrain from demands or incursions on public or political life that issue from their 'difference,' the subject of tolerance is tolerated

²¹³ through his sudden introduction of the notion of separation

²¹⁴ or even does not marry a Muslim.

²¹⁵ In an interview with the metropolitan Yusuf Çetin, he also defines the 'good Süryani' in connotation with Christianity and citizenship. "Interviewer: 'Dine yönelme mi, sekülerleşme mi daha fazla?' Çetin:

'İkisi de var. Elimizden geldiği kadar yönlendirmeye çalışıyoruz. Kiliselerine bağlı, iyi bir Hristiyan, iyi bir Süryani, iyi bir vatandaş olmaları için çabalyoruz'."

<http://m2.milliyet.com.tr/Columnists/Article?ID=1777116>

only so long as it does not make a political claim, that is, so long as it lives and practices its ‘difference’ in a depoliticised or private fashion.”²¹⁶

Moving from Brown’s argument, one can argue that the dominant discourse’s *Süryani* subject, with its emphasis on being depoliticised Christians, institutes the tolerating sovereign as a secular and neutral one. Under the conditions that they are codified and discriminated as non-Muslims, construction of the state as secular/neutral becomes a way of getting protected from a possible Muslim violence. In a similar vein, the discourses on the dignity of Mustafa Kemal and the *Süryani* community’s willing support of his modern ideals of the Turkish Republic becomes tools for demanding not equality but protection from violence. Gürdal’s narrative on the removal of the *Süryani* Patriarchate from Turkish Republic, as an example of the views of the dominant discourse on the community-state relationships, reproduces the legitimacy of Mustafa Kemal’s modern republic:

*... during the time of Atatürk, I believe it was 1932. There was a civil unrest in Turkey, clashes between religious people and the state, between conservatives and modernists etc. To prevent further chaos, Atatürk asked Süryani Patriarch Ilyas Sakir Alkan to leave the country and said he would initiate his return once the dust had settle down. The Patriarch accepted and left. Four or five years later, Atatürk died. And in the absence of a strong political will, The Patriarch could not dare to return.*²¹⁷

In Gürdal’s account, the state is a neutral, secular domain as the embodiment of enlightened ideals introduced by Mustafa Kemal. It is a protective institution for *Süryani* community from Islamist extremists as the real threat. His discourse constructs the *Süryani* identity to take shelter under the protection of the state against

²¹⁶ Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*, Princeton University Press, 2006, p.45-46.

²¹⁷ “... Atatürk döneminde, zannediyorum 32’de olması lazım. Türkiye’de bir takım huzursuzluklar yaşandığı, yani dinle devlet arasında; işte hacı-hocalarla Hristiyan-Müslüman çatışmaları içerisinde filan bir takım sorunlar yaşandı diyelim. Bunların daha fazla büyümemesi için Atatürk Süryani Patriği İlyas Şakir Alkan’a: ‘sen bir süreliğine Türkiye’den uzaklaş. Bakalım durumlar düzelince, bi daha seni buraya getiririz’ diye bir telkinde bulundu. Bu da peki dedi, çıktı gitti. Gittikten dört beş sene sonra işte Atatürk vefat etti. Vefat ettikten sonra da bir daha buraya geri dönüşü sağlayacak başka bir siyasi irada de olmadığı için cesaret edip bir daha gelinmedi.”

the Muslim threat and positions himself as the legitimate representative to point the threats and shelters for the community. It is a Christian *Süryani* subject that takes place on the side of the modern state's values in the name of Mustafa Kemal against the marginal Islamists on the one hand. And on the other hand it is an ideal modern state of the ideal *Süryani* that protects their religious difference against a possible Islamist violence.

Assyrianism versus Christianity

A definitional crisis on the description of *Süryani* identity reached its apex through Erol Dora's election as the first *Süryani* deputy from the BDP in 2011. Erol Dora's candidacy under the roof of the BDP as a party that demands recognition for ethnic difference was not independent of Dora's definition of the *Süryani* identity as a 'people' to be recognized:

*Süryanis always felt excluded, all throughout their history. They are not only a religious entity...they've been living in these lands for almost 6500 years. They've got issues too. Some Süryanis even think they are basically a group of Christian people, they do not think of themselves as a nation. We are a nation. We were here more than 2000 years ago. After Jesus, we became Christians. And we hold Christianity in high regard but our ethnicity is also valuable for us.*²¹⁸

His definition of *Süryani* identity gives priority to ethnicity in opposition to religion since *Süryani* people existed before Christ. According to his view, *Süryani* people's appreciation of religion should not exclude embracing their ethnic root and *Süryani* people should become conscious of their national identity. His complaint regarding the exclusion of *Süryani* identity as a 'people' is in contradiction with the state's constituent claim of the homogeneous nation and its loyal citizens. Rather he

²¹⁸ "Süryaniler de kendilerini tarih süreci içinde dışlanmış olarak hissetmişlerdir. Süryaniler de yalnız dini bir topluluk değil... Süryaniler bu bölgede 6500 yıllık tarihleri olan yerli bir halktır. Dolayısıyla onların da sıkıntıları var" "Süryaniler de Süryani deyince yalnız Hristiyanlıkla özdeşleştirmişler kendilerini bir halk olarak algılama durumunda değiller. Biz bir halkız iki bin seneden önce de vardık ve biz halktık, İsa'dan sonra biz Hristiyan olduk. Biz Hristiyanlığa da değer biçiyoruz ama biz etnik yapımıza da değer biçiyoruz."

stands beside the Kurdish party that demands recognition of Kurdish ethnic identity and the state's assimilationist policies. By contrast, according to the dominant view, *Süryani* individuals have to be able to give account of their loyalty and respect to the state's views. The ones who stray from the traditional loyal relation to the state will not be counted as *Süryani*.

With regard to Erol Dora's above given claim of *Süryani* people's exclusion as their representative at an interview in a public T.V. channel, NTV; a letter transmits the above mentioned dominant view to the column of Yalçın Bayer in *Hürriyet* newspaper:

*An MP who is elected with the votes of BDP supporters, an MP who is approved by the Assyrians of Sweden and tries to set the state and the Süryani at odds whenever he has the chance, can never be the true representative of Süryani people.*²¹⁹

*... Let us not forget, the state has always been there for any prudent and patriotic Süryani who puts his country and flag first. Whenever there is problem, it gets solved. We never needed anyone else, now will we after now.*²²⁰

According to the dominant discourse of the community that has been reproduced by the letter's claim, as a non-*Süryani*, Dora cannot be the legitimate representative of the *Süryani* community. His dangerous affiliations with the Kurdish Party (BDP) pushes the *Süryani* community to a risky position that negative connotations (as traitors, separatists) might get attached to *Süryani* identity. According to this view, the state's ideology of a unified nation represents the norm and since the ones who voted for Erol Dora strayed from the state's norms are BDP's *yandaş*, as a term that refers not to be neutral but a biased supporter. As a non-*Süryani* he has not been elected by the votes of *Süryani* individuals but he has been

²¹⁹ "Süryanileri her platformda devletle karşı karşıya getirerek ve İsveç Asurilerinin desteğini alarak, BDP yandaşları tarafından seçilen bir milletvekili, asla Süryanilerin temsilcisi değildir."

²²⁰ "... Unutulmasın ki devletimiz, daima biz sağduyulu, vatanperver, ülkesine ve bayrağına saygısı olan Süryani toplumunun ve ruhanilerinin yanındadır. Sorunlarımız olduğunda hemen çözülmektedir. Başkalarına asla ihtiyacımız olmamıştır ve bundan sonra da olmayacaktır."

supported by the “Assyrians” in Sweden. Since a real *Süryani* ‘knows where to remain silent’, who claims the ethnic roots of *Süryani* identity are independent of the state’s loyal *Süryani* citizens.

In a similar vein, Gürdal and the circle of the 12 are also in a struggle with the metropolitans that are in affiliation with Assyrian identity for similar reasons:

There were some problems in Mardin, between the community and the Metropolitan Bishop and four of his executives. There were actions with political motivations behind them. They brought forth the Assyrian agenda.²²¹

The Bishop wanted these four people who tell the community about Assyrian history and all and we don't like that. We told them to go away, that they were not fit for us.²²²

The Assyrian identity which became visible mostly through the efforts of the diaspora, basically demands recognition as a nation with its own history and is in vital relationship with the narratives about Muslim violence.²²³ The term ‘ideological’ in Gürdal’s speech forecloses the historical narratives that are in opposition to the ‘neutral’ state’s historical narrative whose subject is the unified nation that is supposed to be exempt from any ‘illegitimate’ violence.

For Gürdal, in opposition to the Metropolitan of Mardin, who affiliates with Assyrianism, the Metropolitan of İstanbul-Ankara, Yusuf Çetin knows to evade the narratives that might disturb the state:

Yusuf Çetin is most valuable to us. And why? Because of his nature. He is experienced, he loves the people, he is an impenetrable Süryani, he doesn't have a secret agenda...all the other Bishops, they have their minds on other suspicious things.²²⁴

²²¹ “Mardin’de bir takım sıkıntılar yaşandı cemaatle Metropolit ve Metropolitliğin içerisindeki idareci üç-dört arkadaş arasında. Bir takım ideolojik hareketlerde bulundular Mardin’de. Asuri meselesini gündeme getirdiler.”

²²² “Metropolitin kendi İsveç’ten getirdiği dört tane sivil, biri orda çalışan filan ama bunlar oradakilere Asuriliği anlatmaya çalışıyor; bu da işimize gelmiyor. Dedik ki gidin kardeşim, şeyiniz yok. Yani bize uygun değilsiniz.”

²²³ For an example of the Assyrianist narrative: Simo Parpola, “Assyrian Identity in Ancient times and today” in *Assyriology: Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, 2004.

²²⁴ “Yusuf Çetin’in varlığı bizim için çok önemli. Neden? Onun kişisel yapısından kaynaklanıyor. Onun tecrübelerinden, topluma olan sevgisinden, koyu bir Süryani oluşundan, Süryani toplumunda

The reason behind Yusuf Çetin's 'non-ideological' discourses is his identification with his community, as a real/extreme (*koyu*) *Süryani*, in opposition to the Metropolitan of Mardin who is supposed to affiliate with Assyrianism. So, the one who makes non-religious differences of *Süryani* identity visible does not belong to the *Süryani* ideal anymore.

Lastly, Gürdal's warning against the poster upon the AKM (Atatürk Cultural Centre) building during the days of the Gezi demonstrations can be given as another example to the definition of the *Süryani* identity in relation to the community's loyalty to the state. The poster read: "Do not touch my Mor Gabriel Monastery – Çapulcu Suryoye" and Gürdal claimed through his 'facebook' account:

*... Gezi is not the place to protest. Not for us! And not with the Suryoye inscription below! No one can use our ethnicity as a tool to revolt against the state or the government. One who does is not from us.*²²⁵

So, one more time it became apparent that the 'democratic' demands especially in relation with the *Süryani* 'ethnic' identity is banned through the state's discourse on minorities that the church circle embrace. According to this discourse, the ones who publicly protest the state's policies on the community and make the ethnic claim visible cannot be one of 'us' since he/she is not loyal to the state. Rather, a proper *Süryani* recognizes the 'loyal' mediation of the state certified representatives.

nifak tohumu atmaya çalışmamasından... Çünkü bütün metropolitlerin aklı-fikri ayrı bir yerde, akli ayrı bir şeyde, herkes bir takım dertler içerisinde.

²²⁵ "...tepkinin yeri Gezi değil. Bize yakışmaz! Hem de altına Suryoye yazarak! Hiç kimse bizim etnik kimliğimizi devlete veya hükümete karşı bir tepki malzemesi olarak kullanamaz, bunu yapan asla bizden değildir."

Loyalty to the Church

In the official website of the *Süryani* Orthodox Metropolitan of İstanbul-Ankara, the church's mission has been described as following:

*The people of Süryani Orthodox Church are true to their traditions, customs, culture and their faith. There are strong ties that bond them together, the strongest being the church. One might look at the history of the Süryani and see that the church has always been the unifying and determinant factor. Süryani people has no other foundation anyway.*²²⁶

According to the dominant discourse of the community, which is represented by the church, the ideal *Süryani* subject is supposed to be attached to his/her community in the name of the values related to church and Christianity. Church as the 'house of god' is the shelter of the community under the conditions of a 'threatening outside'. It is the imaginary home of the community and the spiritual leader, as its father, is the worldly representative of god and Christianity. The *Süryani* Orthodox Church is the embodied form of the *Süryani* values, norms, culture to be protected for the survival of the *Süryani* identity. To be attached to the church for an ideal *Süryani*, besides being attached to the community, is at the same time to be attached to Jesus, to God and Christianity all at once. While the church is the only institutional form of the *Süryani* community that is addressed by the state, at the same time it is the last and the only shelter for the *Süryani* identity against the danger of vanishing. As the contemporary civil representative of the church and the community, chairman of the council of the 12, Sait Susin says:

The thing that keeps us going is being Süryani and that is not an ethnic goal. Our goal is to keep Süryani language and Süryani church alive. It's one thing we live

²²⁶ "Süryani Ortodoks Cemaati örf ve âdetine, kültürüne, inancına bağlı bir toplumdur. Birbirleri ile olan diyalogları kuvvetli, münasebet bağları sıkı örülmüştür. Bu gelişmeleri sağlayan en büyük etken de hiç şüphesiz kilise olmuştur. Süryani tarihine göz atıldığında görüleceği gibi kilise hep belirleyici ve birleştirici unsur vazifesini görmüştür. Zaten kilisenin dışında başka kurumları da yoktur." - http://www.suryanikadim.org/ortodoks_toplumu.aspx

*for, let our language and church live on. We only want this and to make it possible, we have to be unified. There is so few of us left anyway.*²²⁷

His narrative that requests the protection of the church from the state as the last castle of *Süryani* identity; simultaneously calls the members of the community to take shelter before the danger of vanishing under the roof of the church. While he calls for the protection of *Süryani* identity in the name of and under the protection of the Church, his narrative, at the same time, posits the church as the only legitimate representative of the identity.

In Ahmed's words, "the threat of others to social forms is represented as the threat of turning and being turned away from the values that will guarantee survival".²²⁸ Since the church is the equivalent of *Süryani* identity, it should be protected against the danger of disappearance. The Chairman of the church's foundation, Susin demands protection of the church, as the embodied form of *Süryani* identity, both from the state and the community's hailed subjects. Since it is already a small community, he warns against the risk of coming to an end if the members do not unite under the roof of the church and behind the guidance of the representatives. The church that perceived as an organism expects continual dedication, contribution, and support from its *Süryani* subjects.²²⁹ Sacrifice for the church's perpetuation as a manifestation of attachment to it, is a *Süryani*'s debt to the *Süryani* identity, religious ancestors and Jesus.

²²⁷ "Bizi ayakta tutan en büyük özelliğimiz yani Süryaniliğin, bu etnik bir hedef değil burada amacımız Süryani dilinin, Süryani kilisenin ayakta kalması. Tek amacımız tek uğraşımız bu, Süryani dili yaşasın, kilisemiz ayakta kalsın. Bunun dışında hiç bir istek hiç bir iddiamız yok ve bunu yaşatabilmemiz için birlik beraberlik içinde olmak zorundayız. Burada zaten çok küçük bir bölümüz."

²²⁸ Sara Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Routledge, 2004, p.78.

²²⁹ At the same time, these sacrifices promise the *Süryani* subject for the possession of a certain 'symbolic capital' that is valid within the community. In 30 years old single Sevgi's narrative, the metropolitan Yusuf Çetin directly called her in order to arrange a marriage with Aziz from Adıyaman. Since the İstanbul Süryani community is dominantly composed of Mardinites, the non-Mardinites are usually excluded from the community's network and the metropolitan, in his call, emphasized Aziz's father's contribution to the Adıyaman Süryani church in order to compensate the non-recognition of non-Mardinites within the community, according to Sevgi.

The same call to subject the *Süryani* identity to the church at the same time calls the *Süryani* citizens to become submissive to the state's rule. Susin continues:

*Süryanis have always been a religious entity and respectful citizens of their state. They socialize in the church. Never have they acted politically, never have they a political goal.*²³⁰

The call to unite around the church assures the state for the community's loyalty through promising a "non-political"²³¹ *Süryani* subject construction. If a *Süryani* (as Erol Dora) claims to represent the community without the approval of the church circle, that has a traditional dependency relation to the state, he will not be a legitimate representative. Susin declares:

*Erol Dora is a Chaldean. Or he may be a Protestant. One thing I'm sure of, he is no Süryani. We have to have a representative in the parliament, but this representative must be from a certain political group and supported by certain people.*²³²

Disavowal of Erol Dora by the church circle and the dominant discourse as a non-*Süryani*, but a Chaldean²³³, despite his efforts for the rights of the community's confiscated properties²³⁴, reveals that in order to get recognized as a *Süryani*, it is not enough to be loyal to the community or Christianity as such. But a 'recognizable' *Süryani* has also to be loyal to the state. Sait Susin continues:

*It's his own will and decision, we have no right to interfere. But he is not a member of our church, nor did he stand up as a candidate with support from us.*²³⁵

²³⁰ "Süryaniler tarih boyunca hep buldukları ülkeye sadık vatandaşlar olarak, bir dini cemaat olarak varlıklarını sürdürmüşlerdir. Kilise etrafında toplanmışlardır hiç bir şekilde siyasi bir amaç, siyasi herhangi bir hareket içinde bulunmamışlardır."

²³¹ Non-political is used in the sense that politicized in accordance with the state's demands.

²³² "Erol Dora Keldanidir. Birileri Keldani diyor, birileri Protestan diyor ama kesinlikle Süryani değil. Burada mutlaka mecliste bir temsilcimiz olması lazım ama gönderdiğimiz bu insanın belli partilerde ve belli bir destekle gitmesi lazım."

²³³ Chaldeans in Turkey form a part of the Syriac/Assyrian people that belongs to the sepeerate Chaldean Catholic Church since 1553.

²³⁴ <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=18090474&yazarid=42.html>

²³⁵ "Bu kendi isteği ve kendi kararı biz kimseye niye böyle yaptı diyecek halimiz yok ama bizim kilisemizin üyesi değil bizim kilisemizin desteğiyle ya da oluruyla adaylığını koymuş bir arkadaşımız değil."

