“The Hatay belongs to us”:
Defining Community in the Sanjak of Alexandretta, 1915-1940

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Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History at Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Honors in History

April 2020

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Cover Image: *A Street Scene in Alexandretta, late Ottoman Empire* [1]

Gürhan ve Seçil'e
Birlikte yaşadığımız yılı hiç unutmayacağım
Sevgiyle, saygıyla, minnetle…
~
To Gürhan and Seçil,
I will never forget the year we spent together.
With love, respect, and gratitude…

[1] *Scéne de rue – Alexandrette. Strassenscene,* Krt_014148, Türkiye_Hatay_Iskenderun, İstanbul pulları, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.

“Can anyone teach me
how to make a homeland?”
- *Amineh Abouh Kerech, “Lament for Syria”*

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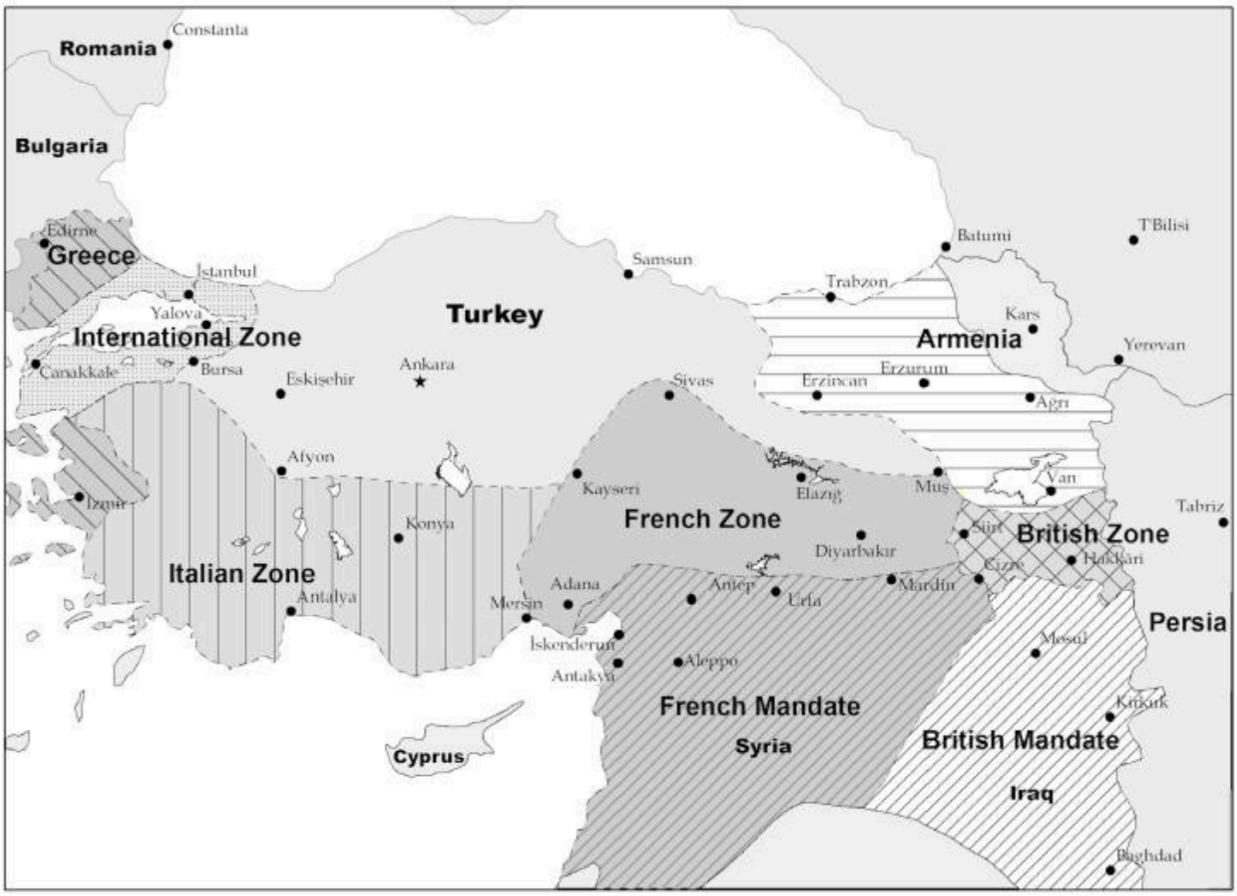

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[3] *Kemalist map of the Treaty of Sèvres.* Adapted by William Terry from La Direction générale de la Presse au Ministère de l'Intèrieur, *La Turquie Contemporaine* (Ankara, 1925), 45 as depicted in Amit Bein, *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East: International Relations in the Interwar Period,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 9.