Because of the fact that Erol Dora belongs to a dissident party, he does not know how to get protected from the state. If he were a *Süryani*, he would collaborate with “certain” parties so that the state certified church and the social network around its power would recognize him. The representatives that have been recognized by the church and the state are the only legitimate representatives of the *Süryani* community. So, the church circle is the only legitimate power to approve one’s *Süryani* identity. Yalçın Bayer of *Hürriyet* publishes a letter from Gürdal. Gürdal declares the *Süryani* community’s non-recognition of Erol Dora:

.... *We don’t believe that this friend who is from Şırnak, is a Süryani. Because we all know each other. Anyone who wants to learn about this can go to the ‘Register’ of the Süryani Kadim Metropolitan.*²³⁶

So, besides being a Christian loyal to God, the church and the state, an ideal *Süryani* is the one who recognized by the church circle as the sole legitimate witness to the sacrifices for the church/community/Christianity. And the church is the highest authority to assign bodies as *Süryani*.

²³⁶ “... Şırnaklı olan bu arkadaşın, Süryani olduğuna inanmıyoruz. Çünkü biz birbirimizi biliriz ve tanırız. Bunu öğrenmek isteyenler Süryani Kadim Metropolitliği’ndeki ‘Süryani Kütüğü’nden bu durumu öğrenebilirler.”

Non-mardinite identity of Erol Dora also becomes an element in denying his *Süryani* identity. But at the same time, members of the church circle usually emphasis their pride for the unity of their church in terms of its composition as a ‘mosaic’. According to the Chairman Susin, their church embraces *Süryanis* from different cities: “*Bir dernek adı altında ayrı bir kuruluş olarak daha çok parçalanmamıza neden oluyor. Geçen gün Avrupa’dan bir arkadaşımız gelmişti Almanya’dan, sizin İstanbul’daki idareyi çok beğeniyorum dedi ve şunu ekledi: ‘Almanya’da Adıyamanlılar bir arada, Midyatlılar bir arada, Midyat’ın köylüsü bir başka grupta, Mardin Diyarbakır zaten çok fazla yok. Burada siz hepsini bir araya getirmişsiniz’. Ve hakikaten her girdiğiniz kilisede bu mozaği görüyorsunuz. Biz bu yapının bozulmasını istemiyoruz.*” The discourse of unity constructs the church as exclusively the only institution for *Süryani* people to gather around and different institutionalizations render the community vulnerable before the danger of disappearance through dividing the community. The same discourse that excludes Erol Dora as a non-loyal, non-statist, non-*Süryani* hails the *Süryani* subjects under the church’s roof as the only institution to unite around.

Middle Classness

Construction of the middle class citizen as an ideal of the modern nation-state provides a domain that the *Süryani* can occupy without undue problems through the myth of equal citizenship. Getting integrated into the division of labor defined by the modern nation-state is a way of becoming proper citizens. It is supposed to be a safe path for non-Muslim desire under the conditions of the state's suspicion on minorities. The community's dominant public discourse upon success in trade or economical well being usually appears in relation with their loyalty to the state. In Gürdal's narrative, we witness the articulation of the loyalty to the state, middle classness and loyalty to the family/community as introversion or 'closeness':

*Süryanis live in their own internal world; concerned with their work, commerce, familial structure.*²³⁷

*Now we are very happy, content in Turkey. Every part of Turkey is also ours. We go for a vacation as we wish, we eat, drink, travel as we want, no one intervenes with us. I mean neither we think to claim for a piece of land, nor we want to have a rift with the state.*²³⁸

Gürdal assures the state of his community's submission to the state by emphasizing consumerist tendencies of his community. As the *Süryani* identity does not have any contradiction with the nation state's ideal middle class citizen, it is docile and depoliticised before the state. Rather than demanding certain rights on certain lands of the country like 'others' (Kurds, Armenians) have done, the ideal *Süryani* citizen has access to the country as a whole. Such a discourse construct a consumerist, middle class *Süryani* subject who is supposed to own the country without any reference to a patriotic investment. An ideal *Süryani* knows her/his

²³⁷ "Süryaniler işlerinde güçlerinde, kendi ticaretlerine, kendi aile yapılarına, kendi iç dünyalarına dönük yaşarlar"

²³⁸ "Şimdi Türkiye'den biz son derece mutluyuz memnunuz. Türkiye'nin her yeri de zaten bizim. İstedığımız gibi tatilimizi de yapıyoruz, yiyoruz, içiyoruz, geziyoruz, kimse bize karışmıyor. Yani biz ne bir toprak peşinde olmayı düşünüyoruz ne de devletle aramızın açılmasını istiyoruz."

position before the state's superior Muslim/Turk citizens but still is able to take an important position within the division of labor:

*Even if they had difficulties at the beginning when they settled in Istanbul for the first time, they had gradually overcome those. They had quickly adapted to the speedy rhythm of the city thanks to their strenuousness and determination; in a short period of time they became adapted to the social life of the city.*²³⁹

*Süryanis from Turkey and Middle East, who opened to world, succeeded important works and built high-level, eye-brightening careers in countries they live.*²⁴⁰

It can be argued that as a way of compensating for the foundational lack of having the 'minority' identity, the professional career becomes a way of making up the *Süryani* identity in 'proper' ways. Even though they are members of a disadvantaged minority group, skillful *Süryani* individuals are capable of achieving occupational success as a source of pride for their community. Similarly, Horeipsikopos Samuel Akdemir emphasizes:

*This community, which realized big achievements in every field of life struggle in a short period of time; made many sacrifices for its people both inside and outside the country, with all its astute, skilled individuals from every occupation like businessmen, merchants and industrialists, professional engineers, talented doctors.*²⁴¹

Such a narrative transposes the struggle against the hardships related to the survival of the community/identity, to a struggle of *Süryani* individuals for taking respectable positions in the division of labor. Through the sterilized narrative of survival it becomes possible to hail the *Süryani* subjects' sacrifice for their

²³⁹ "İstanbul'a yerleşmeleri başlangıçta zor olmuş ise de daha sonraları bu zorlukları gitgide aşmışlardır. Çalışkanlıkları ve azimleri sayesinde kentin hızlı dönen çarkına çabucak ayak uydurmuş, kısa sürelerde şehrin sosyal yaşamına adapte olmuşlardır."

http://www.suryanikadim.org/ortodoks_toplumu.aspx

²⁴⁰ "Türkiye'den ve Ortadoğu ülkelerinden dünyaya açılan Süryaniler kısa zamanda çok büyük işler başarmışlar ve yaşadıkları ülkelerde yüksek düzeyde göz kamaştıran kariyerler yapmışlardır." Samuel Akdemir, *Istanbul Mozağında Süryaniler*, Tarlabası Meryem Ana Kilisesi Yayınları, 2009, s.47.

²⁴¹ "Kısa zamanda yaşam mücadelesinin her alanında büyük başarılar elde etmiş bu toplum; iş adamları, tüccar ve sanayicileri, yüksek mühendisleri, yetenekli doktorları ve her meslekten iyi yetişmiş dirayetli bireyleriyle yurt içinde ve dışında kendi insanları için birçok fedakârlıkta bulunmuştur." Ibid, p.47.

community and the church without placing the *Süryani* identity in conflict with the Muslims or the state. Accordingly, the more members of the community increase their capitals the more the community is supposed to get exalted.

Moreover, an ideal *Süryani* who is loyal to the state's rule and attached to the community and the church; is at the same time expected to be wealthy:

*There are big differences between Süryanis of Europe and of Turkey. Süryanis have low level of education in Europe, they work as workers in the factories. They lie, they blame the country [Turkey] in order to obtain permanent residency. Süryanis from Turkey do one's military service, pay taxes, have an occupation; they are owners of house, of jewellery shop from the elites. This is why, despite they are from my community, I don't like much Süryanis who went from Turkey to Europe. Many Süryanis in Istanbul don't like them either.*²⁴²

The quotation above has been taken from the discussion forum of the website "www.süryaniler.com" below the title "Turkish and European Syriac Christians".

The narration emphasizes the loyalty of the Turkish *Süryani* through the comparison of the two groups. Bearing in mind the struggle of the *Süryani* community in the diaspora for the recognition of the Assyrian national identity and the Assyrian genocide, the critique of the European *Süryani* as laborer and non-loyal to the Turkish state, leans on the assumption of the ideal *Süryani* as a bourgeois loyal to the state. On the other hand, such an economical description of the ideal *Süryani* also corresponds to economic rivalry within the community. According to the description in the official website of the metropolitan of İstanbul-Ankara, the church is pleased with the economic competition within the community:

Süryani people work to increase their life standarts, to not staying one behind another. This fact increases their commercial graphics; influence positively the

²⁴² "Türkiye Süryanileri ve Avrupa Süryanileri arasında büyük fark vardır. Avrupa'daki Süryani'nin eğitim seviyesi düşüktür, fabrikalarda işçi olarak çalışır. Oturum almak için geldiği ülkeye suç atar, yalan söyler. Türkiye'li Süryani askerliğini yapar, vergisini verir, meslek sahibidir; ev, kuyumcu dükkânı sahibi elit kesimindedir. Bu yüzden her ne kadar kendi toplumum olsa da Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya giden Süryaniler'den hoşlanmıyorum. İstanbul'daki çoğu Süryani de hoşlanmaz onlardan." <http://www.suryaniler.com/forum.asp?fislem=cevaplar&kategoriid=4&ustid=4891>

*distribution of income. Although their economic conditions are good, there exists middle and low-income families. But as a percentage, high-income families constitute the majority.*²⁴³

As the church is proud of its wealthy members, members of the community compete for economic wealth. A wealthy *Süryani* is also expected to contribute to the church in the name of the community. According to this dominant view, even though there are non-wealthy families within the community they do not represent the norm of an ideal wealthy *Süryani*. So, it should be expected that the members of the community strive for financial well being not just for the economic comforts but as a way of becoming a respectable, ideal *Süryani* of the community. And the desire to approximate this ideal corresponds to a model of obedience in relation to the state's discourses on the proper minority.

iii - The Representative as Father:

In her article "*Nation of Women*", Nükhet Sirman describes the sociological structure of the Ottoman society as an order that has been ruled over by big houses. She sees Topkapı Palace as the biggest house in the country and as the model that represents the relations of order and power. According to this model, the family and the social order mutually regulate each other; political relations are intertwined with kinship relations; and the household head is both father and sovereign.²⁴⁴

On the other hand, through the institutionalization of the Republic, the nuclear family came to regulate the domestic life which is said to be 'private'. The institution of the nuclear family came out as the symbol of rationality and modernity.

²⁴³ "Süryaniler, hayat standartlarını yükseltmek, biri diğerinden geri kalmamak için, geceli gündüzlü çalışmaktadırlar. Bu olgu onların ticari grafiklerini yükseltmekte, gelir dağılımlarını müspet yönde etkilemektedir. Ekonomik durumları iyi olmasına karşın orta ve dar gelirli aileleri de mevcuttur. Ancak oran itibarı ile geliri yüksek olanlar çoğunluğu teşkil etmektedirler."

http://www.suryanikadim.org/ortodoks_toplumu.aspx

²⁴⁴ Nükhet Sirman, "Kadınların Milliyeti" in *Milliyetçilik: Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 4, İletişim Yayınları, 2002, p.235.

Structurally it rendered possible a political regime based on the assumption of equality by making the dependency relations between men illicit while it dispelled the former hierarchies of the Empire. With the modern nation state, the former relationship to the sovereign power left its place to a model where the sovereign state recognized all married men as equal, as the new household heads and as the separate sovereigns of their families. By empowering the household head as sovereign, the modern state bypasses the mediation of formerly big houses.²⁴⁵ Meanwhile, a cultural analogy between the nation and the family become possible through the portrayal of the nation as a big family which contain ties between the citizens that are similar to the familial ones.²⁴⁶

When we look at the regulation of the minority communities in Turkey, we see that the state has certified the position of representative as fatherhood. The community/family is a big house that is dependent on the state through the fathers as representatives. In this way the state is able to rule over the entire group, now defined as a religious community (and therefore ‘outside politics’) through its relations with the group’s representative. In the *Süryani* case, after the establishment of the Republic we see the perpetuation of this mediating position that has been occupied by the metropolitan and the members of the church circle as the key figures to represent the community before the Turkish state.

For Sirman, one way of describing the condition of being under the authority of someone is thinking in terms of representation. Representation is the ‘making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in

²⁴⁵ According to Sirman, with the law released in 1926 men gained the right for becoming household head through being husbands. Before, men’s marriage was dependent on the ‘pasha’s approval as household head. <http://www.bianet.org/kadin/insan-haklari/78216-sirman-tmk-erkegi-hem-koca-hem-reis-yapti>

²⁴⁶ “Kadınların Milliyeti”, p.243.

fact'.²⁴⁷ It is the authority of the nation state that recognizes the minority citizens as minorities just through the acknowledged representatives. It recognizes the minority citizens not just as regular individuals that belong to the household of their nuclear family but also as persons who belong to their community/family as a big household. The 'minority' community has been recognized as a 'social compartment' that belongs to the big house of the Ottoman rule and the subordinate members of the household are in fact under the authority of its head. If the *Süryani* identity is to be represented, there are the fathers as representatives to effect this representation 'properly'.

Since the state is already mistrustful of its minority citizens, it supervises them through the fathers as representatives.²⁴⁸ In other words, out of the traditional representational forms there is no space left for the *Süryani* citizen to be recognized by the state as different but equal. Furthermore, in Sirman's words, the myth of equal modern citizenship renders these traditional dependency relations invisible.²⁴⁹ "As represented members, they exist in the private spheres of life and are, therefore, invisible or absent from the public sphere."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Pitkin, H.P., 1967, *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, p.8, quoted in Nükhet Sirman, "State, Village and Gender in Western Turkey", in *Turkish State, Turkish Society*, A. Finkel, N. Sirman (eds), London: Routledge, 1990, p.44.

²⁴⁸ According to Yakup's account, the church circle was trying to discourage him and his friends from publishing his website by threatening to sue them for using the name *Süryani* on the independent website www.süryaniler.com in which they independently discuss the issues related to the community. Or, as a contemporary example, Yakup again took a direct warning from Kenan Gürdal for hanging a poster dealing with *Süryani* issues on the AKM during the 'Gezi events'. The poster read: '*Do not touch my Mor Gabriel monastery – Çapulcu Suryoye*'. Gürdal as the vice-president of the council of the 12 warned him against the use of the name *Suryoye* in opposition to the state in public and claims the illegitimacy of such a representation through pointing out the Prime Minister Erdoğan's words: "*The ones who started will pay for it*".

²⁴⁹ "The Making of Familial Citizenship", p.164,166.

²⁵⁰ According to Sirman, "representation thus becomes primarily a gender-specific relationship: it is men, and not just any men but household heads, who by virtue of their position become representatives and women, the represented par excellence." in *State, Village and Gender in Western Turkey* p.45.

The traditional representational schema plays an important role in constructing the hierarchy within the community by legitimizing and prioritizing the representative. “The main actors competing for identity and importance are the representatives, the male heads of households who are thereby given recognition as active participants bearing responsibility, accountability and authority. As the representatives of their households, they are judged not only in terms of their own behavior, but also in terms of the behavior of those individuals over whom they have authority, that is, those whom they represent.”²⁵¹

In his talk of eighteenth century France ancient regime, Donzelot argues that “in compensation for his responsibility toward the authorities that bound him, the head of the family had virtually a discretionary power over those around him. He could make use of them for all the operations that were intended to further his etat, he could determine the children’s careers; decide how the family members would be employed and which alliances would be contracted. And he could also punish them if they did not live up to their obligations toward the family, and for this he could get the support of the public authority that owed him aid and protection in his endeavor”.²⁵²

In Gürdal’s narrative the church circle in İstanbul needs to apply state power over the *Süryani* community in a similar way that Donzelot’s describes ancient regime. The household head requests the support of the state for the punishment of a family member who is supposed to transgress the contract between the state and the community. Gürdal seeks for the dismissal of the Assyrianist officers who work together with the metropolitan of Mardin-Diyarbakır:

²⁵¹ Ibid, p.45.

²⁵² Jacques Donzelot, “Governing Through the Family”, in *The Policing of Families*, Pantheon Books, 1979, p.49.

*... if there is a stranger who occupied your house, you give a request to the prosecutor. Then you say 'people, who we don't want, occupied our house'. You go to the state, the state come with you, do what is necessary about those people.*²⁵³

In Gürdal's narrative these people that came from Sweden talk of Assyriansim and thus they are unwanted as "non-loyal". Assyrianism is a 'dangerous' tendency in terms of the relations with the state and since they are 'outsiders', they are uninterested with that. And we witness again the exclusion of the non-loyal *Süryani* individuals this time as 'invaders'. So Gürdal and the church circle wrote an official complaint to the public prosecutor in order to protect their 'household' from dangerous outsiders as fathers of their community/family. In Gürdal's account, he takes upon himself the responsibility of the community as he took the responsibility of his family. As they represent as fathers, the community becomes the family. The bond that makes him serve, at the same time hails the *Süryani* individuals as subordinates:

*... All I did was not for myself or someone else, neither for my community; but for the future of my children, the name of my family here, its honor. This means that my family is Süryani community, my children are Süryani community.*²⁵⁴

His service for his family does not seek for any personal benefits. A father serves just because of his relationship towards his community/family which also corresponds to his honor. Simultaneously love and nationhood becomes the names for his bond to the community:

Think about that! I rush around for many issues with a great pleasure. What is that for? Doubtlessly it is not for thrusting myself forward but rather it is because

²⁵³ "...sizin evinizi işgal etmiş yabancı bir kimse varsa gider savcıya dilekçe verirsin. Ondan sonra dersin ki 'bizim evimizi istemediğimiz insanlar işgal etmiştir'. Devlete gidersin, devlet seninle beraber gelir, o kişiler hakkında gereğini yapar."

²⁵⁴ "... Ben yaptığım hiçbir şeyi şahsım için değil, başkası için de değil, toplumum için de değil; kendim için, çocuklarımın geleceği, ailemin buradaki ismi, şerefi, onuru için yaptım. Bu da demektir ki benim ailem Süryani toplumdur, benim çocuklarım Süryani toplumdur."

*of my love for my community and of that I am a fanatic Assyrian nationalist. There is no other reason.*²⁵⁵

According to Sara Ahmed, “to love and to be loved is about fulfilling one’s fantasy image of ‘who one would like to be’ through who one ‘has’. Such a love is about making future generations in the image I have of myself and the loved other, who together can approximate a ‘likeness’, which can be bestowed on future generations. Within this economy, the imperative to love becomes an imperative to extend the ‘ideal’ that I seek to have onto others, who ‘can’ return the ideal to me. It is clear from the extension of self in love, or the way in which love orients the subject towards some others (and away from other others), how easily love for another slides into love for a group, which is already imagined in terms of likeness”²⁵⁶.

Gürdal’s love as his reason for serving his ‘community’ is an extension of his ideal upon future generations (including me). The imperative that hail the members of the household to sacrifice, at the same time enables the perpetuation of the existing hierarchies in relation to the dominant discourse’s ideal *Süryani*. It is an ideal *Süryani* that is loyal to the state, the church and the fathers simultaneously. In the end, the ideal is, to remember Ahmed, an effect of the process of idealization, which elevates some subjects over others.²⁵⁷

Gürdal’s service as a father as representative that manifests his love and identification with the *Süryani* identity also assumes the father’s knowledge to

²⁵⁵ “Düşünün ki bunun gibi birçok noktada her şeyiyle beraber büyük bir zevkle de koşturuyorum. Ama bu ne için, illa ben bi ön plana çıkacam, kendime şöhrat kazanacam veya bir şey bekleyecem diye yapmam. Toplumuma duyduğum sevgiden ve koyu bir Süryani milliyetçisi olduğumdandır. Başka hiçbir şey değil.”

²⁵⁶ “*Cultural Politics of Emotion*,” p.129.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.131.

interpret the state as a way of getting protected. It is a 'patrimonial'²⁵⁸ state that represented as a provident and fearful father; and knowledge of it should be respected and followed by the represented members of the household. While the representative's knowledge and ability to represent constitutes the subordination of the represented, at the same time provides him symbolic capital in Bourdieu's terms.

According to Sirman's usage of Bourdieu, in case of the village, the household head has a dual function as the representative of the state as well as of the household itself. This position of the household head within the village, for her, has two consequences: "On the one hand, we can see how representations and interpretations of the state are part of the symbolic capital people compete with. And, on the other hand, the head of the household can be seen as the mediator between the state and the household as well as the state and the village".²⁵⁹ In relation with the governing of the minority communities as households belongs to the state as the biggest house, in Sirman's terms; the representative of the community becomes the head of his household before the state. Since the members of the represented household do not have the necessary knowledge; a father is to represent his family before the state and to protect it from the possible dangers. Gürdal continues:

And of course, the family righteously steers clear of the police and the police station since they do not know what will happen to them. In fact there is nothing to steer clear of; everything operates within the scope of legislative framework. But if I

²⁵⁸ Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?", Daedalus, Vol. 102, No. 1, Post-Traditional Societies (Winter, 1973), The MIT Press.

²⁵⁹ Bourdieu, P., "Maximizing material and symbolic capital", Outline of a Theory of Practice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1977, p.171-83 quoted in Nükhet Sirman, "State, Village and Gender in Western Turkey", in *Turkish State, Turkish Society*, A. Finkel, N. Sirman (eds), London: Routledge, 1990, p.21.

*had been able to help for such issues, I had even forgotten about my supports. I am not aware of them.*²⁶⁰

Moreover, he has to protect and guide the family on the path to survival by constantly warning them of the danger of total annihilation. As a father he gives negative examples:

*Since in this sense Armenian people were engaged in a serious rebellion against Turkey, Ottoman intelligence sources did not forgive and it ended up with such a result. Surely, the trouble has expanded. It started with the intention of expelling Armenians from this country. When Armenians resisted against that, they had the pretext to get inflamed! They moved straight crushing everything. They hung or cut every Christian they found. They kidnapped the Christian daughters and women, and buried the rest in mass graves.*²⁶¹

His narrative reminds the subordinates of their generational responsibility through the fear of annihilation: If the members of the family do not pursue the path that the father's narrative leads and they revolt against the state (as the Armenians did), they will be annihilated all together as a family or will have to give up *Süryani*/Christian identity if it is still possible. So, the state, as the sovereign over the family's survival, has to be persuaded about the loyalty of the family members. The fathers as representatives are the ones who claim to know how to relate to the state in order to get protected. They are the authorities of the traditional relation to the state to keep the community in a representable form. At the moment the representative becomes unable to give an account of his subordinates to the state, he becomes unable to protect the family. Simultaneously, fear becomes a technology of power to construct the *Süryani* subject as submissive to the state and the fathers.

²⁶⁰ “*Ve aile de tabii ki haklı olarak da başlarına ne geleceğini bilmediği için bir polisten çekinir, karakoldan çekinir. Aslında çekinecek bir şey de yok, her şey yasal çerçevede içerisinde yürür. Ama böyle noktalarda da ufak bir yardımım dokunmuşsa da ben yaptığımı bile unutmuyum, farkında değilim.*”

²⁶¹ “*Ermeniler bu anlamda Türkiye'ye karşı çok ciddi bir başkaldırı içerisinde örgütlendiklerinden dolayı Osmanlı istihbaratı da bunu affetmedi ve böyle bir noktaya geldiler. Tabii iş çok daha fazla büyüdü. Ermenileri topraklardan atalım gönderelim diyerek iş başladı ama Ermeniler de tabii silah tutup da karşı koyunca bunlar da siz misin bize vuran! Dümdüz gittiler, nerede Hıristiyan varsa astı kesti, kızlarını kadınlarını aldı götürdü, geri kalanını da toplu mezarlara attı.*”

The usage of the fear of annihilation through the fathers as representatives does not always take form through pointing out the Muslim violence. Marriage with a Muslim also represents a danger for the perpetuation of the identity. According to Erol Dora:

For example, suppose that an Assyrian man marries a Muslim girl. Tomorrow they will have children, right? The man will want to baptise the child and the women will refuse to do so. What I mean, these are issues that may lead to cultural conflicts and these are all real. As I said, reality is what makes a human free. Sooner or later, you may be married but you will have problems, too. Maybe you will be divorced and your children will be unhappy, too. It is my contention that for the reasons of bringing up their own generations and maintaining their self-existence as a community, it is important for people to have a marriage in harmony with their own culture.²⁶²

Throughout the interviews with the young *Süryanis*, the issue of endogamic marriage appeared as the most important issue that shapes the experience of being a *Süryani* in Istanbul today. It is a moment that tests one's belonging to the community. Besides, through the endogamy the *Süryani* ideal operate in the sense that one might learn his/her and the others position within the community. So, since the issue of marriage bears power relationships and the issue of endogamic marriage in *Süryani* community in Istanbul is one of the most important facts that enables one to make sense of his/her identity; experiencing the *Süryani* identity in Istanbul always/already leaves one to the marital webs of kinship and power relations of the community.

Representatives as fathers mostly touch upon the issue of marriage in their narratives. Intervention to the subordinates' matrimonial affairs came to be among

²⁶² "Örneğin diyelim ki bugün bir Süryani gidiyor bir Müslüman kızla evleniyor. Yarın bunların çocukları olacak, değil mi? O diyecek vaftiz edeceğiz, öbürü diyecek kabul etmiyorum. Yani bunlar kültürel çatışmalara vesile olabilecek şeylerdir ve bunlar gerçektir. Dedim ya, gerçek insanı özgür kılar, yarın öbür gün sen evlendin, ama problem yaşayacaksın. Belki boşanacaksın, çocukların da mutsuz olacak. Onun için aileler evlenirken, tabi ki kendi kültürlerine yönelik olarak bir evlilik gerçekleştirmeleri, ileride kendi nesillerini yetiştirmek bağlamında da, kendi varlıklarını halk olarak da sürdürmeleri bağlamında da önemli bir düşüncedir diye düşünüyorum ben."

the most important duties of the household head for the survival of his community/family. In Erol Dora's narrative, marriage with a Muslim causes cultural conflict within the family and the extinction of the cultural identity at the same time. And this time the fear of extinction operates as a technology to reproduce endogamic marriage. Even though Erol Dora is excluded by the church circle and said to be in opposition to its traditional dependency to the state; he speaks within a discourse of fatherhood that intervenes in the subordinates' matrimonial affairs. It can be said that Erol Dora, as a non-dominant father, performs the duties expected from a proper father in order to prove his capacity for the community fatherhood.

iv - Metropolitan and the Council of the 12:

The first *Süryani* migration wave to Istanbul took place from the 1830s until the Republican years. The first migrants were mainly from Simhor, Bitlis, Diyarbakır and Elazığ. And the second wave took place starting from the 1950s up till now.²⁶³ Until 1959, the Board of the Beyoğlu Syrian Orthodox Church, as the centre of the community in Istanbul, was administered by non-official committees composed of 5-6 members at the most. Together with the increasing population of the community in Istanbul, the committee applied to the Administration of the Foundations for legal status. With the new regulation, the committee composed of 12 civil members came to be the only legal institution to represent the community with a direct responsibility.²⁶⁴ The council of the 12 is a representative community institution under the roof of the church and the name of 12 is a reference to Jesus' 12 disciples. With the Metropolitan, the committee is responsible for the community's public affairs. The members mostly belong to the economically predominant families of the

²⁶³ Muzaffer İris, *Bütün Yönleriyle Süryaniler*, Kişisel Yayınlar, İstanbul, 2003, s.151.

²⁶⁴ <http://www.suryanikadim.org/vakif.aspx>

community. They, as the members of the committee, are also inaugurated to their statuses as representatives with the following oath as a manifestation of their loyalty to the state:

*...We swear on our honour, pride, dignity and Bible that we will conform to and be committed to laws of Turkish Republic, as we did in past.*²⁶⁵

When we look to the Council of the 12 we see the coexistence of the features that are in relation with the *Süryani* ideal. Manifestation of wealth, proximity to the church and the State are the main characteristics that are supposed to describe the members of the council as fathers. While these members, who usually belong to powerful families, already have symbolic and economical capitals; for Yakup²⁶⁶ membership brings further capital accumulation:

*For every period, definitely there are representatives from certain families, from big families that aid the Church. For example, there are representatives from Family T., Family K and Family G. There are some certain grand families; one member from each of these families takes part in administrative body.”; “These are titles. It is a title in community and it is also a social title. For example, when somebody looks at calling card of one of these people, they will mention her/him as Member of Assyrian Administrative Body. This will open up many gates with regard to state affairs.”*²⁶⁷

On the one hand, the status as the legitimate representative of the community brings a social capital that is valid before the state institutions. On the other hand, the actual or projected relations with the various sections of the state are used in intra-

²⁶⁵ “... T.C. kanunlarına geçmişte olduğu gibi bağlı kalıp riayet edeceğimize namus, şeref, haysiyet ve incilimiz üzerine yemin ederiz.”

²⁶⁶ Dissident editor of the first independent, civil print magazine of the İstanbul Süryani community which is now defunct and site manager of the contemporary web site: www.suryaniler.com

²⁶⁷ “Her dönem kesinlikle belli ailelerden, kiliseye yardım yapan büyük ailelerden bir temsilci mutlaka oluyor. Mesela T ailesinden oluyor, K ailesinden oluyor, G ailesinden oluyor. Belli başlı büyük aileler var; bunların bir üyesi kesinlikle yönetim kurulunun içinde oluyor”; “Bunlar hep etikettir. Cemaat içi bir etiket ayrı, bir de toplumsal bir etiket. Kartvizitine baktığın zaman Süryani Yönetim Kurulları Üyesi diyor mesela. Bu ona devlet nezdinde de birçok kapıyı rahatlıkla açabiliyor.”

community competition to enhance what Sirman, in reference to Bourdieu²⁶⁸, described as ‘symbolic capital’.

Besides the council of 12, there are the spiritual leaders who represent the community. Until 1986, deceased Hori episkopos Samuel Ezber and Hori episkopos Samuel Akdemir respectively served as the spiritual leaders of the community in İstanbul, as the representative of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate. With the increase of the *Süryani* population in İstanbul, the council of the 12 requested from the Patriarchate in Damascus the status of the metropolitan for the congregations of the İstanbul Syrian Orthodox Church. Thus, in 1986 Mor Filüksinos Yusuf Çetin has been consecrated as the Metropolitan of the community in İstanbul by the Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I. Iwas.²⁶⁹

Metropolitan Mor Filüksinos Yusuf Çetin is responsible for the current *Süryani* community in İstanbul-Ankara today. Besides him, there are three more Metropolitans on duty in Turkey: The Metropolitan of Tur-Abdin²⁷⁰, Mor Timotheos Samuel Aktaş; Metropolitan of Mardin-Diyarbakır, Mor Filüksinos Saliba Özmen; and the Metropolitan of Adıyaman and peripheral provinces²⁷¹, Mor Grigoriyos Melki Ürek. Amongst 25.000 *Süryani* in Turkey, as the Metropolitan of 17.000 *Süryani* in İstanbul, Yusuf Çetin is the most important representative of the *Süryani* community in Turkey.

²⁶⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, “Maximizing material and symbolic capital”, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

²⁶⁹ <http://www.suryanikadim.org/metropolit.aspx>

²⁷⁰ Tur Abdin is a hilly region of south east Turkey incorporating the eastern half of Mardin Province, and Şırnak Province west of the Tigris, on the border with Syria. The name 'Tur Abdin' is from the Syriac language meaning 'mountain of the servants (of God)'.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tur_Abdin

²⁷¹ Mersin, Şanlıurfa, Malatya, Gazintep, Elazığ, Adana and Antakya.

The Metropolitan is called *Seyyidne* by the community, as a term means ‘our grandfather’; while the priests are called *Abbune* which means ‘our father’. As the *Seyyidne* is head of the church, he is the worldly representative of God’s rule and since the church is the unique home of the community, the Metropolitan is symbolically the highest father of the community.

When it comes to the worldly affairs, the Metropolitan is the one who is ‘consulted’. The church circle as the elites of the community who are supposed to be in ‘contact with the outside’ are pleased with the Metropolitan’s views about the ways to make the community survive.²⁷² In terms of the community’s affairs, the members of the council of the 12 said that they are in conformity with the *Seyyidne*:

*It does not contradict with because it works in harmony with the other (Seyyidne). Yusuf Çetin is an utterly different man. He comes and joins to our meetings, as I said, he provides insights for us and gets our opinion but he does not insist on our doing anything.*²⁷³

These ways do not transgress the traditional rule of the state to govern the minorities. According to Gürdal, in comparison to some others (like the metropolitan of Mardin-Diyarbakır who is prone to Assyranism), Yusuf Çetin does not intervene in the traditional relation between the elites of the community and the state. In other words, he remains submissive to the state and depoliticized:

²⁷² The ‘dissident’ editor of the www.suryaniler.com website, Yakup says: “...bir heyet kalkar buradan Suriye’ye patrikhaneye gider. Metropolit ihtiyaçları olduğunu söylerler ve onlardan öğrencilerin içinden uygun olan bir tanesini seçmeleri istenir. Buradaki metropolit de böyle bir teste tabi tutulmuştur. Bundan yaklaşık, yanılmıyorsam, 30 sene önce toplumun Münir Kilimci gibi ön plana çıkmış insanları tarafından seçilmiş ve buraya getirilmişti. Onların kriterleri: problem çıkarmayacak, pürüzleri iyi örtecek, zenginlerin her dediğini yapacak kalitede bir insan yetiştirmektir.” His narrative posits the cooperation between the state and the elites to a fundamental procedure for the electing of metropolitans. But for him, there were also times that the elites made the ‘wrong’ choice: “Bu seçimlerinde başarılı fakat bazen baltayı taşta da vurabiliyorlar. Böyle bir uygulamayı Mardin ve Diyarbakır metropolitlikleri için de yaptılar fakat maalesef oraya getirdikleri insan biraz tahminlerinin dışında birisi çıktığı için şu anda o dini liderler biraz sorun yaşıyorlar. Şimdi onu görevden almaya çalışıyorlar mesela.” But, according to Yakup, since that the elites in İstanbul could not get the necessary support from the community in Mardin, they could not dismiss the metropolitan of Mardin.

²⁷³ “Çelişmiyor çünkü uyum içinde gidiyor. Yusuf Çetin bambaşka bir insan. Geliyor toplantılarımıza katılıyor, şimdi dediğim gibi, bize fikir veriyor, bizden fikir alıyor ama illa şunu yapacaksınız diye elini masaya vurmuyor.”

In our community, spirituals only deals with spiritual issues. For example, our metropolitan Yusuf Çetin, we are thankful to him, is principal responsible for priests, their conditions, their needs and shortcomings, and what to maintain for each of Churches. He is responsible for commingling and integration of the community, for gathering young people together...²⁷⁴

The *Seyyidne* functions as the council's member responsible of public relations. Apart from religious ceremonies, he regularly meets with his community through the celebrations (as for baptizals, engagement or holy days). The meetings usually take place at the rooms that are next to the church buildings as the metaphorical home of the community.

The main part of the *Seyyidne*'s service, as a public relations man, is to perpetuate endogamic marriage against the danger of disappearance. It is a fundamental function on the way to the survival of the community. He takes an active role in introducing the young *Süryani* men and women to one another through social activities such as trips, holidays, picnics, et cetera. Parents are thankful for his efforts to protect their children from a possible marriage with a Muslim. For them, the *Seyyidne* is the protecting father assuring the community's survival and unity. Members of the council of the 12 also repeatedly emphasized their gratitude towards the Metropolitan Yusuf Çetin's admirable efforts on endogamy as the main way for the community's survival. Gürdal says:

... He undertakes a mission of striving to make young people to get married to someone from the community, not to others outside the community. And he succeeds in that mission extremely good. God bless him.²⁷⁵

For Sara Ahmed, "the turning away from the object of fear involves turning towards the object of love, which becomes a defense against the death that is

²⁷⁴ "Bizim burada ruhaniler sadece ruhani işlerle ilgilenir, bizim Metropolitimiz sağ olsun, mesela Yusuf Çetin papazlardan sorumludur, papazların durumlarından, eksikliklerinden, hangi kiliseye ne olması gerektiğinden en başta sorumludur. Cemaati bütünleştirmekten sorumludur, toplumun bir araya kaynaşması için, gençlerin bir araya gelmesi için..."

²⁷⁵ "...gençlerin birbiriyle evlenip yabancılara gitmemesi için çabalar sarfeden bir misyon üstlenmiş kendinde ve bunu da son derece başarıyla yapıyor. Allah başımızdan eksik etmesin."

apparently threatened by the object of fear. In this way we can see that fear is that which keeps alive the fantasy of love as the preservation of life, but paradoxically only by announcing the possibility of death”.²⁷⁶

In Gürdal’s speech, the object of fear as ‘stranger’ represents the Muslim. The Muslim is the one who massacres the Christians or convert Christian women to Islam and takes them as a spouse.²⁷⁷ It is the historical enemy figure of our Christianity which is supposed to be the last castle of the *Süryani* identity. The main antidote against the Muslim threat to survival is to perpetuate endogamy. The father as representative, who knows the best way for his family’s survival, has also power on the marital decisions of his subjects. By announcing his love and sacrifice for his community/family, his *Süryani* ideal hails the prospective subjects. Such an idealization reproduces the hierarchical power relations within the community; and places the church circle, including Gürdal himself, to the top within the community.