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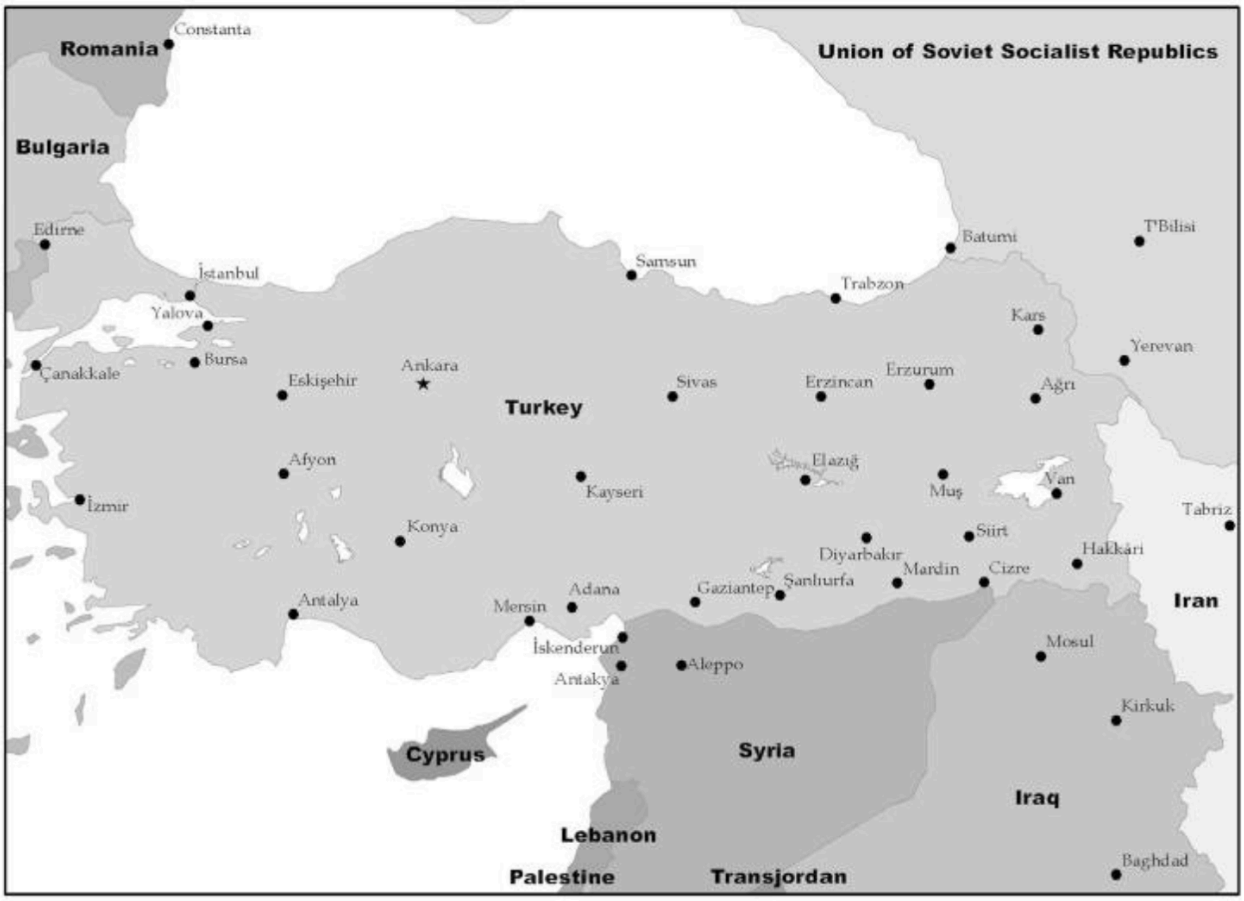

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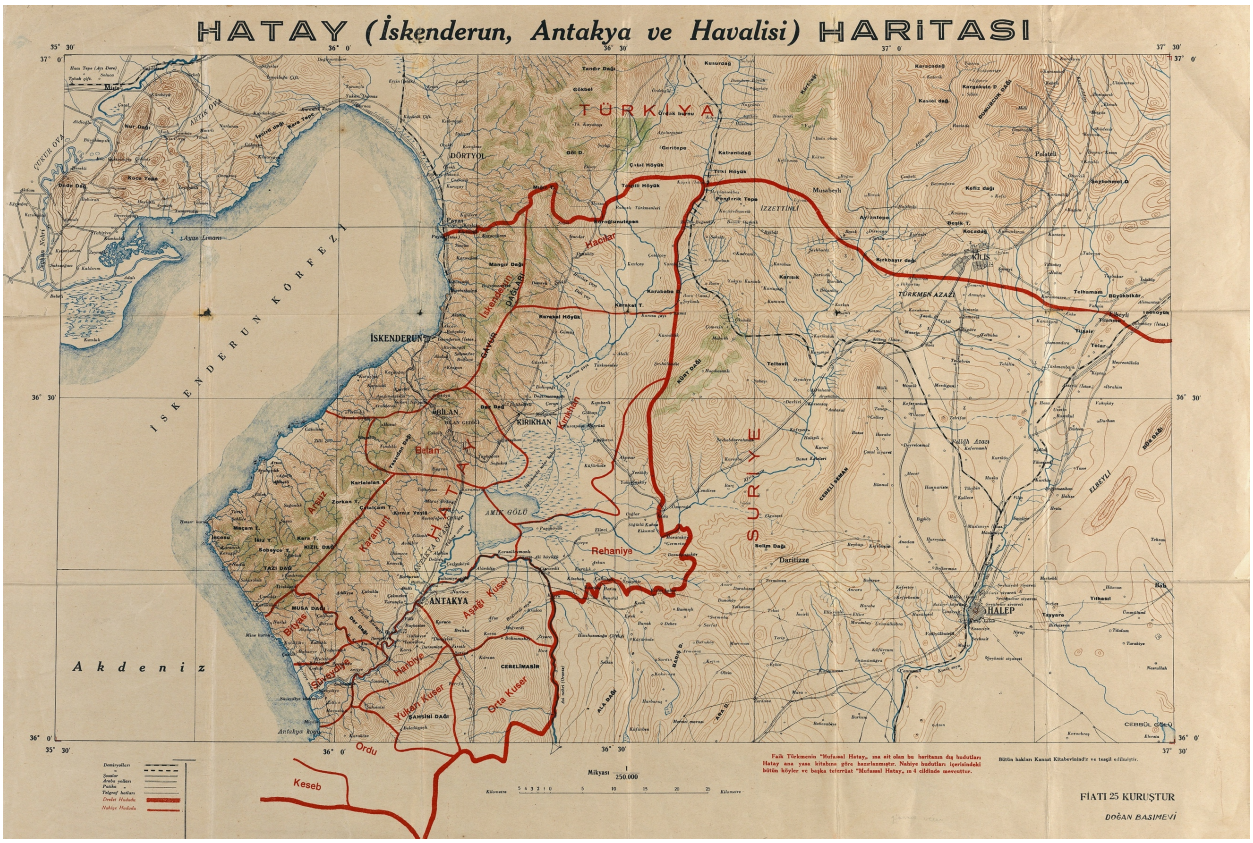

[5] *Hatay (İskenderun, Antakya ve Havalisi) Haritası,* Doğan Basımevi, n.d. Map. As replicated in *The Afternoon Map,* http://www.midafternoonmap.com/2014/10/hatay-in-history.html.

Introduction

One morning in 1915, ten-year-old Haroutune Aivazian was just finishing his breakfast in Maraş when he heard the town crier ordering all Armenians to go to the square. His father was away, serving with the Ottoman army. In this chaos, a neighbor confronted his aunt, begging her to convert to Islam so that she might be saved. Haroutune's mother gathered her children. On the way, a soldier recognized the family and stopped her, pleading with her to spare her children. She left Haroutune and one of his brothers in a nearby German-Jewish orphanage.[6] While Haroutune waited in the orphanage, a fourteen-year-old named Zaki al-Arsuzi watched his father, Najib, frantically stuff a paper into his mouth and swallow it. Ottoman soldiers were searching their family home in the city of Antioch, and Najib needed to destroy his list of fellow Arab nationalists.[7] In that same city, Dr. Abdurrahman Melek watched as his friends went off to war and the membership of their nationalist *Türk Ocağı,* or Turkish Hearth Association, dwindled. For the past year, they had been gathering together, but now it seemed there were bigger priorities.[8] Just twenty-seven kilometers southwest of Dr. Melek, an Armenian man named Sarkis Khabaghian stood with his comrades, under siege at Musa Dağı. "Do not be afraid!" someone yelled in the chaos. They remained there for fifty-three days.[9] That same

[6] Testimony from Haroutune Aivazian, May 12, 1993, interview by J. Michael Hagopian through the Armenian Film Foundation, https://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=56564&returnIndex=0 (accessed 31 March 2020).

[7] Keith D. Watenpaugh, "'Creating Phantoms': Zaki al-Arsuzi, the Alexandretta Crisis, and the Formation of Arab Nationalism in Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, 3 (August 1996): 364. (This evidence comes from an article Zaki al-Arsuzi published in 1958 titled "The Awakening of Arabism in Antioch." Although no independent sources verified this evidence, historian Keith Watenpaugh suggests that it is consistent with "the crackdown on Arab nationalists' aspirations in Syria under Ahmet Cemal Pasha during the summer of 1915."

[8] Abdurrahman Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1966): 27.

[9] Testimony from Sarkis Khabaghian, October 11, 1972, interview by J. Michael Hagopian through the Armenian Film Foundation, https://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=56359&returnIndex=0 (accessed 31 March 2020).

spring, George Chamichian woke up in his home in Aintab one last time. He was about thirteen years old.[10]

In 1915, Haraoutune, Zaki, Abdurrahman, Sarkis, and George lived in the southern reaches of the Anatolian plain. From the unfolding of the Armenian Genocide in 1915 to the eve of World War II in 1939, the lives of each of these individuals were entangled with the fate a small region known as the Sanjak of Alexandretta. This thesis traces each of their stories as well as the broader history of the province of Alexandretta. Members of various nationalist movements set their sights on this region during these years. This thesis explores "the Question of the Sanjak" from the perspective of a number of different individuals and movements, particularly Arab nationalists and Turkish nationalists.

In 1915, the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of collapse. Hemorrhaging land to separatist movements at the edges of the state and now caught up in the Great War, the Young Turk regime had implemented a series of reforms to save the empire and unite its citizens. In the midst of territorial loss, mounting debt, and sweeping reform, tensions within the empire came to a fore. In the first months of 1915, commanders Talat and Enver Pasha blamed Armenian soldiers for an Ottoman military loss at Sarıkamiş. Furious, they ordered Armenian Ottoman troops to disband into labor battalions. As the Ottomans clashed with Russian forces near territories with significant Armenian populations, the Young Turks constructed a plan to remove Armenians from the Anatolian plain. Beginning with deportations of Armenian communities to the southeastern reaches of the empire, Ottoman leadership and individual citizens soon perpetrated a mass slaughter of the empire's Armenian population.[11] By the end of World War I,

[10] George Haig to Secretary of State, "The Anglo-Franco-Turkish Friendship Pact and the Alexandretta Affair" by George Haig, July 22, 1938, 751.67/235, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[11] Ronald Suny, *"They Can Live in the Desert and Nowhere Else:" A History of the Armenian Genocide,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015): xix-xxi.

the survivors had dispersed to every corner of the empire. Some had languished in the Syrian desert, while children sat in foreign orphanages and young girls were forced to marry into non-Armenian families. Still others had survived in hiding.[12] In the Sanjak of Alexandretta, Armenians from the six villages of Musa Dağı banded together to resist arrest.[13] Today, all six villages and their descendants remain. Only one village, however, still sits within the bounds of the Republic of Turkey.

In 1921, a French-Turkish treaty divided the former Ottoman *vilayet,* or province, of Aleppo into two. One half, the Sanjak of Alexandretta, became a special, administrative district at the insistence of the recently formed provisional Turkish government based in Ankara. Following the war, French and British colonial powers negotiated mandates over various former Ottoman territories. Under mandate status, France and Britain proclaimed that they would temporarily run the new states until they deemed its citizens capable of forming their own, independent nation. France claimed mandates over modern-day Syria and Lebanon, and tacked the Sanjak of Alexandretta to its northern border. The Sanjak remained semi-autonomous under French control until the Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936, when the Syrian National Bloc reached an agreement for Alexandretta's independence from France, while incorporating the other two autonomous districts of French-mandate Syria, Latakia and Jabal Druze, into Syria.[14] That same year, the Sanjak of Alexandretta became the epicenter of an international debate. *Who* would get the Sanjak?