The threat itself is shaped by the authorization of the father’s narrative about what is and is not threatening, and about who are and are not the appropriate ‘objects’ of fear. It is a fear that hails the *Süryani* desire towards the Christian bodies, the Church, the community and all the mentioned values in relation with them. In Ahmed’s words, it is the same fear that works to restrict the subordinate bodies through the movement or expansion of fathers.²⁷⁸ The more fear makes subordinates stick on to the fathers’ ideals, the more fathers’ ideals gain influence and vice versa.

According to the Chairman of the Foundation of the *Süryani* Church, Sait Susin:

²⁷⁶ “*Cultural Politics of Emotion*”, p.68.

²⁷⁷ The saying “*Even if it is an apple, don’t put it into your pocket. If you have to put it, cut your pocket to let it fall*” represents an example of the negative image of Muslim in the memory of *Süryanis*. The apple refers to ‘the Muslim’ in a way to suggest that even if there might be occasions that we, as *Süryani* Christians have to put the apple in our pocket, the best thing to do is to get rid of it and stay away from the Muslims as much as possible. (It has been translated from its original in Arabic.)

²⁷⁸ “*Cultural Politics of Emotion*”, p.69.

*Seyyidne is metropolitan of Süryani Ortodox Church. He wants his church to get bigger with respect to both number of members and physical space. He has to protect that intention as the leader of that Church, as the Metropolitan of Süryani Ortodox Church.*²⁷⁹

According to Susin, as the protecting father of his community, the *Seyyidne* normally strives to enlarge his church as the embodied form of the community. This enlargement necessitates the dedication of the *Süryani* individuals and at the same time corresponds to the expansion of the influence of the fathers as household heads. The more values related to the church circulate, the more they gain accuracy. In sum, the more fathers' ideals get idealized, the more they gain power.

For the purpose of 'enlarging his church', besides arranging endogamic marriages, he finds and brings back to the community and Christianity, the members whose ancestors converted to Islam in the past.²⁸⁰ Using his symbolic power, he even finds adequate jobs or spouses²⁸¹ to the converted or powerless members of his community which all together corresponds to the expansion of the fatherhood as provider and the church's power.

For Bourdieu, "the technical and symbolic forces of cohesion are embodied in the person of the 'patriarch', *djedd* whose authority is based on the power to disinherit, the threat of malediction, and above all on adherence to the values

²⁷⁹ "*Seyyidne Süryani Ortodoks'un metropoliti. Kilisesinin daha çok büyümesini insan sayısı anlamında, mekân olarak da büyümesini ister bunu yapması için de oradaki kilisenin başı olarak bunu yapmak, bunu korumak zorunda Süryani Ortodoks'un Metropoliti olarak.*"

²⁸⁰ The mentioned converted members are mostly from Adıyaman, Urfa, Elazığ, Bitlis, Siirt, Batman, Şırnak and Diyarbakır.

²⁸¹ As an example from the interviews done for this study, in 30 years old Sevgi's account she has been called directly by the *Seyyidne* to be introduced to Aziz from Adıyaman as a prospective spouse with an emphasized reference to his father's contributions to the church in Adıyaman. Since the *Süryani* community in İstanbul is overdominantly composed of Mardinites, Aziz was complaining that he was excluded from the kinship networks and he declared that he only recognizes his father and the Metropolitan in the community ("*Bir babamı bilirim, bir de Seyyidne'yi bilirim bu toplumda*"). His words also point out the perception of the community father as the one who provides equality to the community members. But in the end, even the Metropolitan's threatening for the disavowal of the young woman does not bring a happy end. Despite the *Seyyidne*'s intervention Sevgi declares that she could not feel in comfort with him for his complaints against the Mardinites' exclusionary network and one more time Aziz's "prejudices" about the Mardinite's exclusion became approved.

symbolized by *hadjadith* (from *djedd*, father's father, the set of ascendants common to those who claim the same real or mythic ancestor), the original and historical community which is the basis of the official units. The patriarch ensures equilibrium among the brothers by his very existence, since all power and prestige are concentrated in him".²⁸² Even though he is said to be in a symbiotic power relationship with the community elites; the *Seyyidne* as the grandfather of the community has a symbolic position within the community similar to Bourdieu's patriarch. The *Seyyidne* as the highest representative of the community has a power to disinherit and provide 'equality' to the ones that are close to the church. And, being critical against the state represents the limit to the *Seyyidne*'s efforts to integrate non-Mardinites or converted members as a way of ensuring the equilibrium. Questioning of the traditional subordinate and loyal relation to the state is a dangerous limit for the *Seyyidne* and the church circle that needs to be controlled and contained.

According to Yakup's account, in reference to the above mentioned independent website and magazine to introduce the *Süryani* community to the public, the *Seyyidne* talked directly to the parents of the young writers to point out the dangerous path their children were taking. Even more, in one of his speeches at church, the *Seyyidne* pointed out a prominent writer of the magazine for 'talking too much even though he is a convert (*dönme*)'. The reason for using the term *dönme* was rejoining of the young man's family to the community after living as Muslims in Adiyaman before. For Yakup, following the words of the *Seyyidne* the young man always stood away from the church and the community. In other words, he has been indirectly excommunicated from the community by the *Seyyidne* for not being loyal

²⁸² Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press, 1990, p.193-194.

to the state. Moreover, we witness the 'convert' as an unreliable subject for the community either.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL BELONGINGS: LIMITS OF DISSENT IN THE COMMUNITY

In this chapter I will try to examine the discourses that are critical towards the community that has been defined by the dominant discourse described in previous chapters. It is a discourse that represents the community as wealthy, religious and harmoniously loyal to the state and is reproduced in consensus by the state and the community representatives. The young men who are barred from fatherhood and the women through their critical narratives reveal in different ways this consensus on the *Süryani* 'ideal which elevates some subjects over others'²⁸³. In other words, these critiques of the community correspond to the revelation of the suppressed subject positions within the community which are rendered invisible by the dominant discourse that is reproduced by the state certified fathers as representatives. It can even be argued that the literature on the *Süryani* community in Turkey also generally renders these subject positions invisible to the extent that it represents the community as a unitary entity. But these critiques also have to remain within the limits of dissent in order to belong to the community. The young *Süryanis* who feel pressurized by the patrimonial authorities criticize the community in following ways.

²⁸³ Sara Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Routledge, 2004, p.131.

Critique of the Church's rule

In Yakup and Edip's critical narratives the church appears as the central power that has the ability to control the community in Istanbul. Yakup is the editor of the first independent, civil print magazine of the İstanbul *Süryani* community, which is now defunct, and the site manager of the web site: www.suryaniler.com. His narrative depicts the church as an institution against the establishment of independent organizations within the community:

For instance, one of the most important issues of Süryanis today is their inability to demilitarize. They have a problem in demilitarization. The church and its management agencies want to control everything. Under these circumstances, civil initiatives can't survive. Let me give an example, about 6 years ago, Süryanis in İstanbul attempted to establish a non-governmental organization. However, the church received this as an action against itself and declared in church announcements the establishment of such an organization and that Süryanis shouldn't accredit it. This happened for the first time in the Süryani society; the emergence of a civil initiative trying to become an organization and report its demands, but the church hindering it.²⁸⁴

The church sees this as a matter of struggle against its own power. It believes that the non-governmental organizations will enter its own territory and lessen its strength. For this reason, it never wants civil initiatives to form and exist.²⁸⁵

The church does not just intervene against the alternative institutions to represent the community, but also against any social gathering that attempts to be independent of the church. According to Edip²⁸⁶ they were organizing social activities to introduce young *Süryani* people to each other. Even though their main intention was to introduce young *Süryani* individuals to each other for a possible

²⁸⁴ “Mesela bugün Süryanilerin en önemli sorunlarından biri sivilleşmemek. Sivilleşme sorunları var. Kilise ve onun yönetim kurumları, her şeyin kendi kontrolleri altında olmasını istiyor. Böyle olunca da sivil inisiyatifler yaşama şansı bulamıyor. Şöyle bir örnek anlatayım, bundan yaklaşık 6 sene önce, ilk defa bir sivil toplum derneği kurulmaya çalışıldı İstanbul'daki Süryaniler arasında. Fakat kilise bu hareketi kendine karşı yapılmış olarak gördü ve kilise duyurularında böyle bir derneğin açılacağını ve Süryanilerin bu derneğe itibar etmemeleri söylendi. Bu Süryani toplumu içerisinde ilk defa olan bir şey, sivil bir inisiyatif ortaya çıkıp dernekleşmeye çalışıyor, taleplerini anlatmaya çalışıyor ama kilise buna engel oluyor”.

²⁸⁵ “Kilise bunu kendi gücüne karşı bir iktidar meselesi olarak görüyor. Sivil toplum örgütlerinin kendi alanına gireceğine inanıyor ve gücünü azaltacağına inanıyor. Bu nedenle de sivil inisiyatiflerin toplum içerisinde doğmasını, yaşamasını hiçbir zaman istemiyor.”

²⁸⁶ 43 years old single Süryani man.

marriage, people around the Metropolitan intentionally organized the *Seyyidne*'s meeting on the day of Edip's independent meetings in order to prevent their activities. In the end, Edip came to face with the *Seyyidne*:

They did it on purpose. After that, we played the theatre piece for one more day, and they put Seyyidne's holiday celebrations on the exact same day. He calls me and says: 'let me inform you, they do it on purpose, they will have it coincide with yours, they'll arrange a celebration, you should know, be careful, arrange another day'. I went to Seyyidne at once. I sat down and said 'Seyyidne, the situation is such and such: we gather the youth, meet among ourselves, let the young ones get to know each other, play theatre, this is an activity'. He directly said, 'make religious meetings as well, like the ones you do for theatre'. 'We will, Seyyidne', I said, 'we will also do that.' The youth branch that they appointed is responsible for that. If they can't manage that, if they can't knock it off, what can we do? Then he says 'come and take the chair'. Neither my knowledge, my power, nor my time is enough for this. If I do, I will perform inadequately, I wouldn't begin something that will be loose. My schedule does not allow me for activities with the youth from 3, 4 pm to 10, 11 pm at night, 4-5 days each week at the church. Some days I work until 12, 1 at night. I'm not in the position to do that. I told him this. He said OK. I'm cancelling that day off. You are doing better work. You gather people around and integrate them. I will tell them to change the day.'²⁸⁷

Even though the *Seyyidne* was opposed to the non-religious character of the meetings at first, after Edip's submission to the church's authority by giving detailed personal explanations, the *Seyyidne* appreciated his efforts and allowed the meeting to take place. It might be argued that Edip's admittance of the church's authority corresponds to their organization's dependency on the church. Later on Edip had to close down his 'independent' organization because of malevolent gossip and family pressures. By preventing his efforts to gather the young *Süryani* people on the way to

²⁸⁷ "Kastılı yaptılar. Ondan sonra bi gün daha tiyatro yaptık, o güne Seyyidne'nin bayramlaşmasını denk getirdiler. Beni arıyo diyo ki: 'abi sana haber veriyim, bilerek yapıyorlar, senin gününe denk getiricekler, bayramlaşma koyacaklar, haberin olsun, dikkat edin başka güne alın'. Anunda Seyyidne'ye gittim abi. Oturdum dedim 'Seyyidne böyle böyle; gençleri topluyoruz, kendi aramızda toplanıyoruz, gençleri tanıştırıyoruz, tiyatro yapıyoruz, bi etkinliktir'. İşte hemen bana şey dedi 'tiyatro gibi dini toplantılar da yapın'. Yaparız dedim Seyyidne, onu da yaparız. Onu o şekilde yapmayla görevli olan sizin atadığınız gençlik kolları. Bunu yapamıyolarsa, beceremiyolarsa biz ne diyebiliriz ki. O zaman gelin başkan olun diyor. Benim ne bilgim, ne gücüm, ne de zamanım bunu yapmaya yeterli değil. Yaparsam yarım yamalak yaparım, bir işe yarım yamalak girmem. Benim haftanın 4-5 günü 3'lerde, 4'lerde çıkıp gece saat 10'lara 11'lere kadar kilisede gençlerle ilgili etkinliklere zamanım müsait değil abi. Ben gün geliyo gece saat 12'lere, 1'lere kadar iş yetişsin diye çalışıyorum. Onu yapacak durumda değilim ben. Onu söyledim. Tamam, oğlum dedi. Ben o günü iptal ediyorum. Siz benden daha iyi iş yapıyorsunuz. Milleti bir araya toplayıp kaynaştırıyorsunuz. Ben söyliyecem onlara günü değiştirsinler."

endogamic marriage, the community is able to deprive Edip of his social group independent of the church (and maybe even of his prospective marriage). Edip argues that what the church seeks is the preservation of the monopolistic power of the church on the community:

*Why doesn't he want this? Because the church can't manage it. Then they say 'the church wants it but can't make it, however you can.' Then you can make them do everything. If you can manage to have them do this, you can make them do anything. Therefore they want us to work under them implementing their commands. They don't want us to do anything without first asking them. They want to have the control.*²⁸⁸

According to Edip's critique, the church strives to repress every organization that is independent or to absorb them to increase its own power but in Edip's words they, as *Süryani* individuals, 'endure in order not to get excluded'²⁸⁹. In these narratives on the community the church as the institutional form of paternal authority is also the power to assign one as a respected *Süryani* father. Edip thinks that it is the church and its dominant norms that have prevented him from getting married and establishing his own family²⁹⁰. In other words, his wish to be a father thwarted by the church's understanding of paternalism while his general critique of the church as a monopolistic power simultaneously conceals his search for a domain that would enable his (liberal, secular, tolerant) fatherhood independent of the church.

Like Edip, Yakup also criticizes the church for wanting to monopolize authority, but the main difference in his narrative is his emphasis upon the church's closeness to the state. This closeness, for him, leads the church to suppress

²⁸⁸ "Niye istemiyo? Kilise yapamıyo çünkü. O zaman 'kilise istiyö yapamıyo, sen yapıyosun' oluyo. O zaman sen her şeyi yaptırabilirsin. Sen bunları yaptırabiliyosun, herşeyi yaptırabilirsin onlara. Onun için istiyorlar ki onların altında onların verdikleri emirleri uygulayalım. Yani bana sormadan bir şey yapma. Benim elimde olsun istiyö."

²⁸⁹ "Bazı şeylere katlanıyoruz abi. Niye katlanıyoruz? Toplumumuzun içinde dışlanmamak için katlanıyoruz."

²⁹⁰ "Hayatımda en çok sevdiğim ne biliyor musun Selim? Çocuk. Benim yanıma bir tane çocuk koy, ben beş saat onla oynarım abi. Bayılıyorrum çocuklara, aile kurup kendi çocuğum olması lazım ama ben bunları çekeceksem evlenmem abi ve evlenmiyorum da. Benimki protesto abi."

independent organizations that might threaten the dominant representation of the community on which the state and the church are in consensus:

We decided to put together a website that will have our own articles, that will tell about our culture with our names. It was the year 2001 when we decided this. With a crew of 5, we initiated the first website that tells about the Süryani culture in Turkey. Naturally, this formation drew the reaction of the church and the men of the cloth. They threatened us with prosecution. They propagandized against us in the society, telling that we were doing this for money and that our goal was to divide the society. After hearing these accusations we demanded a meeting from the administration and from Metropolit. We gathered with them. The meeting was quite tense, I remember it as if it was yesterday. They threatened us with prosecution. They claimed that only they could use the name Süryani and that if we continued to use this name, they were going to sue us. That day I brought a book to the meeting. Its name was Süryanis of the Middle-East, from Aziz Koluman. I said to the head of the management of the time, Yakup Tahincioğlu 'Mister Yakup, I wonder if this author asked for permission from you when writing this book.' Seeing the book and unable to provide an answer, Yakup Tahincioğlu got angry, took the book and threw it on the floor.²⁹¹

The Assyrianist tendencies of young Yakup and his friends came forward together with their emphasis on the use of Syriac language and minority rights²⁹² was well known by the church circle especially since Yakup worked under the roof of the church in order to publish a community magazine. His experience of working for the church magazine took place before his attempt to produce an independent

²⁹¹ “Kendi yazılarımızı, kendi kültürümüzü, kendi ismimizle anlatacak bir site kurmaya karar verdik. Bu 2001 senesi falandı kurmaya karar verdiğimizde. Beş kişilik bir ekiple Türkiye’deki Süryani kültürünü anlatan ilk siteyi kurduk. Bu oluşum tabi yine kilise ve din adamlarının tepkisini çekti. Bizi mahkemeye vermekle tehdit ettiler. Hakkımızda toplum içinde, bu işi para karşılığı yaptığımızın, amacımızın toplumu bölmek olduğu propagandası yapıldı. Bu iftiraları duyunca yönetim ve Metropolitlikten bir toplantı talep ettik. Onlarla bir araya geldik. Toplantı oldukça gergin geçmişti, dün gibi hatırlıyorum toplantıyı. Bizi mahkemeye vermekle tehdit ettiler. Süryani ismini kendilerinden başka kimsenin kullanamayacağını, eğer bu ismi kullanmaya devam edersek bizi mahkemeye vereceklerini iddia ettiler. Ben de o gün toplantıya bir kitap getirmiştım. Kitabın adı Ortadoğu Süryanileriydi. Aziz Koluman’ın kitabı. O zamanki yönetim kurulu başkanı Yakup Tahincioğlu’na ‘Yakup Bey, acaba bu arkadaş bu kitabı yazarken sizden izin aldı mı?’ dedim. Tabi kitabı görüp argümanıma karşılık veremeyince sinirlendi Yakup Tahincioğlu ve kitabı alıp yere fırlattı.”

²⁹² As it has been mentioned previously, the rights discourse posits the minorities to a legal domain that their rights defined clearly. On the other hand ambiguity of the church’s traditional paternalistic relation to the state provides representative and interpretative power to the church before the community as well as it bestows further power to the state in the face of the community. So the alternative attempts to represent the community (as Erol Dora and Yakup) criticize the church for evading the use of rights discourse. In other words, it is a contradiction between the demand of a contract with the modern state that clearly defines the minority rights and the traditional patrimonial relation between the state and the church.

magazine²⁹³. This attempt has been perceived by the church circle as a threat to the unitary representation of the community. In Yakup's view, their independent efforts have been reflected by the church circle to the community as the efforts to divide the community. Since a divided community is assumed to be more vulnerable in view of the danger of disappearance, malevolent gossip circulated within the community was a way of excluding them and rendering them silent.