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[12] Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, "The Rebirth of a Nation," *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016): 21-50.
[13] Dikran Andreasian, translated by Stephen Trowbridge, "A Red Cross Flag That Saved Four Thousand," *New Outlook* 111 (1915): 800.
[14] Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011): 11-12, 44.

Demographics were the central issue of this crisis. The League of Nations, the Republic of Turkey, Syrian nationalists, and French mandate powers wanted to assign a clear-cut majority identity to the residents of the Sanjak of Alexandretta. However, this was not a simple matter. The Ottoman Empire was famously diverse, but the Sanjak of Alexandretta was particularly so, home to an array of Turks, Arabs, Alawites, Kurds, Circassians, Jews, Orthodox Christians, Armenians, Ismailis, Chaldeans, Catholics, and others. There were pluralities of each population scattered throughout the province, but no one "community" constituted a majority. According to popular Wilsonian principles of the time, residents of the Sanjak had a right to self-determination. More specifically, the majority had the right to determine the fate of the province. Thus, enumeration of identity became the crux of the issue.

As Turkish and Arab nationalists made their respective cases for the "identity" of the province, working on the ground to convince individuals to register according to a Turkish or Arab national community, they exposed the complexities of twentieth-century nationalisms in the former Ottoman Empire. Still reeling from the collapse of the sultanate and the Armenian Genocide, the Republic of Turkey faced a particularly daunting nationalizing task. Article Eighty-Eight of the 1924 Constitution stated, "The People of Turkey, regardless of religion and race, are Turks as regards citizenship." However, as scholar Soner Çağaptay has contended, this language intentionally distinguished between "Turks-by citizenship and Turks-by-nationality." One could be a Turkish citizen without being a part of the Turkish nation.[15] The actualization of the early Republican national project illuminated the extent to which the late Ottoman national era had influenced conceptions of citizenship in the new Republic. Republican interventions in

[15] Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 15.

the Sanjak of Alexandretta serve as a case study in this distinction between being a Turkish citizen and being a part of the Turkish *nation* in the country's early years.

This thesis draws primarily on the histories of late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey to present the Sanjak crisis through a new lens. Scholars of Republican Turkey and post-Ottoman Syria have explored this same moment in a number of ways. Sarah Shields, for instance, investigated the nuanced realities of international diplomacy and their effects on individuals within the province in her 2011 monograph, *Fezzes in the River*. Her work has proved an important point of departure for my own study in a number of respects, not least of which is the ways she complicates broader assumptions of local identities in her analysis, using terms like "Turcophile Alawis," for example, to show how not everyone easily fit into one category alone.[16] Like Shields, I draw on archival sources from the U.S. Department of State to contextualize the events of the Sanjak. However, I make a deliberate effort to shift the narrative away from the interventions of the League of Nations, and to focus instead on Turkish Republican policy as well as exceptional stories of both belonging and resistance in the region.

I have also made a choice to limit my own enumeration of identities, for a number of reasons. As the crisis in the Sanjak escalated, many diplomatic telegrams began to offer interpretations of events along wholly sectarian and ethnic lines, explaining—for example—how many Alawites had died, how many Arabs were arrested, or how many Turks had demonstrated in Antioch on a given day. The League of Nations, for its part, only allowed electors to register with one of seven communities. In light of these sources and the effects that colonial census-taking had on many populations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I moderate

[16] Sarah Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II,* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2011): 143.

references to League and diplomatic enumerations of identity in the Sanjak.[17] In some cases, it is impossible to avoid quoting identity numeration in these documents, particularly as it pertains to the League registration results in Chapter Four. Throughout, I have focused on the stories of individuals and notable exceptions to nationalist trends in the region to poke holes in efforts to neatly quantify these communities. Indeed, because the enumeration of identities defined and drove the Sanjak crisis, this thesis avoids quantifying residents of the province in these terms as much as possible.

Middle Eastern historian Keith D. Watenpaugh explored the Sanjak crisis through a Syrian nationalist lens, focusing specifically on the life of Zaki al-Arsuzi in his 1996 study, "'Creating Phantoms' Zaki al-Arsuzi, the Alexandretta Crisis, and the Formation of Modern Nationalism in Syria."[18] Watenpaugh's analysis links the Sanjak crisis and Zaki al-Arsuzi to the emergence of the Syrian Ba'athist movement. Because the bulk of my primary research drew from Turkish sources, I have relied on Watenpaugh's scholarship for crucial context regarding Syrian nationalist movements and their reciprocal relationship with Republican Turkish rhetoric. Like Watenpaugh, I drew on the Arabic writings of Zaki al-Arsuzi to contextualize Arab nationalism in the region. Most of al-Arsuzi's writings emerged well after the crisis itself, during the 1940s and 50s. As with any historical source, the influence of time affects how one perceives a narrative. Al-Arsuzi is no exception.

Perhaps the study in closest conversation with this thesis is Elizabeth Angell's 2005 Master's Thesis, "Inventing Hatay," which examines Turkish national rhetoric and interventions

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[17] See Benedict Anderson, "Map, Census, and Museum," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Revised Edition. (London: Verso, 2006) for impact of colonial census taking and Ipek Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies, Shaping Souls: the 1903 Census and National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, 1 (2006). for concepts of identity in the late Ottoman Empire and the influence of Western European census-taking measures.