On the other hand, it can be argued that Yakup's reference to Aziz Koluman's book implies that he as a *Süryani* has the same right as the Turkish writer to use the name *Süryani*. Such an equation of the *Süryani* and the Turkish subjects distorts the consensus between the church and the state which necessitates the subordination of *Süryani* subjects to the community's dominant representation as it has been defined in the previous chapter. While the fathers as representatives declare the illegality of the use of the name *Süryani* independent of the church, Yakup and his friends bypass them and attempt to interpret the intentions of the state by themselves. It can be argued that the myth of equal citizenship helps the dissenting *Süryani* subjects to try to establish their autonomy from the paternal authority of the church. Nevertheless, they still need the tacit ratification of the church in order to be recognized by the community at large. Similarly, in Edip's narrative, the church appears as an oppressive institution but it is still the highest authority to defer to in order to be recognized as *Süryani*.

Furthermore, for Yakup, the church uses its symbolic power to influence the families to control their children so that the fathers and the state are in consensus:

²⁹³ Later on this magazine will be closed by the church's pressure on the parents of the young volunteers of the magazine.

For instance, Metropolit calls the parents of the child. He meets with them in private and tells them that their son is following a wrong path. He tells them that if their son continues like this, something bad could happen to him, and that he wants to help. The institution of Metropolit is a very important one among Süryanis. All Süryanis attach great importance to this institution, they have great respect for the people running it. Everything he says is like a sacred law for them. They try to do whatever he asks. To fulfill the wishes of Metropolit, they take their sons aside and say 'Look son, this is not a good way to follow. Such and such could happen to you. These are illegal things, we never deal with such things. Look, Metropolit loves you. Because he loves you, he summoned us and told about you. We don't want anything bad to happen to you'. They convince their sons and detract him from us.²⁹⁴

One more time the father as representative warns his subordinates about the dangers outside. Yakup's attempt to make the *Süryani* identity visible to the Muslim public, his possible transgression of the assumed consensus between the church and the state might harm the community's conditions of existence. Because of the fact that the father as representative knows the best way for the survival of his family, the subordinates remain submissive to the church's power and the familial appears as a domain of power over the young *Süryani* subjects. For Edip, the church's spiritual effect on the community corresponds to 'brainwashing':

This is not possible with a single person. They brainwashed the people quite effectively. Our mothers get brainwashed in the church.²⁹⁵

According to Sirman's study, "the dominant image of the state as provider, an image is reproduced by its local representative and emulator, the household head.

This image reinforces the nature of everyday social relations and gender identity

²⁹⁴ "Mesela Metropolit çocuğun anne ve babasını bir şekilde yanına çağırıyor. Onlarla baş başa görüşüyor ve oğullarının yanlış bir yolun içinde olduğunu ifade etmeye çalışıyor. Bu yolda giderse başına ilerde kötü işler gelebileceğini, onlara yardım etmek istediğini ifade ediyor. Tabi Metropolitlik Süryaniler arasında çok önemli bir kurum. Bütün Süryaniler çok önem verirler bu kuruma, başındaki insana çok büyük saygı gösterirler. Her dediği kutsal bir yasa gibidir onlar için. O ne isterse yerine getirmeye çalışırlar. Bu Metropolitin isteklerini yerine getirmek için oğullarını alıp köşeye çekerler. 'Oğlum bak, yanlış yapıyorsun, bu yol güzel bir yol değil. Başına şöyle şöyle şeyler gelir. Yasadışı işler bunlar, hiçbir zaman bunlarla işimiz olmaz. Bak Metropolit seni seviyor. Seni sevdiği için bizi çağırıyor bunları söyledi. Biz de senin başına kötü bir şey gelsin istemiyoruz' diye ikna ediyorlardı ve bir şekilde bizden uzaklaştırıyorlardı.

²⁹⁵ "Bi kişiyle bu olmaz. Halkın da kafasını çok güzel yıkamışlar. Annelerimizin kafasını kilisede yıkıyorlar."

within the village.”²⁹⁶ Similarly, fatherhood within the community as representative of the household before the state reproduces the familial roles and the mother, on the other hand, appears to domesticate and reproduce ‘proper’ *Süryani* individuals within the context of the gendered division of labor. If the father is to provide necessary connections with the state for the protection of the family from the dangers ‘outside’, the mother is to reproduce the members within the family/community. Indeed, throughout the interviews, the dominant representation of the proper *Süryani* woman appears to be the subordinate who remains loyal to the household head’s rule²⁹⁷, is beneficial to her community and the church, marries a *Süryani* man and raises proper (or ideal) *Süryani* children.

In fact, Edip’s narrative posits the mother as an agent of the church’s oppression in relation with the dominant *Süryani* norms and the loss of the mother is the worst experience that a man can ever have.²⁹⁸ As a *Süryani* man whose greatest problem throughout his narrative is the world of norms that prevent him from having power as a *Süryani* father, a power which is reproduced through mothers, points to the loss of the mother as a loss of the bonds that tie him to his *Süryani* identity.

‘Our mothers get brainwashed in the church’ was the last sentence of Edip’s critical narrative towards the church’s intervention to their independent social organization. After uttering the mentioned last words, he wanted me to stop the voice recorder as if we came to a discursive limit. Even though, we, as young *Süryani*

²⁹⁶ “*State, Gender, Village*”, p.22.

²⁹⁷ Furthermore, It is worth to mention that the wedding swear on bible that preaches the woman to be obedient towards the household head in the name of God and Christianity as a domain that love of man towards woman and woman’s commitment towards the community/family coincides with the gender construction of the *Süryani* women as subordinate. The mentioned oath that takes place in the *Süryani* church weddings is as following: “*Ey kocalar, Mesih kiliseyi nasıl sevip onun uğruna kendini feda ettiyse, siz de karılarınızı öyle sevin*”, “*Ey kadınlar, Rab’be bağımlı olduğunuz gibi, kocalarınıza bağımlı olun. Çünkü Mesih bedenin kurtarıcısı olarak kilisenin başı olduğu gibi, erkek de kadının başıdır. Kilise Mesih’e bağımlı olduğu gibi, kadınlar da her durumda kocalarına bağımlı olsunlar*”. <http://incil.info/arama/Efesliler+5:22-33>

²⁹⁸ “*Erkeklerin hayatında yaşadığı en kötü olay nedir biliyor musun? Annesinin ölmesi.*”

people, are critical of the dominance of the church and the community of its norms, we should know when to be silent. There are still limits to Edip's critique of the familial roles and the church's spiritual power. His *Süryani* identity that enables Edip as a man who might be able to possess the patrimonial power, at the same time endows him the fear of losing the identity through a confrontation with the patrimonial authority or losing the mother. His critical belonging to *Süryani* identity is composed of these fears that lead to silence as a precondition of remaining a *Süryani*.

To sum up, together with Yakup, Edip is critical of the church's monopolistic power. Both are deprived of their efforts to find a space independent of the church to realize their ideals. Even though their criticisms have different objects, it can be said that they both feel castrated by the dominant views that are reproduced by the fathers of the church circle. But in different ways they still seek to be recognized as *Süryani* fathers, so it can be said that their narratives are in consensus with fatherhood but not with the fathers of the community.

Critique of the Istanbul Community through National Identity

As it has been mentioned in previous chapters; Yakup's critique points to a consensus between the church, the community elite and the state. On the one hand, the community is being represented as a non-ethnic, religious entity in correspondence with the state's discourse on minorities. On the other hand, the state permits the community elites to prosper economically:

The relationship of the Süryanis with the state is one based on self-interest. When Süryani's left Mardin, Midyat and settled in İstanbul, for the sake of surviving... And most of them succeeded, I mean they made good money, good capital. They were forced to get involved with the state to increase the value of the capital.. Therefore they made concessions from their identity to the state. They tried to appear with the identity that the state wanted them to. It was like this: There is a dress that the state wants to put on the minorities. It wants to see them in a religious

dress. Süryanis put on that dress willingly. Because they too have such a claim: 'We are talking in the same language with the messiah Jesus'. But on the other hand their national identity was put aside. Süryani language, Süryani identity, Süryani culture became of secondary importance and our involvement with the state made us lose our own personality, our own language. We got assimilated voluntarily.²⁹⁹

In this account we see the positing of wealth, religious identity and loyalty to the state in contradiction to the *Süryani* 'national' identity, language and culture.

According to him, representation of the community as a religious entity corresponds to the denial of the authentic national essence and its assimilation into the middle classness. For him, the general inclination of the upper-middle class İstanbul community is to prefer the economic interest to authentic cultural identity. The Metropolitan of İstanbul, as the representative of the overwhelming majority of the *Süryani* population of Turkey, is in contradiction with the metropolitans of Mardin and Midyat who are inclined towards Assyrianism:

... there was the Mor Gabriel case two years ago, you must have heard. The surrounding villages sued against the land of Mor Gabriel Monastery and the process is still going on. In this process the Arami sect never gave support. However there is a monastery and its land to lose at the end of the case. A destructive result for Süryanis. When they needed to support each other, no one cared. This is something painful. They left these people alone, just because they weren't like them, they weren't thinking like them. But these two Metropolit's are giving up a legal fight like lions over there. They are going to cases on their own. They are in a struggle to be admired but the İstanbul Süryanis who are in close contact with the state somehow closed their eyes to this case. They are acting as if this has never happened. This is not a nice situation, it makes one sad.^{300 301}

²⁹⁹ “Süryanilerin devletle ilişkisi biraz çıkara dayanan bir ilişki. Süryaniler Mardin'den Midyat'tan çıkıp İstanbul'a yerleştikleri zaman ayakta kalabilmek, tutunabilmek adına... Ve çoğu da başarılı oldu yani güzel paralar kazandılar, güzel sermayeler yaptılar. Sermayenin değerlendirmesinde devletle ilişkiye girmek zorunda kaldılar. Bu nedenle devletle ilişki kurarken kimliklerinden taviz verdiler. Devletin onları görmek istediği kimlikle görünmeye çalıştılar. Yani şöyle oldu: Devletin azınlıklara giydirmek istediği bi elbise var. Onları dini bir elbise içinde görmek istiyor. Süryaniler de bu elbiseyi seve seve giydi. Çünkü kendilerinin de böyle bir iddiası var: 'İsa Mesih'in konuştuğu dille konuşuyoruz' falan. Fakat diğer taraftan ulusal kimlik ikinci plana itildi. Süryani dili, Süryani kimliği, Süryani kültürü ikinci plana itildi ve devletle bu ilişkiye girmemiz kendi benliğimizi, kendi dilimizi kaybettirdi. Kendi isteğimizle asimilasyona uğradık.”

³⁰⁰ “...iki sene önce Mor Gabriel davası oldu duymuşumdur. Mor Gabriel manastırı topraklarının aleyhine çevre köyler tarafından davalar açıldı ve süreç hala devam ediyor. Bu süreçte hiçbir zaman Aramici kesim destek vermedi. Hâlbuki davanın sonunda kaybedilecek bir manastır ve toprakları var. Süryaniler için bir yıkım sonucu. Birbirlerine destek olmaları lazımken hiç orali olmadılar. Bu acı bir şey. Sırf onun gibi değil diye, onun gibi düşünmüyor diye bu insanları orda yalnız bıraktılar. Ama bu iki Metropolit orda aslanlar gibi hukuksal bir mücadele veriyorlar. Tek başlarına davalara gidip

The İstanbul church's Aramean view that represents the community as a religious entity, opposes the Assyrianist stances of the Metropolitan of Mardin-Diyarbakır and the Metropolitan of Midyat. The Metropolitan of Mor Gabriel monastery even voiced his concern regarding the property rights on the lands of the monastery in a meeting in which the religious representatives of the Armenian, Jewish and the Protestant communities, the Turkish and the German Prime Ministers were present in the Prime Minister's office in 25th of February 2013.³⁰² Although the purpose of the meeting was to listen to the problems of the minority communities, the complaint of the Metropolitan of Mor Gabriel, especially in front of German Prime Minister, made the other minority representatives uneasy since it seems to prove the dominant perception of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey as collaborators of Western powers and hence as enemies of the state. Together with the representatives of other minority communities, the representatives of the İstanbul community also made their reaction public against the Metropolitan's confrontation with the authorities of the Turkish state.

For Yakup, the church's tendency to side with the status quo is illegitimate:

Another problem is that Süryanis don't make their problems public enough. Because the church is the only dominant power, the existing problems can't be seen. For example, Süryanis' have a problem of language. Even one percent of the Süryanis in İstanbul can hardly speak the language of Süryanis. This is a terrifying statistics. The number of people who know Süryani language is very low. There is no education either. Non-governmental organizations tried to do projects several times but they weren't helped as well. The church is always in the mindset of 'if my people have problems, I will deal with it, don't interfere.' but this never resolves the issues. For example Süryanis had the problem of foundation, they had no foundations in the real sense in the huge city of İstanbul. Tarlabaşı Meryemana Church in Tarlabaşı is

geliyorlar. Takdir edilecek bir çabanın içerisinde fakat devletle yakın ilişkiler içinde olan İstanbul Süryanileri nedense bu davaya gözlerini kapatmış durumdadır. Sanki böyle bir olay olmamış gibi davranıyorlar. Bu güzel bir durum değil, insan üzülüyor.”

³⁰¹ With the last 'democratization package' belongs AKP government, in 08.10.2013 the lands belonging to the monastery have been returned.

http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/mor_gabrielin_arazileri_iade_edildi-1154504

³⁰² <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25425123/#storyContinued.html>

the sole foundation that Süryanis have. When they dedicated their possessions, rich people didn't dedicate to the church, they still don't. The church has all the initiative. If the church wants something, it is done, if not, it is not done.” “To this day, the church never responded positively to a request. Heavens know why, it still doesn't. Withdrawn to its shell, it plots on getting closer to the state.”³⁰³

So, according to Yakup, the church interprets state action in a way to preserve its dependency relation with the state and hold the traditional power it derives from it. By contrast, Yakup seeks to establish a domain of power outside the church's area of influence. Yakup's use of the term 'still' seems to suggest that he thinks that the Turkey has changed and that the church is unnecessarily fearful of the state. So, by interpreting the new era as an alternative to the church circle's supposed traditional loyalty to the state, Yakup tries to bypass the church's interpretative mediation and attempts to represent an ethno-linguistic *Süryani* identity. It is at the same time a modernist demand which argues that there is no need to desist from demanding ethnic rights from the state anymore and assumes the legitimacy of the modern state.

To sum up, in Yakup criticizes the İstanbul church from point of view of a *Süryani* national identity. For him, since the church is dominated by elite rule and economic interests, and since they obtain this only through the consent of the state, they prefer the wealth to the authentic *Süryani* identity. His critique of the community's fathers as representatives rather than fatherhood itself, with which the state and the representatives are in consensus, can be interpreted as the dissent of a *Süryani* male who is excluded from a possible fatherhood for his 'non-dominant'

³⁰³ “Diğer bir sorun, Süryanilerin sorunlarını yeterince ortaya dökmemesi. Kilise tek hâkim güç olduğu için var olan sorunlar ortaya çıkmıyor. Mesela Süryanilerin dil sorunu vardır. İstanbul'daki Süryanilerin yüzde biri bile Süryaniceyi zor konuşuyor. Bu korkunç bir istatistik. Süryaniceyi bilen insan sayısı çok az. Bu konuda eğitim de verilmiyor. Birkaç kez sivil toplum kuruluşları çalışma yapmak istediler, onlara da yardımcı olunmadı. Kilise her zaman vatandaşımın bir sorunu varsa ben çözerim siz karışmayın anlayışında ama hiçbir zaman bu sorunları çözmiyor. Mesela vakıf sorunu vardı Süryanilerin, koskoca İstanbul'da gerçek anlamda vakıfları yoktu. Sadece Tarlabası Meryemana Kilisesi Süryanilerin sahip olduğu tek vakıf. Zengin kişiler mal mülk vakfettikleri zaman kilisenin adına vakfedemiyorlardı, hala da öyle. Süryaniler bu konuda bir girişim de yapmıyor. Her şey kilisenin inisiyatifine kalmış. Kilise isterse bir şeyler yapılır istemezse yapılmaz”. “Kilise bugüne kadar kendisine gelen hiçbir talebe olumlu yaklaşmadı. Ne hikmetse hala da yaklaşmıyor. Kendi kabuğuna çekilmiş bir şekilde, 'devlete nasıl yakın olabilirim' in hesabı içerisinde.”

views. So it can be said that while his narrative is in opposition with the ethnic homogenization policies of the nation state and the church's rule, it is in consensus with fathers as the proper representatives of the community. In other words he seeks another *Süryani* community to represent and a representative domain that would be democratic and liberal, and would be able to criticize the ethnic homogenization policies of the state. The same narrative that is subversive towards the consensus between the community fathers and the state conceals the power of fatherhood.

Competition for Manhood

One of the implications of fatherhood as a position is its capacity to protect the family/community from the dangers outside. One has to compete with others in order to become a respectable, proper father within the community. For Sirman, it is a competition that takes place not only with regard to economic superiority, that is material capital, but more importantly it is a competition for 'manhood'.³⁰⁴

Moreover, according to Bourdieu, "the homogeneity of the mode of production of habitus (that is, the material conditions of existence and pedagogic action) produces a homogenization of dispositions and interests which, far from excluding competition, may in some cases engender it by inclining those who are the products of the same conditions of production to recognize and pursue the same goods whose rarity may arise entirely from this competition."³⁰⁵

If we assume the *Süryani* community in Istanbul as a habitus, seats of the council of 12 appears as a domain of competition for manhood within the community since the council is the 'highest' representative institution of the community that is recognized by the state. When we look at the members of the council of the 12

³⁰⁴ "State, Gender and Village", p.22.