[18] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," et al.

in the Sanjak in the context of the late Ottoman era. Angell analyzed the Turkish nationalist movement in the province itself, ultimately arguing that Turkish Republican nationalists attempted to redefine the Sanjak to "make its population legible" to the new state.[19] Like Angell, I also emphasize the relationship that the Sanjak of Alexandretta had with the broader Republic of Turkey, investigating Turkish nationalist movements in relation to the crisis within the borders of Turkey itself and focusing particularly on the activities of the nationalist *Halkevleri,* or People's Houses, in both the Sanjak and the Republic. In contrast with Angell's thesis, however, I gathered much of my evidence on Republican Turkey from two primary sources that she did not use, the *Halkevleri* magazine, *Ülkü (Great Ideal: February 1933, September 1934, November 1934, and December 1943)* and Ahmet Faik Türkmen's 1937 geography textbook on the Sanjak, *Mufassal Hatay Tarihi* (*Details of the History of Hatay)*. Using these sources, I attempt to dig deeper into the relationship between the Republican People's Party and citizens of the Republic. I contend that the stories of individuals from within the Sanjak also challenged conceptions of citizenship in the broader Republic. In focusing on individual narratives within the province, I work to expose ruptures in broader understandings of the Turkish nation. In addition to exploring Arab and Turkish nationalist groups and individuals, my investigation employs evidence from the activities of two other "communities" in the province: Armenian and Alawite. In so doing, it reveals the ways that nationalism in early Republican Turkey both converged with and diverged from popular theories of nationalism writ large.

Outside of the Sanjak, I have drawn on case studies from throughout the Turkish Republic to illuminate my investigation into the nuances of citizenship in Turkey, particularly for minority populations, during the late Ottoman and early Republican eras. I relied on Ronald

[19] Elizabeth Angell, "Inventing Hatay: Turkish Nationalism, Minority Politics, and the Sanjak of Alexandretta," Master's Thesis, (University of Oxford, 2005): 105.

Suny's *"They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide* (2015), Soner Çağaptay's *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey* (2006), and Hale Yılmaz's *Becoming Turkish* (2013) to better contextualize the influences of Ottoman nationalism, particularly the Armenian Genocide, on early Republican nationalist movements. Uğur Ümit Üngör's *The Making of Modern Turkey* (2011), Lerna Ekmekçioğlu's *Recovering Armenia* (2016), and Hakan Mertcan's Turkish-language *Arab Alawites at Turkish Modernization (Türk Modernleşmesinde Arap Aleviler)* (2013) all investigate the relationships between the Republic of Turkey and minority populations in the early transitional period, exploring the roles of Arab Alawites and Armenians in particular. Notably for this study, Ekmekçioğlu's investigation into how Armenian women in post-genocide Turkey shaped both their own belonging and resistance served as an inspiration for my understandings of how residents of the Sanjak negotiated this crisis on their own terms.

On a theoretical level, I attempt to contextualize the Sanjak crisis in light of other theories on the enumeration of identities in the twentieth century. Relying on Benedict Anderson's revised edition of *Imagined Communities* (2006), I bring the Sanjak into conversation with other nationalist movements of the era, particularly in the context of French colonial influence. I also rely on Ipek Yosmaoğlu's article "Counting Bodies, Shaping Souls" (2006) to illuminate the ways in which Western European census practices influenced early-twentieth century conceptions of belonging in the Ottoman Empire. Yosmaoğlu's contention that residents of Ottoman Macedonia negotiated the system of census-taking to assert their own autonomy influenced how I understood the registration process in the Sanjak.

Taking a critical view of practices of census-taking, colonial influence, and the complexity of community in the former Ottoman Empire, I have also been influenced by work

done in the field of subaltern studies. Certainly, within the period under study, the layers of power within the province were inconsistent—circulating among French colonizers, the Republican People's Party, the Arab League of National Action, and the people of the Sanjak itself. Inspired by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 2010 argument in her work "Can the Subaltern Speak?" I am cognizant of the fact that my own position as a Western historian cannot provide a complete voice for the people of the Sanjak.[20] Rather, I hope to use the stories that I have found to hint at inconsistencies in popular narratives about the Sanjak of Alexandretta, challenging our own understandings of who "won" and "lost" in the outcome of the crisis itself.

In short, this thesis relies on the work of many scholars in a variety of fields, including nationalism studies, subaltern studies, diplomatic histories, and contemporary Syrian and Turkish histories. The Sanjak crisis played out on an international stage, and it questioned many of the ideals of the new Turkish nation, as others have noted before me. This thesis seeks to contribute to the existing scholarship by using the crisis to investigate broader issues emerging between citizen and state in the Republic. Ultimately, this study weighs the extent to which the residents of the Sanjak of Alexandretta were able to negotiate and define their own sense of belonging, despite Turkish and Syrian nationalist pressures and French colonial influence. In this sense, it departs from earlier studies, both in its focus on local actors and by exploring little-known or underused sources. It examines how the Republic of Turkey influenced the people of the Sanjak, but also how practices of citizenship and resistance in the province itself altered understandings of belonging in the broader Republic. Ultimately, it asks the extent to which one could belong in the early Republic of Turkey without necessarily being "Turkish."

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[20] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? : Reflection on the History of an Idea," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory,* ed. Laura Chrisman et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): 66-111.

I

"Organizing a community life is not an easy task"
The Origins of the Sanjak Crisis

Haroutune Aivazian was born into a tense world. Named after his maternal grandfather who was killed in a massacre in 1895, the Armenian Genocide defined much of his childhood. After escaping the initial call for deportations in 1915, Haroutune remained in an orphanage called *Bayt Shalom* throughout World War I. When his father returned from his service in the Ottoman army, he started working in the orphanage. Toward the end of the war, French troops occupied the city. In 1920, the French fled Maraş for Alexandretta, and Haroutune's mother followed. His father chased after her, but Turkish troops arrested him along the way. They stopped him, compelling him to sing nationalist songs out of respect for the Turkish nation. All he knew were religious hymns. They spared him in the moment, but they imprisoned him in Maraş with the threat that he might be hanged.[21]

When Mustafa Kemal became the first president of the Republic in 1923, he and the Republican People's Party implemented a series of reforms to establish a new, secular nation. However, Turkish nationalism was not a product of the young state. The transition from empire to republic was perhaps not a complete revolution, but a transformation that both aligned with and ruptured from the late Ottoman era. This chapter traces the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to contextualize Republican reform. It then introduces the Sanjak of Alexandretta, a diverse province where many former Ottoman subjects made their homes after the war, and the geopolitical tensions that brought the region international fame in 1936. It outlines the beliefs and goals of both the Republican People's Party and the Arab

[21] Testimony of Haroutune Aivazian, May 12, 1993 and Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 340.