³⁰⁵ "Logic of practice", p.192.

throughout the years, there we see the dominance of a number of wealthy families who have usually been close to the church for generations. In other words, the economic and symbolic capitals valid within the community overlap in the council's profile and the council appears as a target of critique for the 'excluded' Süryani men. In the critiques of Yakup and Edip, the council appears as an undemocratic, exclusive entity which is dominated by these big families:

Yakup: Every period there is always a representative from particular families that make donations to the church, from big families. For example from Tahinci family, Kilimci family, Güzeliş family. There are specific big families, one member from each of them definitely enters the administrative board.”; Edip: “Can Sait, being a president, solve a problem in Midyat, in Mardin, in Deyrulzafaran on his own, without making calls to 3 people, 2 people? Can he solve it without consulting, tell me about that? Can Sait brother do anything without calling Münir brother from Kilimci's, Münir brother from Tahincioğulları's, -I don't know his name, his fathers name- one from Asil's?³⁰⁶

For Edip, the 'figurehead' president is unable to operate without the alliance of the household heads of 'big' families. Moreover, according to Yakup's account, the elections are not fair because of the intervention of the former councils and the Metropolitan:

I once stumbled upon these elections. I was spending most days of the week at the church because I was issueing a magazine. I was together with Metropolit. It was again a period for the election of a new administrative board. I saw the old board members go to the room of Metropolit with a list. I was also in Metropolit's room, I listened to the conversations. The head of the old board said 'Dear Metropolit, this is the list of the next board. We discussed among ourselves, and decided on these. If you approve, the new administrative board will consist of these names.' to Metropolit in front of my eyes. And those twelve people all got elected. There were 15 candidates.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ “Her dönem kesinlikle belli ailelerden kiliseye yardım yapan, büyük ailelerden, bir temsilci mutlaka oluyor. Mesela Tahinci ailesinden oluyor, Kilimci ailesinden oluyor, Güzeliş ailesinden oluyor. Belli başlı büyük aileler var, bunların bir üyesi kesinlikle yönetim kurulunun içinde oluyor”; Edip: “Sait abi bugün kalkıp bana başkan olarak, 3 kişiyi, 2 kişiyi aramadan, Midyat'ta, Mardin'de, Deyrulzafaran'da bir sorunu kendi başına çözebilecek mi? Danışmadan çözebilir mi, bana onu söyle? Sait abi bugün Kilimcilerden Münir abi, Tahincioğullarından Münir abi, Asillerden –ismini, babasının adını bilmiyorum- şu 3 kişiyi aramadan bir şey yapabilecek mi?”

³⁰⁷ “Ben bir kere bu seçimlere denk gelmiştim. Dergi çıkarttığım için haftanın büyük bir bölümünü kilise içinde geçiriyordum yani. Metropolitin yanındaydım. Yine bir dönemdi, yeni bir yönetim kurulu seçilecekti. Eski yönetimin elinde bir listeyle metropolitin odasına girdiğini gördüm. Ben de

In Yakup's account, there is the further exclusion of the unapproved candidates not approved by the elites through a mechanism of gossip:

They make no difference, we are making these elections only for show. They see the situation like this: Let's say twelve people from that list nominate themselves as candidates. And besides them x, y, z also nominated themselves. The gossips and rumors start right away about x, y, z. That man is evil, he attempted to do such and such but wasn't successful, he lived at the community's expense. Negative propaganda starts. Such and such is a convert, there are people who turned to Islam in his family.³⁰⁸

We see in Yakup's narrative that to have ancestors or relatives who converted to Islam and returned to the faith in the past makes one fall out of favor since it puts the person's loyalty to the community in question. Furthermore, one's economic failure in private life also might overshadow his/her³⁰⁹ candidacy. As it has been mentioned for the ideal *Süryani* man, an ideal council member is expected to forge good relations with the Muslims outside the community, but not to get too involved so that links to the *Süryani* community lose their strength. Such economic success also brings possible benefits to the church and the community:

During the 90's, there was a teacher named Hanna Karanfil in the administrative board elections. She declared herself as a candidate. She was probably the 13. candidate from here. She was a middle class Süryani who lived in Kurtuluş and was teaching for a living. But although she received enough votes, she wasn't taken to the administrative board because she was not rich. She didn't make a

Metropolitin odasında dım, konuşmaları dinledim. Yönetimi bırakacak olan başkanın Metropolite gelip 'Sayın Metropolit, bizden sonraki yönetim kurulunun listesi bunlar. Aramızda konuştuk, bunları tespit ettik. Onaylarsanız yeni yönetim kurulu bu isimlerden olacak' diye konuştuğunu duydum kendi gözlerimin önünde. Ve o listedeki on iki kişiden on ikisi de seçimde seçildiler. 15 aday vardı.'

³⁰⁸ *"Hiçbir önemi yok, biz göstermelik bir seçim yapıyoruz yani. Oylara şöyle bakılıyor: Diyelim o listedeki on iki kişi adaylığını koyuyor. Onun dışında da x, y, z adaylığını koydu. O x, y, z' ye karşı hemen dedikodu mekanizmaları çalışmaya başlıyor. İşte bu adam kötüdür, bu işi yapmıştır başarılı olamamıştır, cemaatin parasını yemiştir. Olumsuz propagandalar yapılmaya başlanıyor. İşte bu dönmedir, ailesinde Müslüman olmuş insanlar vardır."*

³⁰⁹ Maribel Mağzelcioğlu has been elected as the first woman member of the council in 26.11.2006. It is worth to mention that she came forward not with economic success but as the president of the woman's branch of the Moda church in the official representation of the church.

<http://www.suryanikadim.org/reyono/default.aspx?s=14&b=4&p=3>

In 20.11.2011 Semra Abacı as a woman's branch member has also been elected and presented without any reference to her professional career. So it can be argued economic success is something exclusively expected from male candidates. In the same year, painter Lolita Asil has been elected with an emphasis upon her career as a painter but not with any references to economic success again.

<http://www.suryanikadim.org/yonetim.aspx>

*situation out of this not to disrupt the peace in the society. The order came from high above, from Metropolit.*³¹⁰

Yakup, maintains that if the mechanism of gossip does not work and an ‘improper’ candidate comes to be elected, the metropolitan can directly prevent the membership. Economic wealth one more time appears as the criterion to design the hierarchy within the community that excludes the middle classes from fatherhood of the community. It is the heads of the elite families of the community who hold control of the church and the community and prevent the ‘usurpers’ such as Hanna Karanfil, Yakup or Erol Dora from becoming community leaders on the basis of their good relations with the Turkish state. But it is worth to mention that the elites are not exempt from power struggles and intra-rivalries besides their struggle against the above mentioned ‘improper’, non-ideal, non-loyal, non-wealthy, et cetera *Süryanis*.

As it has been mentioned in previous chapter, the traditional relations with the state define the *Süryani* ideal in relation with the community’s dominant discourse. This is an ideal that can be perceived as an effect of the process of idealisation, which elevates some subjects over others³¹¹. This very practice of elevation and exclusion leads to an intra-community competition. With Bourdieu, I want to argue that the conditions that led the community to develop measures for self-protection also give rise to an intra-community competition among *Süryani* men. While to be intertwined ‘too much’ with the Muslim outside brings with it the danger of disengagement from the community, it is at the same time, the means to acquire capitals to become a powerful man and a respectful father.

³¹⁰ “90’lı yıllarda, yönetim kurulu seçimlerinde Hanna Karanfil adında bir öğretmen vardı. Adaylığımı koymuştum. 13. adaydı herhalde burada. Kurtuluş’ta yaşayan, geçimini öğretmenlikle sağlayan, orta halli bir Süryani’ydi. Fakat zengin olmadığı için, yeterli oyu da almış olmasına rağmen, yönetim kuruluna alınmadı. O da toplumda bir tatsızlık çıkmasın diye bu olayı büyütmedi. Emir büyük yerden, Metropolitten gelmişti.”

³¹¹ “Cultural Politics of Emotion”, p.131.

In Bourdieu's words, "the domestic unit, a monopolistic grouping defined, as Weber said, by the exclusive appropriation of a determinate type of goods (land, names, etc.), is the site of competition for capital, or rather, for control over this capital, a competition which continuously threatens to destroy the capital by destroying the fundamental condition of its perpetuation, that is, the cohesion of the domestic group."³¹²

Endogamy is one of the most important ways of protecting the community from outside influence, and for the dominant discourse of the community, one of the most important good according to which men compete is the availability of the possible bride. In Bourdieu's words, it also corresponds to a competition for "the capital to provide the ability to contract 'good' marriages, to command respect and to be men of honour"³¹³ that reproduce the means to become a proper *Süryani* father. *Süryani* men compete for the social and cultural as well as economic capital described by the *Süryani* ideal in order to become proper *Süryani* fathers and need to get related to the 'outside' in order to gain further power ; but this very relationality also represents a threat to the cohesion of the community.

In effect to Edip, as a man who explains that he is still a single man as a protest against the community³¹⁴, the competition might destroy the community:

... we say 'If he did, why shouldn't I?' and we destroy ourselves. I mean, are we that rich as a society? We have nothing indeed as a society. Actually forty percent of our society is in very bad conditions. And all this has been hidden. An uncle or another person helps but this has limits. We will have explosions very soon. Like the times we had migrations from Mardin to Istanbul, to Sweden... this is a blasting

³¹² "Logic of Practice", p.192.

³¹³ Ibid, p.31.

³¹⁴ "Bayılıyorum çocuklara, aile kurup kendi çocuğum olması lazım ama ben bunları çekeceksem evlenmem abi ve evlenmiyorum da. Benimki protesto abi."

*point. Why? When you cannot obtain anything materially or morally, you have this feeling to run away.*³¹⁵

Edip thus links *Süryani* migration to İstanbul and Sweden to this kind of competition which hides the fact that in reality the community is poor.³¹⁶ Escape is actually just a fantasy in Edip's account since we see that he does want to be part of the community. What he articulates as an ideal is a community that is more liberal, tolerant of difference and more secular.

Edip is critical of almost every aspect of community lifeways. One of his trenchant critiques is directed to forms of conspicuous competition, which he links to the smallness of the community. This face to face communal way of life prevent the *Süryani* from living a modern life, and this, in spite of the fact that the *Süryanis* think that they are modern:

*... our Süryani society doesn't have any problem my friend. We are enemies of ourselves. We do all we do to ourselves and by ourselves. We cannot do either together or apart. We don't now each other's right, we are each other's enemies. The fundamental frame of all the events we have been going through is actually our jealousy for each other. Anyone who earns the same amount of money as we do, she/he can live all her/his life with the amount we earn in one year. But we spend in two months all the money we earn in one year. Why? Because we have to be in competition with one another. Because of this competition, we have an unusual amount of cost.*³¹⁷

³¹⁵ "... 'Vay o yapmış ben niye yapamıyorum?' diye kendi kendimizi katlediyoruz. Yani bugün toplum olarak bu kadar mı zenginiz? Toplum olarak hiçbir şeyimiz yok aslında şu anda. Toplumumuzda şu anda yüzde kırk bataklık halinde. Ve bunlar hep gizleniyor. Amca yardım ediyor, dayı yardım ediyor, o yardım ediyor, bu yardım ediyor ama bir yere kadar. Bir yerde bir patlak vereceğiz çok yakında. Hani bir zamanlar Mardin'den İstanbul'a, İsveç'e göç olayları vardı ya... Bu bir patlama noktasıdır. Niye patlama noktasıdır? Maddi ve manevi açıdan bir şey alamadığın zaman başka bir yere kaçma dürtüsü gelir insane."

³¹⁶ His narrative conceals the oppressive practices towards the community as the reason of migration. As it has been mentioned in previous chapter, It can be argued that his concealment is in relation with the dominant discourse of the community that is to be harmonious with the state. So, the cause for the *Süryani* migration becomes not the Muslim violence but intra-community competition.

³¹⁷ "...bizim Süryani toplumunun problemi yok abi. Biz kendimizin düşmanınız. Biz ne yapıyorsak kendi kendimizi yapıyoruz. Biz ne birbirimizle yapabiliyoruz, ne de birbirimizden ayrı yapabiliyoruz. Biz birbirimizin hakkını bilmiyoruz, birbirimizin düşmanınız. Yaşadığımız bu olayların ana çerçevesi aslında birbirimizi çekemememiz. Bizim şu an toplumda kazandığımız parayı herhangi biri kazansın, bir yılda kazandığımız parayla ömrünü geçirir. Ama biz bir senede kazandığımız parayı iki ayda yiyoruz abi. Niye yiyoruz? Çünkü rekabet içinde olmamız lazım. Bu rekabet yüzünden anormal şekilde masrafımız var."

The hostility that emerges from this competition produces conditions that threaten the existence of the community as *Süryani* and in a contradictory way, pushes *Süryanis* towards each other for protection. Thus Edip defines a vicious circle: competition breeds protection, which breeds more competition. He, later on, relates this rivalry, that can be named as competition for manhood, to endogamic marriage:

*How many billions you're gonna earn? Two billions, three billions... This is not a business. What are you going to do with that, will it be sufficient? They say it won't and you cannot open. So what am I going to do; I will work somewhere. No, you cannot. Which men in our society works somewhere? How many of them? We have an important standard...*³¹⁸

*We cannot work at every job. There is only one reason to it, again related to the marriage.*³¹⁹

The definition of the ideal *Süryani* as wealthy and the intra-community rivalry for manhood makes a good marriage an accepted way of becoming an ideal *Süryani* and a respected, proper father. It is a path that necessitates considerable capital which represents the precondition for *Süryani* men to become proper fathers of their own household.³²⁰ In other words, the *Süryani* ideal presents wealth as a *sin qua non* of *Süryani* manhood. This wealth, that includes social and symbolic capital, also enables one to contract 'good' marriages which open up the possibility for further wealth that empower him on the way to become ideal *Süryani* father. Thus,

³¹⁸ "Abi kaç milyar kazanacaksın? İki milyar, üç milyar... O da iş değil. Ne işin var orda ya, yetecek mi sana? Yetmez diyorlar ve açamıyorsun. E ne yapacağım, bir yerde çalışacağım. Yok abi çalışamazsın. Toplumumuzda hangi erkek bir yerde çalışıyor abi? Kaç kişi? Abi bizim önemli bir seviyemiz var..."

³¹⁹ "Biz her işi yapamayız. Yapamamızın tek bir sebebi var, yine evliliğe bağlanıyo."

³²⁰ On the other hand, even though the Metropolitan Yusuf Çetin's (even personal) warnings towards the community members to evade extraordinary marital expenditures which supposed to represent an obstacle before the endogamic marriage and perpetuation of the community's survival and he is said to support the prospective marriages 'in necessity' through the sources of the church in order to encourage the endogamic marriage; it is worth to mention that the extraordinary martial expenditures and a high cost wedding is still a norm especially among the elite families that are usually close to the church so that the manifestation of wealth keeps representing an ideal for the ordinary *Süryani* marriages.

Edip's emotional narrative is a critique of a man that has been prevented from becoming proper man in accordance with the *Süryani* ideal:

*This fear was inside me. Will I be able to marry, to set up a family? Do you know what I like the most in my life, Selim? Children. Put a child next to me, I would play for five hours with that child. I adore children. I should have a family and have my own kids, but if I am going to suffer all this, I would not marry and I don't. Mine is a protest, my friend. I loved three people in my life, two of them were Muslim. Can't I get married? I won't get married; I am happy. Nobody in the society lives what I live. I enter or exit with whoever I want. I am not scared at all. But what do I become everywhere I go? That's the thing...*³²¹

Even though his narrative posits his celibacy as a protest against the economic and symbolic rivalry within the community, he does not marry a Muslim and seeks the recognition of the community. It is a community that designates one path for becoming a proper *Süryani* man and according to this norm, despite the hardships of endogamic marriage, the single man is not a respectable person. Edip feels he has to suffer all the problems posed by the community in order not to be excluded.³²² Even though he is said to earn well, he argues that his (and the community's) unhappiness stem from this insistence on endogamic marriage.

*You know what, solve my marriage problem, take away my obligation to marry a Suryani, I am the happiest man on earth. I'm making monthly average of eight to ten billion money now.*³²³

As a man who is supposed to be prevented from fatherhood, i.e. from power, Edip's narrative reveals the rivalry for manhood within the community. At the same time he assumes that there is no problem in the relation between the *Süryani* and the

³²¹ "E bu korku içimdeydi benim. Evlenebilecek miyim, aile kurabilecek miyim? Hayatımda en çok sevdiğim ne biliyor musun Selim? Çocuk. Benim yanıma bir tane çocuk koy, ben beş saat onla oynarım abi. Bayılıyorum çocuklara. Aile kurup kendi çocuğum olması lazım ama ben bunları çekeceksem evlenmem abi ve evlenmiyorum da. Benimki protesto abi. Ben hayatımda üç kişiyi çok sevdim, ikisi Müslümandı. Evlenemiyor muyum? Evlenmem abi ben mutluyum. Benim yaşadığımı şu anda kimse toplumda yaşamıyor. Ben istediğimle giriyorum, istediğimle çıkıyorum. Hiçbir korkum yok. Ama her gittiğim yerde ne oluyorum? Eh işte..."

³²² "Birbirimizle evlenebildiğimiz için mecburuz bazı şeylere katlanmaya. Bazı şeylere katlanıyoruz abi. Niye katlanıyoruz? Toplumumuzun içinde dışlanmamak için katlanıyoruz."

³²³ "Bak ne diyorum, benim evlilik problemimi çöz, benim Süryani biriyle evlenme zorunluluğumu kes, dünyanın en mutlu erkeği ben olurum. Ben aylık ortalama şu anda sekiz on milyar para kazanıyorum."

Turkish state. It is a critical belonging that posits him within the community through a limited critique that assumes silence but at the same time promises a position of patriarchal power.

Normal versus Community

Critiques of the community's marriage strategy are usually articulated from notions of modernity, humanity or citizenship. In the critical narratives of young community members, these notions seem to provide a fundamental position for critique. They criticize the oppressive community practices as patriarchal or traditional and they do this from a point of view that they see as normal or neutral.³²⁴

*We are financially and morally superior than they are. We have to be far more superior. I see that life is their life. They are happy. We're not happy. We are currently in depression.*³²⁵

The term 'they' in this quotation refers to friends Edip has in İzmir and we can assume that they are not *Süryani*. These others are supposed to be independent from the norms and kinship ties that bind them to community. It can be inferred that these others are people who lead a 'modern' liberal way of life. He evaluates the community's and his own well-being in comparison with this assumed domain out of the community's world.

³²⁴ For example, Sevgi frequently gives references to her friends from 'outside' in order to evaluate her relationship with the *Süryani* candidate for marriage. Meanwhile marriage appears as a domain that depicts the community as an exception, as a deviation from the norm: "*Bizim cemaatte de varmış böyle düzgün insanlar*"; "*Yani bu toplum... Bu toplum demiyim, normalde olsa...*"; "*Yani evlenmeye kadar giden süreçte inanılmaz, normalinden fazla şeyler yaşanıyor*". In reference to Melin Levent Yuna's work, I will assume that this common space is created by the discourse of modernity introduced by Turkish nationalism. Melin Levent Yuna, *Identity Construction: Self-Narration of Educated Turkish Jewish Young Adults*, Boğaziçi University, 1999, p.12.