League of National Action in the Sanjak to explain why the definition of "community" became so important to both Turkish and Arab national projects in the province.

The Late Ottoman Era

Haroutune's grandfather was killed in 1895, a result of the conflict of the late Ottoman age that eventually escalated into the 1915 Ottoman genocide of its Armenian populations. In many respects, the violence that beset the empire during this period was the culmination of almost a century of fracture and change in the Ottoman Empire, caused by mounting separatist nationalist movements, military losses, foreign interference and insolvency. In its earlier centuries, the Ottoman Empire had been built around the tolerance of difference—whether of religion, language, and ethnicity. Muslims remained the ruling class, with Jews and Christians among the subservient and protected class of those who were "ruled." In exchange, the state rarely interfered in the communal or religious affairs of its subjects. While religion helped divide the population into those who ruled versus those who were ruled, questions of language or ethnicity did not formally divide society. As historian Aron Rodrigue has put it, Islam functioned as the "conveyer belt to the top," meaning that Muslims – regardless of linguistic or geographic origin – could ascend to the highest ranks within the imperial hierarchy. The same was true for those who converted to Islam.[22] This system began to change in the nineteenth century.

From Sultan Mahmud II's death in 1839 to Sultan Abdülhamid II's ascension to power in 1876, the first *Tanzimat* reform period took shape. Leaders of the *Tanzimat* era used reform to define the rights of Ottoman citizens, attempting to quell non-Muslim separatist movements, repel European intervention, and overhaul Ottoman political systems in favor of a more

[22] Aron Rodrigue, "Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire," interview by Nancy Reynolds, *Stanford Humanities Review* 5, (Fall 1995): 82-85.

democratic model.[23] The Ottoman legal system shifted away from the heterogeneous private practices of the previous centuries into a more standardized system that removed legal distinction among subjects. This also ushered in Ottoman citizenship laws that declared that all imperial subjects were Ottomans, regardless of religion.[24] Furthermore, the institutionalization of the court system in the 1860s undermined the religious courts of the past, establishing state courts that suggested steps toward secularism.[25] Some subjects saw these changes as an imposition of identity, attempting to substitute religious affiliation for a universal, Ottoman one.[26] Conservative Muslims also protested the *Tanzimat* reforms, claiming that the citizenship laws usurped their societal status, making Jews and Christians equal to Muslims under law.[27] [28] These reforms also entailed higher taxes, the enforcement of public justice systems over private ones, and an invasion of European market forces in the economies of the empire.[29] Although the reform period represented an effort toward democratization and unification, this transition to a pan-Ottoman identity ultimately divided the citizenship, angering Muslims who felt it was an abandonment of the Islamic order and Christians and Jews whose communal affairs were now included in state law.

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[23] Banu Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of the Turkish Republic,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017): 52.
[24] Turnaoğlu, *The Formation,* 54.
[25] Carter Findley, "The Tanzimat II," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 4,* ed. Reşat Kasaba, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 21.
[26] Turnaoğlu, *The Formation,* 54.
[27] Turnaoğlu, *The Formation,* 56.
[28] Muslim historian and jurist, Abdullah Cevdet Pasha (1822-1895) in response to the citizenship law of 1856, "In accordance with this firman, Muslim and non-Muslim subjects were to be made equal in all rights. This had a very adverse effect on the Muslims. Previously one of the four point adopted as the basis for peace agreements had been that certain privileges were accorded to Christians on condition that these did not infringe on the sovereign authority of the government. Now the question of specific privileges lost its significance; in the whole range of government the non-Muslims were forthwith to be deemed the equals of the Muslims. Many Muslims began to grumble: 'today we have lost our sacred national rights won by the blood of our fathers and forefathers. At a time when the Islamic *millet* was the ruling *millet,* it was deprived of this sacred right. This is a day of weeping and mourning for the people of Islam." In Abdullah Cevdet Pasha in Julia Philips Cohen and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "A Muslim Intellectual on the Emancipation of Ottoman Non-Muslims (1856)," *Sephardi Lives: A Documentary History, 1700-1950,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014): 120-121.
[29] Rodrigue, "Difference," 7.

Foreign interventions and separatist movements contributed to and emerged from these changes. After Sultan Mahmud II's death in 1839, European powers intervened to secure Ottoman control over Egypt from Mehmet Ali. This intervention destabilized Crete and Lebanon. In 1866, Cretan Christians campaigned for unity with the newly-independent Greece (1831), and sectarian violence broke out in Lebanon. In the same era, the politicization of religion exacerbated a pre-existing conflict between Catholic and Orthodox clergy. When Orthodox Russian clergy tried to claim religious rights in the Holy Land, France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia. Thus began the Crimean War (1853-1856). The war concluded with the Treaty of Paris, which brought Ottoman leadership into closer conversation with European powers. However, the treaty also allowed for further European influence in Romania, Serbia, and the broader Ottoman state.[30]

Toward the end of the first *Tanzimat* era, the effects of the Crimean War and widespread Ottoman reforms inspired an uprising in Herzegovina in 1874, spreading to Bosnia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria before the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War. Balkan citizens protested the high taxation rates and changes to the legal system. Later, separatist movements utilized the concept of the nation-state to legitimize their uprisings.[31] The rebellions triggered increased sectarian violence, killing Christians and Muslims alike.[32] Europeans capitalized on this violence, defending Christian populations and dubbing Ottoman Muslims "the terrible Turks" because of the brutality of these engagements.[33] By 1875, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Wallachia, and Moldova had all separated from the Ottoman Empire.[34] This separation became official after the

[30] Findley, "The Tanzimat II," 14-16.
[31] Rodrigue, "Difference," 7.
[32] Findley, "The Tanzimat II," 14-16.
[33] Benjamin C. Fortna, "The reign of Abdülhamid II," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 4.*, 42.
[34] Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 25.

Turkish defeat in the Russo-Turkish War in 1878.[35] Ottoman Muslims began fleeing those territories. In response to both territorial loss and internal religious polarity, the composition of the Ottoman Empire changed.

Sultan Abdülhamid II rose to power just before the Russo-Turkish War in 1876. In some ways, he continued the legacy of the *Tanzimat* era, passing reforms in Ottoman administration, transportation, communications, education, and healthcare.[36] However, these changes could not counter the territorial loss, mounting debt and insolvency, and legal reforms that had triggered separatist movements across the empire. In 1822, Ottoman leadership had approved the mass-slaughter of rebelling civilians on the Aegean island of Chios. They did the same in Bulgaria in 1876. Abdülhamid's reign amplified these precedents, employing both repressive policies and massacre to control the factioned citizenry.[37] His opponents dubbed him the "red sultan," but to his supporters he was the "great sultan." Soon after the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Turkish War in 1878, Abdülhamid suspended the 1876 constitution.[38] Overthrowing Abdülhamid became a primary objective of insurgency movements across Ottoman territory.

Concurrent with all of these changes, young scholars who were keen for reform began the Young Ottomans movement in the 1860s. In concert with *Tanzimat*-era reforms, from the 1860s to 1889, its adherents proposed a type of Ottoman patriotic citizenship intended to unite the empire against foreign intervention and advance the rights of its citizens, regardless of religion. However, the effects of the Russo-Turkish war and Abdülhamid's reign altered this movement's trajectory. As Muslims fled Balkan territories for the Anatolian plain, leaders of the movement renamed themselves the Young Turks and embraced Muslim nationalist activism from 1889 to

[35] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 93-94.
[36] Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 25.
[37] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 92.
[38] Fortna, "Abdülhamid II," 38 & 49.

1913. In the latter part of this period, a group of five Ottoman students and supporters of the Young Turks formed the Committee of Union and Progress (hereon referred to as the CUP). They encouraged citizens from across the Empire to push for democratic reform and restored the 1876 constitution in the Constitutional Revolution of July 1908.[39] By 1909, the CUP successfully forced Sultan Abdülhamid II to abdicate the throne and effectively took control of the empire. Although the sultanate was still in place, the CUP wielded most of the power.[40]

In response to demographic changes, violence, and foreign interventions, Ottoman reformers embraced the narrative of a Muslim empire led by an Ottoman, *Turkish* elite as a point of divergence from European nation-states.[41] [42] Thus, both religion and ethnicity became political. Historian Ipek Yosmaoğlu's study of the 1903 census in Ottoman Macedonia outlined the impact of growing nationalist movements on the final years of the Ottoman state. Although the Ottoman Empire had led efforts to collect information on its population since the fifteenth century, the purpose of the nineteenth-century Ottoman census was to recruit Muslim soldiers and estimate tax revenue, counting wealth and religion. At times, these census efforts had encouraged religiously-motivated deportation policies, moving Muslim populations to protect the empire's borders and increase Islamic presence in some regions.[43] However, the census of 1903 indicated a shift in imperial attitudes toward population demographics. This census urged all members of the Macedonian population to register according to *linguistic* and religious classifications.[44] As Yosmaoğlu wrote of emerging religious and ethnic divides in Ottoman Macedonia during this period, "Religious and linguistic differences in Macedonia were not

[39] Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 26.
[40] Fortna, "Abdülhamid II," 61.
[41] Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, 3 (June 2002): 787.
[42] See W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (London: 1876) for European portrayals of Islam and Turks.
[43] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 4.
[44] Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies," 71.

invented by the Ottoman administration or the European patron states. But their politicization was."[45] The politicization of religion – and later, language and ethnicity – defined the divergence of the late Ottoman Empire from its predecessors.

This politicization contributed to Ottoman territorial and demographic changes. In 1913, the Ottoman Empire lost Macedonia in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), which ushered in a new age of Turko-Muslim national hegemony as even more Muslim citizens emigrated from former Ottoman territories. [46] Historian Kemal Karpat estimated that more than seven million people immigrated to the central Anatolian plain from 1856 to 1914.[47] In the nineteenth century, Anatolia had been about one-third Christian, but by 1914, its share of the population had dropped to just a quarter.[48] In response, Ottoman reformists increasingly viewed Anatolia as a homeland for Turks and other Ottoman Muslims.[49]

The CUP also enacted policy changes that distinctly aimed for the Islamization and Turkification of the empire. In 1913, Turkish became the official language of education in imperial high school, and imperial leadership mandated that non-Muslims learn Turkish in school. The CUP expanded this system of privileges, passing laws that favored Turks and Muslims in commerce and industry.[50] World War I tested these new Ottoman structures. During this period, the CUP shifted to an explicit definition of the Turkish nation, with a Turkish-speaking, Muslim citizenship in the heartland of the Anatolian plain. [51] The ruling party began transferring non-Turkish Muslims, especially Kurds, across the plain so that non-Muslim

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[45] Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies," 70.
[46] Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 26.
[47] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 5-6.
[48] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 6.
[49] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 7.
[50] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 6-8.
[51] Mustafa Aksakal, "Not 'by those old books of international law, but only be war': Ottoman Intellectuals on the Eve of the Great War, *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 15, 3 (2004): 513.

communities would not constitute more than ten percent of the population in any given area.[52] Thus, demographics became important in securing a Turkish-speaking, Muslim majority in the center of the empire.