³²⁵ "*Biz maddi, manevi açıdan onlardan çok üstünüz. Çok üstün yaşamamız gerekiyo. Bir gidiyorum ki hayat onların hayatı. Mutlular. Biz mutlu değiliz. Hepimiz şu anda depresyondayız.*"

As has been mentioned previously, Edip's criticisms focus on endogamy and the norms related to it. According to him, the church's pressure towards endogamic marriage is the unavowed secret of the community:

*Sait Susin doesn't tell you this. Today, when you talk to Sait Susin, as whom does he speak with you? He speaks with you as the current leader of the Assyrian society and he can't denigrate the society. He has to tell lies when it is needed. He also has to show bad things as good ones. Because he feels pressured when they gather together. Like the pressure of Seyyidne on your family. Today, perhaps we would not be in these situations if it had not been for Seyyidne. We could have been worse or better. They go to our families and pressure them that people should be from the society, people from the society. All people all over the world marry people who they love as people; we're just in our own community... Brother, have you seen anything like that in any other country in the world? You went to Europe, did you hear anybody saying that 'I have to marry a Christian? They are marrying Chinese people and Japanese people.'*³²⁶

The men whom I have interviewed are, as men, able to claim alternative forms of power within the community so that they define different ways of becoming household heads. Edip and Yakup's criticisms address the church circle as the power behind the oppression within the community. It is this which keeps young men under the control of the church fathers and this is a secret that needs to be concealed.

Accordingly, for Edip, endogamy is an oppressive practice that is against humanity and Europe appears as the norm to compare and criticize the community. The *Süryani* by contrast, live as a minority and therefore have to comply with majority norms while those who are in the majority, like Europeans and Turks, can escape these restrictions.

³²⁶ "Bunu sana Sait Susin söylemez. Bugün Sait Susin'le konuştuğün zaman Sait Susin senle ne olarak konuşuyor? Senle Süryani toplumunun şu anda başkanı olarak konuşuyor ve toplumu kötüleyemez. İcab ettiği zaman yalan konuşmak zorunda. Kötüleri de iyi göstermek zorunda. Çünkü toplandığı zaman buna bu baskı yapılyo. Ailene senin Seyyidne'nin yaptığı baskı gibi. Bugün belki biz bu hallerde olmazdık Seyyidne olmasaydı. Daha da kötü olabilirdik, daha da iyi olabilirdik. Ailelerimize gidip baskı yapıyorlar ille toplumdaki insan, toplumdaki insan diye. Bütün dünyadaki insanlar insanı insan diye sevip evleniyor, biz sadece kendi içimizde... Dünyada hiçbir ülkede böyle birşey gördün mü abi? Avrupa'ya gittin 'yok ben Hristiyanla evlenmek zorundayım' diyen duydun mu? Çinli'yle evleniyorlar, Japon'la evleniyorlar."

An interesting elision is accomplished here: Minority as a lack in numbers is confounded with minority as a lack of power vis-à-vis an ‘other’ so that endogamy in the end appears as a product of face to face relations in a small community rather than a technology of power imposed upon a subordinated community by a dominant one. He is thus able to blame the victim, the self, the *Süryani*, rather than blame the powerful. In that too, he acts like a proper *Süryani*.

The *Süryani* community in Sweden too gets its own share of damnation. It is a ‘fanatic’ and ‘close’ community that is unable to take part in the Swedish life while the *Süryani* community in Istanbul manages to become a part of Turkish life:

*Don't count Sweden. Our people who left Turkey are very bigoted and come from an extremely closed society. People who fled from here, and are organized under the guise of religion have to stay connected to each other. They are Midyatlı. Brother, it is very bad that they have to stay connected to each other... Their situation is not very nice there. Brother, go there... It is not nice at all. They gathered among themselves, they held on to each other. There is beauty of it too but they are living a very restricted life. Indeed, they live a very restricted life. Like the old Kumpkapi days here. But that's not nice.*³²⁷

According to Edip, the *Süryani* in Sweden live as a close community because they all come from Midyat. To be from Midyat in dominant Mardinite discourse represents a patriotic *Süryani* identity that is both religious and ethnicist and functions as a sign of backwardness in Edip’s narrative.³²⁸ By contrast, he wants to

³²⁷ “İsveç’i sayma. Bizim Türkiye’den gitmiş bağnaz, çok kapalı bir toplum. Buradan kaçanlar orda gidip din kisvesi altında toplanmışlar ve birbirlerine bağlı kalmak zorundalar. Bunlar Midyatlılar. Bunlar abi birbirlerine bağlı kalmak zorunda oldukları için çok kötü... Onların hali orda çok güzel değil. Git abi orda... Hiç güzel değil ya. Kendi aralarında toplanmışlar, tutmuşlar birbirlerini. Yani güzelliği de var ama çok kapalı bir hayat yaşıyorlar. Hakikaten çok kapalı bir hayat yaşıyorlar. Burdaki eski Kumpkapi hesabı. Ama bu güzel değil.”

³²⁸ Midyat and the central district of Mardin were the two biggest settlements of *Süryani* community in Turkey until the mass migrations in the second half of the twentieth century. This split also represents the biggest socio-cultural fragmentation among the community in İstanbul. On one hand, *Süryani* population lived in the villages of Midyat known to have predominantly a peasant lifestyle, speak *Süryani* language and are said to be more patriotic about *Süryani* values and traditions. On the other hand, *Süryani* population live in Mardin is prone to engage in trade, speak in Arabic language and are said to be concerned more about ‘worldly’ doings. These two groups may even have different churches at Diasporas that can be perceived as an indicator of the fragmentation mentioned above. I am aware that the picture above is a caricaturized one but nevertheless, it is important for giving an idea about Mardinite Edip’ comment about the *Süryanis* from Midyat.

base his own masculine power on a liberal, laicist identity that would allow him easy access to the dominant society and the possibility of transcending the disadvantages of belonging to the minority *Süryani* community.

Women too complain about endogamy, but without positing alternative forms of power, since they, as woman, would be barred from power in a modern as well as a traditional society. Sevgi a 30-years-old woman criticizes the community's rule of endogamy and sees the intervention of the family in the marital process as 'abnormal':

The event of affiance is not changing easily in our society, in the community. I mean amazing things, more things happen than normal times in the process leading up to marriage. What is it? The event is no longer what two people are experiencing when families enter into the process. Families are entering into the process and intervening. Doesn't matter how much you know yourself, no matter how you have it all together, you necessarily get affected.³²⁹

I also get affected from this in some ways although I say that my family is decent and we are different from others.³³⁰

Sevgi, contrary to Edip, just want to be protected from family intervention. However, in the quote above, the link between families and the community is not spelled out. This becomes clearer when she talks about the difference between her family and the other families in the community. The others are traditional *Süryani* families and it is through them that she feels the influence of an invisible oppression of the community:

Actually, was it my fault in most of this, or wasn't? Of course it wasn't also my parents', but my family's influence and pressure also was great, unavoidable. An invisible pressure. You know, how they say the invisible hand in economy. Here is an

³²⁹ "Bizim toplumda, cemaatte sözlülük olayı çok zor gelişiyo. Yani evlenmeye kadar giden süreçte inanılmaz, normalinden daha fazla şeyler yaşanıyo. Nedir bu? Aileler isin içine girdiği zaman iki insanın yaşadıklarından çıkıyo artık olay. Aileler işin içine girip müdahalelerde bulunıyo. Sen kendini ne kadar bilirsen bil, akli başında ne kadar olursan ol illaki etkileniyosun."

³³⁰ "Her ne kadar benim ailem düzgün, diğerlerinden farklıyız biz desem de bi şekilde ben de etkileniyorum bundan."

*invisible pressure too. Well, I could not overcome it, I could not run away, I was not that strong, and so I experienced these happenings.*³³¹

Her family is different but not different enough and even she herself is not strong enough to confront them all. One can argue that it is Sevgi's assertion that her family is different from the rest and her identification with it that makes the oppression that she complains about 'invisible'. In other words, her identification with her family, ties Sevgi to the community through the recognition of her family's difference from the rest of the community. Sevgi's differentiated identification with the community, defines her critical 'belonging' to it and her critique keeps her within the limits of the community/family. The community is something to be criticized but not to be left behind so that a critique of the oppression becomes possible as far as one assumes as discursive limit the bonds that ties one to the community.

Moreover, different than the previous male interviewees' (as 'household heads' or prospective household heads) who direct their critique towards the community fathers, Sevgi's narrative is not directed to any particular institution. Rather, in Sevgi's account, it is an 'invisible oppression' that her family is just 'partly' engaged in. It can be argued that she is related to the community through the mediation of the household head as representative of the family and through the assumption of her family's difference, her dependency relation to the family becomes 'invisible' in her own words. The myth of modernity that renders this dependency relation invisible, simultaneously functions as a tool to criticize the community with:

The education of the girls is very unnecessary and a superfluous thing in our society. So I graduated from high school when I turned eighteen, and while I was

³³¹ "Hani çoğunda, hepsinde hata bende miydi, değil miydi? Tabi ki ailemin de değildi ama ailemin de büyük etkisi, baskısı vardı ister istemez. Görünmez bi baskı. Görünmez bi el derler ya hani Ekonomi'de. Burda da görünmez bi baskı var. Ha ben bunu yenemedim, üzerine gidemedim, bu kadar güçlü olamadım, bu olanları yaşadım".

*thinking to go to university after college graduation, suddenly I came to face the necessity of marriage*³³²

*Of course, there would be marriage, but I have plans for university now.*³³³

Here, we see the opposition between the modern subject as educated and the patriarchal community's expectation from the young woman to marry as soon as possible. She criticizes the community as a traditional, patriarchal entity does not respect women's education. On the other hand, education also protects her from the pressure to marry.

But it might worth emphasizing that it is not just the modern values which provide protection from the pressure to marry. In Sevgi's narrative, we also see the concept of 'destiny' that provides a similar tool for protection alongside the modernism:

*It is luck. I'm not saying that marriage shouldn't happen. I'm not that stupid. Don't I also want, like my friends to have children but everything... There's something called destiny. I mean predestination...*³³⁴

The destiny that gives coherence to her critical narrative, at the same time enables her to remain a 'smart', 'proper' woman and a member of the community still through her recognition of the family and the endogamic marriage. It is possible to interpret 'destiny' as a liberal tool against the familial pressure and intervention on marriage. It appears as something preferable to the community's pressure before her personal capacities. In fact she says:

*'I should do something; I should succeed in something too.', 'I could not do it so far, but after this I'll do it. I'll say that this life is my life', '... I'll do what I consider is the right way.'*³³⁵

³³² "Bizim toplumda kız çocuğunun okuması çok gereksiz, lüzumsuz bir şey. Yani ben onsekizimi doldurduğum gibi, liseyi bitirmişim, mezun olup üniversite hayatını düşünürken bi anda isteme olayıyla karşı karşıya geldim"

³³³ "Evlilik tabi ki olacak ama şu anda önümde okul var."

³³⁴ "Kısmet ya. Ben demiyorum evlilik olmasın. O kadar da şey değilim, aptal değilim ki. İstemez miyim ben de, yaşıtılarım çoluğa çocuğa karışmış ama her şey... Yazgı denen bişey var. Yani alın yazısı..."

Sevgi, who counsels and shows references for her actions throughout her narrative, claims her independence at the end of the text. Her desire for gaining her agency, at the same time reflects her critique of the pressure to marry. In spite of the fact that she has a new suitor that her family insists she has to see, she decides to go to and stay in England for two months with the reluctant approval of her family. In Sevgi's narration, this decision signifies her agency against the intervention of her family and the kinship network of the community.

It can be argued that Sevgi's desire to obtain her independence corresponds to the modern woman's critique of the community as an oppressive entity and her efforts to assume autonomy before patriarchal kinship oppression. Her narrative that delegitimizes the proper, subordinate *Süryani* woman in the community and introduces her agency independent of the kinship ties, simultaneously seeks the family/community's recognition so that the gendered oppression of women remain 'invisible' in Sevgi's words. One can say that this very invisibility points to Sevgi's own *Süryani* subjectivity that prevents her from contravening community practices. It is a critical belonging which is possible through a critique of the community with modern notions and invisibility that corresponds to silence before the limits of this critique.

There are also the limits of dissent in Melissa's narrative despite the fact that she transgressed the endogamy. Melissa, after 10 years of conflict with her family, married a Muslim-Alevi man two months before the interview and the emphasis in her narrative was overdominantly on the hardships they lived in relation to her

³³⁵ “*Bi şeyi de yapıyım, bi şeyi de beceriyim.*”, “*Ben bunu yapamadım şimdiye kadar ama bundan sonra yapıcım. Bu hayat benim hayatım diyecem*”, “*...kendi bildiğim doğrular üzerine gidicem*”.

transgression of endogamy. For her, the mentioned hardships were in relation with the pressure of the community as a minority:

I actually believe in my parents being progressive, but because of the pressure of the congregation they are forced to reject many things. The fact that my mom and dad sit on the same table to drink rakı shows that they are actually not this kind of people. But you are forced to deny a lot of things when you are (living) in a minority.³³⁶

Similar to Sevgi, Melissa's narrative posits her parents as 'different' and their 'modern' tendencies have become defeated by their obligations to act as members of a minority community. The community has to survive at all costs and endogamy perceived as the main way to perpetuate the *Süryani* community. For Melissa, since they belong to a minority community they have to deny her marriage with a 'Muslim'. In her account it is a necessity that leads her parents to deny her marriage. And the same narrative posits the traditional community in opposition to modernity. Her sister in law's interpretation of Melissa's mother also represents the same dichotomy:

My aunt -my brother's wife- told me 'your mom looks very communitarian, but at the same time she's trying to be so modern and therefore contradicting, the problem of this contradiction will come up years later'. Indeed, I did something like this and my aunt is not talking to my mom right now. She is very furious towards my mother. Because my aunt is very conservative.³³⁷

Melissa criticizes her sister-in-law, who does not recognize her marriage, for being a 'fanatic' and modernity one more time appears as a position from which to criticize the oppression of the community/family. But talking to me, a member of the community, makes Melissa pose her criticisms against the community within the

³³⁶ "Ben aslında annemle babamın ileri görüşlülüklerine inanıyorum ama cemaat baskısı yüzünden birçok şeyi reddetmek zorunda kalıyorlar. Annemle babamın aynı sofraya oturup rakı içmesi aslında böyle insanlar olmadığımı gösteriyor. Ama işte bir azınlığın içinde olunca bir sürü şeyi inkâr etmek zorunda kalıyorsun."

³³⁷ "Yengem -abimin karısı- 'senin annen çok cemaatçi gözüküyor ama bi o kadar da modern davranmaya çalışıyor ve çelişiyor, yıllar sonra bunun problemi yaşanacak' demişti. Nitekim ben böyle bir şey yaptım ve yengem şu an konuşmuyor annemle. Çok hırslı ona karşı. Çok bağınaz çünkü yengem."

limits of a submissive *Süryani* woman that seeks recognition for her *Süryani* identity. Despite the fact that she recognizes me as ‘critical’, she keeps her critique within the limits of the community, and, except for mentioning community pressure and the fanaticism of her brother and sister-in-law, she does not pose any serious criticisms towards the community. It can be argued that as a way of her critical belonging to the *Süryani* identity she also knows where to be silent.

Indeed, the young *Süryani* interviewees of this study simultaneously seek the recognition of the community and a critical posture towards the communal pressure as individuals in their narratives. Their modern selves that are supposed to be autonomous are meanwhile constructed in reference to the communal bonds. One may say that their critical position towards the patriarchal and excessively interventionist community takes for granted the autonomous individuality as a modern norm and consequently renders invisible the same capacities within the modernity.³³⁸ Moreover, the critical position towards the community without reference to the historicity explaining the conditions in which the community becomes a ‘minority’ corresponds to the discourse of the ‘proper’ *Süryani*. In this

³³⁸ According to Tekçe “it is not simply the idea of self-realization that is critical here, which has existed in pre-modern Europe as well as in other cultures, but its association with an autonomous, ‘free’ individual. Hence the dichotomy between societies typically characterized by one or the other type of marriage, essentially draws on the distinction between the presence or absence of self-willed, self-contained individuals, and leaves no conceptual space for personhood where orientation to desires and the claims of others are as much a part of the self-image as orientation to a unique self.” Contrarily for her, “assent to social norms, and rationality or the exercise of agency are not necessarily incompatible. Attributions of agency to actors, and hence the evaluation of whether choice was exercised, need not always use the view of the person embedded within the dominant social imaginary of the West, which typically sees the individual not only as culturally distinct, but prior to society and culture, even in conflict with them.” And she concludes with that “intense reflexivity is required in those contexts where selfhood is constructed and maintained through negotiating multiple claims by and on others. This is particularly the case in societies where selves are constructed by continuously choosing and balancing normative, sentimental, and practical requirements of one’s relationships to different others, rather than by continuously drawing boundaries between an essentialized, decontextualized self and others.” Belgin Tekçe, “Paths of Marriage in İstanbul: Arranging choices and choice in arrangements”, *Ethnography* Vol 5(2), p.194- 195.

vein, the clear-cut distinction between the pre-modern minority and the supposedly ‘modern’ majority conceals the bonds that construct the ‘proper’ *Süryani*.

To sum up, in the young *Süryani* interviewees’ critical narratives towards the community, modernity is opposed to tradition and the community is criticized for being too traditional. The oppressive patriarchal tendencies are thus relegated to tradition without any sense that modernity too is patriarchal. At the same time, in their critiques, men in fact define another more enlightened form of patriarchy while women want to see what life would bring to them. It might be said that, while modernity provides a position to young *Süryani* individuals to criticize the community as patriarchal, oppressive or traditional it, at the same time conceals the dependency of the community to the state. And it might become possible to speak about the *Süryani* subject that is in between oppressive, patriarchal community practices and a modern discourse that renders the *Süryani* identity as a deviation from the norm which is reproduced by the modern state³³⁹.

Endogamy: The Limits of Belonging

It has been mentioned that throughout the interviews with the young *Süryani* individuals, endogamy appeared as a crucial issue for the experience of belonging to the *Süryani* community in Istanbul. According to the dominant discourse of the community it appears as something that transmits the norms, roles, ideals, expectations that place one within the community. The issue of endogamy serves as a critique of the community which is thereby charged with not being modern and not respecting humanity. It is an unpleasant, traumatic moment that questions the loyalty of the young *Süryani* to the community/identity.

³³⁹ As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, it is a modern state that is also known as a Muslim state to remember the ‘converts’.

For Edip, endogamy as the only institution that holds the community together is also its only problem:

We're experiencing everything. The Assyrian society is experiencing everything. Our only problem is to get married. There is one single pressure since our childhood and youth times: to marry. Our society doesn't have other problems anyway"; " ... all of us in the community are currently concerned of marriage, fear of starting a family, nothing else."; "The Assyrian community has no preoccupation, all our troubles lead to marriage. For example, we are making a forum in the church; the forum topic for example is technology in the Assyrian society, the benefits and harms of technology. This topic is spoken for 15 minutes; in the 20th minute somehow this issue comes to marriage. We are organizing a forum, for example about medicine in Assyrian society, our doctors talk about medicine for 15 minutes, then again in the 20th minute the subject comes to marriage. Brother, take out the marriage from Assyrian community, then let's see where society is going to. Look, who keeps this society?"³⁴⁰

In his narrative, endogamy appears as the greatest oppression and the source of fear in the experience of being a *Süryani*. One should marry a *Süryani* (or with a 'Christian' in the worst case³⁴¹) in order to not to get excluded. Indeed, as intervening to marriage is the most efficient way of maintaining power within the family/community, marriage appears a domain of power and contention that both ties one to the community and oppresses at the same time.

We all are currently concerned about establishing family. We are able to marry each other so we are compelled to tolerate some things. We put up with some

³⁴⁰ "Biz her şeyi yaşıyoruz. Süryani toplumu her şeyi yaşıyor. Bizim tek sorunumuz evlenmek. Tek baskı var çocukluğumuzdan, gençliğimizden beri: evlenmek. Bizim toplumumuzun başka bir sorunu yok ki zaten"; "...hepimizin şu anda toplumda korkusu evlenmek aile kurma korkusu, başka bir şey değil."; "Bu Süryani toplumunun hiçbir derdi yok, bizim bütün derdimiz evliliğe çıkıyor. Biz mesela forum yapıyoruz kilisede, forumun konusu atıyorum ne, Süryani toplumundaki teknoloji, teknolojinin yararları ve zararları. 15 dakika bu konuşuluyor, 20. dakika dönüp dolaşıp bu konu evliliğe geliyor. Atıyorum Süryani toplumunda tıp konulu bir forum yapıyoruz, 15 dakika doktorlarımız tıpla ilgili konuşma yapıyor, sonra yine 20. dakikada konu evliliğe geliyor. Süryani toplumunda evliliği çıkar abi, bak toplum nereye gidiyor. Bak bu toplumu tutan var mı?"

³⁴¹ According to the Chairman of the Foundation, Sait Susin: "Seyyidnenin mutlaka cemaatinin kendi içinden evlenmesini istemesi çok doğal, çok haklı. Ama tabi günümüzde şartlar değişti yani bırak yalnız Süryanileri, Hıristiyanlar da başkalarıyla da evleniyor. Bu bir akış, bunu önlemeye imkân yok. Ama tabi biz azınlık olduğumuz için, az olduğumuz için bizden başka cemaatle evlenmemeli, evlenmesin diyecek değilim. Ama başka bir cemaat ya da başka bir dinden birisiyle evli olan bir insan o azınlık grubu içinde eriyorsunuz, bir eksiliyorsunuz." So it can be said that even though the best option for a 'father' is to keep the community members within the endogamy, marriage with the members of other Christian communities is perceived as tolerable considering the reduced non-Muslim and *Süryani* population in Turkey.

*things, man. Why do we put up? We put up with things in order not to be excluded from our society.*³⁴²

*We will not care about each other and live comfortably if we solve this marriage problem.*³⁴³

*The place where our life is defined, our environment, our sense of establishing a family, everything will calm down when it disappears, but for that indeed a disaster has to take place.*³⁴⁴

In his narrative the issue of endogamic marriage one more time appears as an obligation that a *Süryani* cannot stay indifferent to in order to not to get excluded. It can only be abolished by a disaster that corresponds to the abolition of the identity since that getting rid of the identity is a discursive limit. The same bond that assembles the members, demands endogamy as duty and knowledge of the connotations with one's family name plays an important role in marital relations³⁴⁵:

*As Edip if I do that I will destroy my family. I will destroy my family, not only myself. I will destroy my sister, my brother, my uncle's children, and my uncle. So many qualities have given to the son of Sevim and Cemil Yaltık; can a girl be given to that family? Let's leave a side if a girl can be given to that family, is a girl been asked from that family?*³⁴⁶

Transgression of endogamy corresponds to disloyalty or disrespect towards the community, for Edip and thus brings a negative connotation to the family's name that affects negatively the marital future of other family members. In his account, the loss of ability to marry a *Süryani* corresponds to an end as a *Süryani*.

Women are even more vulnerable before this moment. In Sevgi's narrative, marriage is inevitable:

³⁴² "Hepimizin derdi şu anda aile kurmak. Birbirimizle evlenebildiğimiz için mecburuz bazı şeylere katlanmaya. Bazı şeylere katlanıyoruz abi. Niye katlanıyoruz? Toplumumuzun içinde dışlanmamak için katlanıyoruz"

³⁴³ "Bu evlilik sorunu çözersek birbirimizi umursamayacağız ve rahat yaşayacağız"

³⁴⁴ "Hayatımızın belirlediği yer, çevremiz, aile kurma duygumuz, o kaybolduğu zaman her şey rahatlayacak ama bunun için de hakikaten bir felaketin olması lazım".

³⁴⁵ According to Bourdieu, "it is hardly an exaggeration to claim that the group's whole matrimonial history is present in the internal discussions over each intended marriage". - Pierre Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press, 1990, p.195.

³⁴⁶ "Ben Edip olarak bunu yaparsam ailemi bitiririm. Ailemi bitiririm, tek kendimi bitirmem. Ablamı bitiririm, kardeşimi bitiririm, amca çocuklarımı bitiririm, dayımı bitiririm. X, Y oğluna o kadar terbiye verilmiş; o aileye kız mı verilir? O aileye kız mı verilir bırak, o aileden kız mı istenir?"

*I also have experienced the marriage which is an unavoidable fact of this life.*³⁴⁷

In her account marriage appears as something that is out of one's control and endogamic marriage act as a discursive limit to stay within the community:

*I'm saying no, I mean absolutely not. I mean we don't have something like that.*³⁴⁸

The ones who marry a Muslim do not belong to 'us' as a *Süryani* anymore since that he/she becomes disrespectful towards the community:

*I told my father that what right he has to say that. What have I done wrong so far? Did I get married with a Muslim? Have I shown disrespect towards something in the community? I just could not do it with that person.*³⁴⁹

Sevgi's marriage to a non-Muslim can become evidence for being a proper *Süryani* woman to be used against her father. Despite she feels under pressure of the community/family, recognition of the self through them is key to constructing a morally acceptable life course. As a proper *Süryani* woman she is not just the one who does not marry a Muslim but at the same time the one who does not even intend to have a relationship with a Muslim³⁵⁰:

*I didn't leave anything with any person coming from outside of the community due to things which are internalized subconsciously and yet I never experienced something.*³⁵¹

Marriage with a community member becomes a duty to display loyalty towards the community and an imperative in the name of the perpetuation of *Süryani* community/identity. So, it can also become the responsibility of the family elders to bring the younger member of the family to the order back. Indeed, in 28 years old,

³⁴⁷ "Bu hayatın kaçınılmaz bir gerçeği evliliği ben de yaşadım."

³⁴⁸ "Hayır diyorum yani kesinlikle olmaz. Yani böyle bir şey olmaz bizde."

³⁴⁹ "Ne hakkı var bunu demeye diye de söyledim babama. Ben şimdiye kadar neyi yanlış yaptım? Ben bi Müslüman'la mı evlendim? Ben topluma bi saygısızlıkta mı bulundum? Ben sadece bu insanla yapamadım."

³⁵⁰ It is worth to mention that in Sevgi's narrative about the endogamic marriage, 'out of community' becomes 'Muslim outside' rather than non-*Süryani*. Especially in the last 20 years, it is said that with the acceleration of migration and the gradual decrease of the *Süryani* population in Turkey, non-endogamic marriages raised and marriage "at least" with a Christian started to be perceived as 'acceptable'.

³⁵¹ "Bilinçaltına yerleştirilen bir şeyden dolayı da cemaat dışında bi insanla da şey olmadım, hiç bir zaman bir şeyler yaşamadım."

single İbrahim's story we learn that after verbal warnings against his thoughts about marrying his 'Muslim' girlfriend, İbrahim has been taken into custody by the police and was deported to the Netherlands by the instruction of his family elders.³⁵²

Even if these examples are exceptionally strict measures to protect the community, it can be said that the pressure is very strong. Even Edip, who spends the whole interview criticizing the community, warns me against a 'transgressive' marriage:

*So the day after tomorrow, I'm guessing you will be thirty-thirty five, you will get married with eyes shut when you are in an age of marriage and I am sure you will regret in five or six years and you will realize that your love has finished once you turn and look back.*³⁵³

According to him, marriage with a 'Muslim' brings unhappiness anyway. Regardless of communal pressure, he still chooses and recommends submission to the community rather than risk exclusion. This is a *Süryani* subject positioned between the community pressure accompanied by the fear of exclusion on the one hand, and the fear of an uncertain future accompanied by exclusion on the other. This fear leads to *Süryani* identity becoming a burden that necessitate the knowledge of where and when to remain silent. So, Edip's emphasis of 'escape'³⁵⁴ might become a fantasy of salvation from the oppression that one experiences in belonging to a 'minority' community. One might argue that this very oppression even led Serdar

³⁵² İbrahim and his family migrated to Holland when İbrahim was 8 years old. Later on his relationship with his girlfriend led him to settle in Turkey and start to work with his maternal uncles. According to his narrative, the elder uncle who through his contacts arranged his arrestment, later on "saved" İbrahim from police office and arranged a last minute plane ticket to Netherlands for him. The police also interrogated his girlfriend for the fact that she helped him for the so called robbery of a bank in Netherlands. According to İbrahim, he had a ban for entering Turkey and his girlfriend believed to the accusations of the police and İbrahim's family. In the end they broke up.

³⁵³ "Yani yarın öbür gün, atıyorum otuz-otuzbeş, evlenme çağına geldiğinde bunu yapmaya kalktığın zaman gözünü karartıp evleneceksin ve emin ol beş altı sene sonra çok pişman olacaksın ve bir dönüp bakacaksın ki fark etmeden sevgini bitirmişsin".

³⁵⁴ "... 'çok yakında bir patlama yaşanacak' dediğim patlama bu. Mardine geri dönüş, İsveç'e kaçış, başka ülkelere...", "Bu bi patlama noktasıdır. Niye patlama noktasıdır? Maddi ve manevi açıdan birşey alamadığın zaman başka bir yere kaçma dürtüsü gelir insana. Şuanda oturuyorum ama çok arkadaşım var İzmir'de. Kafamda düşünüyorum: bunlar mı yaşıyor, biz mi yaşıyoruz?"

Dönmez³⁵⁵ (and some other probable victims³⁵⁶) to commit suicide. In the last letter he has left, Serdar says:

*I am tired of loving and being loved. It is always me who is suffering.*³⁵⁷

It would not be an exaggeration to argue that Serdar's destiny was in relation with the mentioned oppression related to endogamy. He may be just a *Süryani* who was not able to endure the burden of silence as interviewees of this work seem able to. A *Süryani* subject is in between the oppression and exclusion and this in-betweenness makes him/her vulnerable.

³⁵⁵ Serdar Dönmez was a 34 years old, single *Süryani*. He was working at Bakırköy Midas Jewelry Company -which also belongs to *Süryani* owners- and was living with his family in Yeşilköy/İstanbul. He committed suicide on 09.03.2009 through drinking cyanide.

³⁵⁶ As an example from this work's interviewees, Melissa declared that she seriously thought of suicide many times during the years that she was in a relationship with her recent Muslim husband.

³⁵⁷ "Sevmekten ve sevilmeden yoruldum. Acı çeken hep ben oluyorum."

<http://www.haberler.gen.al/2009-03-09/enerji-icecegine-siyanur-katarak-intihar-etti/>

CHAPTER V:

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I studied the *Süryani* community in İstanbul. I draw attention to the power relations within and without the community and the way they shaped *Süryani* subjectivity. I problematized the homogenous representations of the community and the cost of such representations on the *Süryanis* in İstanbul. The ethnographic research I conducted for this thesis constituted interviews with community representatives and young *Süryanis*. I analyzed their narratives by tracing the notions of threat, paternalism, and modern desire in them.

In the second chapter, I provided a brief account on the historical formation of the *Süryani* community in Turkey. I historicized the process within which the church became the sole authority as the mediating institution between the community and the state. I argued that within the ambiguous domain between the statuses of equal citizenship and being a minority, pre-republican forms of governing the religious groups still played an important role in governing the community. I also gave an account of the ‘advanced liberal’ governing of the community in the era of 2000’s multicultural tolerance. Thus I discussed the church as a site of change and continuity that institutes a patrimonial form of power and control over the community.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the ways in which men in the position of community leadership maintained their authority by reproducing patrimonial power relations. Following the conditions of perpetuation of this patrimonial power today, I emphasized the importance of the Metropolitan and the church board as the representational mechanisms whose role in governing the community has generally

been overlooked. I demonstrated the power of this traditional mediating institution in reproducing the dominant representations of the *Süryani* in Turkey. And, I argued that the norms defined by this representation actively produced and reproduced the community.

As fathers of the community, these representatives claim to know the proper ways to maintain the survival of the community. In this respect, they represent the community/family before the state and promote a discourse of endogamy as the necessary condition for survival as a community. The claim over controlling marriage is a claim over regulating thoughts and emotions. Hence, marriage emerges as a crucial domain in the management and reproduction of the community. In this mechanism, threat functions as a technology of power to suppress the dissent within the community and to fashion a discourse of “unity.” Moreover, the acuteness of the danger of extinction, a possible Muslim violence or state’s discriminatory policies play an important role in the formation of the discourse of a “threatening outside.” With regard to this patrimonial form of power, the claims to represent the community usually reproduce these discourses of fatherhood, even though they oppose to the power of the church.

According to various studies, under the conditions where such a threat does not seem to play a role in identity building, Syriac communities in Sweden have developed antagonistic positions based on religion versus nationalism.³⁵⁸ Even though ethnicist or nationalist positions also exist within the *Süryani* community in Turkey, we witness that they are subject to a considerable pressure of a discourse

³⁵⁸ Naures Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora: Identity Discourse Among the Assyrian/Syriac Diaspora Elites in the European Diaspora*, Leiden University Press, 2011; David Gaunt, “Identity conflicts among Oriental Christian in Sweden”; Cultural Diversity, *Multilingual and Ethnic minorities in Sweden*, International Conference 2-3 September 2009 – Stockholm, Sweden

based upon the threatening outside. Since the field research conducted for this project was limited to Istanbul and there are considerable differences between the formation of *Süryani* identity and the experiences of the members of the community in Turkey, Sweden, and Syria or in Istanbul and Mardin, it might not be convenient to apply the conclusions drawn in this study to *Süryanis* outside Istanbul.³⁵⁹

In my discussion of the “community fatherhood” as a patrimonial position of power, I emphasized the similarities between the discourses of the representatives from different positions (as ethnicist vs. religious). But it is also worth to mention that, in terms of narrative construction, there are differences among the representatives from the same alliance or there are similarities between the representatives of opposing camps: For instance, even though they are in the same alliance under the roof of the church, while Gürdal, as a civil representative, presents a discourse of loyalty to the state with reference to Turkish nationalism, the clergy³⁶⁰ construct such a discourse with reference to Christianity and God. Similarly, as discussed in chapter two, both Sait Susin and Erol Dora, who would be considered in opposing views, develop their arguments about the community rights and the relations with the state in reference to globalization and the European Union.

Finally, in the fourth chapter I focused on the narratives of the people who feel oppressed by the patrimonial power that functions as a control mechanism over their lives. For the young/single *Süryanis*, marriage is perceived as a crucial way to belong to the community or as a critical domain to escape from what they define as the community pressure. In the narratives of the young generation, notions of

³⁵⁹ Throughout the thesis I also gave place to the heterogeneities within the İstanbul community in terms of political view, gender, class and hometown.

³⁶⁰ As Metropolitan, Mor Filiksinos Yusuf Çetin, Priest Horeipiskepos Samuel Akdemir or the Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas.

individualism, modernity, or destiny emerge as main points of reference in their relation to the constraints brought by the expectations of the community.

While male interviewees related their criticisms towards the community to the norms defined by the elites and the church, female interviewees did not direct their criticism to any particular institution. While men's criticism towards community fathers were far from challenging the notion of fatherhood itself, in the narratives of women it was possible to trace that they did not relate to the community through such power positions. While men saw themselves as the subjects or addressees of the discourse of fatherhood, thus criticized the community representatives and their practices, for women, the major problem resided in the structure itself, hence they put more emphasis on individual freedom. But, considering the limitations in their critiques with regard to the paternal authority, it is suffice to say that, silence appeared as a heavier duty on the shoulders of *Süryani* women. In that sense, while this study addresses the significance of gender relations in organizing the community life, the specific experiences of *Süryani* women and the way they develop strategies to deal with the patriarchal organization of community life remains as a subject for future research.

Since transgressing endogamy is supposed to result in non-recognition of and exclusion from the community, people develop various strategies to deal with this cost. While 43 years old Edip argued that he remains single as a protest against the community, Melissa, who is married to a 'Muslim' man, still seeks the recognition of the fathers' community, through telling about her "transgression" with an abstention that implies, as a proper *Süryani*, she still knows where to remain silent. While Yakup criticizes the community for being elitist, he is proud to be married to the daughter of a communist *Süryani* poet from Syria. Sevgi is "finally" married to her

Armenian husband after two “unlucky” engagements with *Süryani* men that she narrated as painful memories. While İbrahim could choose to live in Netherlands with her Muslim girlfriend, Serdar committed suicide for his “hopeless” loves.³⁶¹ In all these narratives, endogamy and the norms that regulate it emerge as a central issue to deal with as a *Süryani* and the *Süryani* community as an entity to manage all these internal/external problems in order to survive.

Thus, I argue that the control over marriage and reproduction has a significant capacity in governing the *Süryani* community. Focusing on the narratives related to marriage, enabled me problematize the domain between marriage and minoritisation with regard to the reproduction and the contemporary governance of the community. Hence, this thesis is a reading of the *Süryani* subjectivity in Istanbul by focusing on the institution of marriage and the narratives and practices that regulate it. I argued for the centrality of marriage in governing the *Süryani* community in Istanbul by regulating lives. In other words, the community further regulates these lives, as a response to the state’s regulation of them.

³⁶¹ In his last letter Serdar said: "*Sevmekten ve sevilmekten yoruldum. Acı çeken hep ben oluyorum.*" - <http://www.haberler.gen.al/2009-03-09/enerji-icecegine-siyanur-katarak-intihar-etti/>

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