In addition to this evolving Turkish nationalist movement, Arab nationalist thinkers in Syria and Lebanon began questioning the role of the Ottoman sultanate. A community of Arab thinkers contributed to the Arab *nahda,* or renaissance, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Among them, Rashid Rida (1865-1935) and ʻAbd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1854-1902) believed that the Ottoman state was not a true caliphate because its leaders were not Arab and had not mastered Arabic.[53] The emerging conflict between Islam and modernity in the Ottoman Empire impacted Arab nationalist movements as some thinkers called for a separation from the Ottoman Empire to either strengthen the Arab nation or form an Arab caliphate. This movement peaked in 1916 when Emir Faysal and his supporters sided with Great Britain during World War I, pushing the Ottomans out of Arab territories.[54] The Arab Revolt firmly separated Arabic-speaking Muslims in the Ottoman Empire's south from Turkish-speaking Muslims in Anatolia.

Armenian nationalist movements also diverged from Muslim nationalist movements.[55] Like the Arab *nahda,* the late nineteenth century marked the beginning of an Armenian "awakening" of national consciousness. This evolution in scholarly thought shifted the definition of Armenianness from a Christian religious community to a national identity.[56] Armenian uprisings in the 1890s underscored many of the issues Balkan insurrectionists had identified.

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[52] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 9.
[53] Shaadi Khoury, "Instituting Renaissance: The Early Work of the Arab Academy of Science in Damascus, 1919-1930" (PhD diss., The George Washington University, 2016), 7-9.
[54] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 25.
55 Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 8.
56 Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia,* 10-11.

High taxation rates, local ethno-religious tensions, and increasingly nationalist scholarship all encouraged Armenian protests and rebellion during the Hamidian era (the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II). In the midst of this change, Armenian nationalists formed the Hnchak party which advocated for an independent, socialist Armenia in 1887.[57] During the 1890s, the party split and the Dashnaks became the leading Armenian national liberation party.[58] The Dashnaks and other Armenian separatist groups led insurrections against Ottoman rule.[59] In response, Abdülhamid organized the *Hamidiye* cavalry of mostly Kurdish tribesmen to quell Armenian rebellion in the eastern Anatolian plain.[60] This led to the Hamidian massacres of Armenians from 1894 to 1896.[61] Haroutune's grandfather died in one of these slaughters. However, unlike separatist movements in the largely-Christian Balkan territories, Armenian uprisings faced a majority Muslim population in Anatolia, which had become "the crucible of Ottoman power."[62]

Although opposition to Hamidian rule united both Turkish and Armenian nationalists, their movements diverged in the early-twentieth century as they more clearly distinguished between reformed Ottomanism and two distinct Armenian Christian and Turkish-speaking Muslim nations.[63] The Great War tested these tensions. The CUP claimed that Armenians had asked Russia, an Ottoman enemy, for protection. In doing so, they betrayed the empire.[64] In 1915, Ottoman commanders Talat (1874-1917) and Enver Pasha (1881-1922) claimed that Armenian traitors had lost them the battle at Sarıkamış. CUP leadership demanded that all

57 Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 86.
58 Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 87.
59 Fortna, "Abdülhamid II," 54.
60 Fortna, "Abdülhamid II," 55.
61 Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 128.
62 Cited in Deringil, "The Armenian Question is Finally Closed," p. 349; Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Y.PRK. 32/94, 3 September 1893 as cited in Suny, 111.
63 Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 149.
64 M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "The Second Constitutional Period, 1908-1918," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 4.*, 96.

Armenian soldiers and non-Muslims be removed from the Ottoman army and placed in labor battalions. Beginning with the initial disbandment of Armenian soldiers, they constructed a plan for the removal of the Armenian demographic threat. Between March and April 1915, the CUP decided that deporting Armenian populations, particularly those near the Russian border, was necessary for their "national ideals."[65] Organized deportations began in March 1915. Although CUP leadership orchestrated these plans, Kurds and irregular forces related to the regime perpetrated most of the deportations and killings.[66] Over the course of the next two years, the CUP forced the Ottoman Empire's two million Christian Armenians across the Anatolian plain. They massacred hundreds of thousands of people, forced Armenians into concentration camps in the Syrian desert where many eventually starved or were killed, compelled women and children to convert to Islam, and stranded children in orphanages only to be drowned later.[67] By the end of the war, ninety percent of the Ottoman Empire's Armenian population was gone. Between 600,000 and one million Armenians were killed, and the surviving majority remained in exile.[68] The Armenian Genocide was the last test of the empire's plurality. By the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire on the Anatolian plain was almost certain to become a Turkish nation.

As the Ottoman Empire attempted to eliminate its Armenian Christian communities, Ottoman nationalist scholarship transitioned from a phase of Muslim nationalism to Turkish nationalism. The founding father of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), was one of the first scholars to distinguish among Turkish Muslims and non-Turkish Muslims in a national context. Gökalp's writings indicated a clear evolution from the Ottoman-Muslim nationalism of an earlier era to the Turkish hegemony of the twentieth century. Although he was part Kurdish,

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[65] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 247.
[66] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 284.
[67] Suny, "Genocide," *They Can Live in the Desert,* et al.
[68] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* xix-xxi.

he began to differentiate among Turkish Muslims and non-Turkish Muslims living in the Empire, isolating Albanians, Arabs, Kurds, and Persians as non-Turks.[69] "It becomes clear," he wrote in a 1917 edition of *Yeni Mecmua (New Society),* "that our nation consists of Turkophone Muslims."[70] Gökalp's writings reflected changing attitudes toward nationalism in the Ottoman Empire throughout the Great War. Like the broader Ottoman nationalist movement, Gökalp shifted from supporting a Turkish-run multi-national state, to a Turco-Arab state, to an entirely Turkish state during the war.[71] The Great War marked a decades-long shift from the acknowledgement of linguistic, religious, and ethnic differences in the Ottoman Empire to the politicization and nationalization of all three.

The implications of the Ottoman surrender at the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918 indicated another step toward the dominance of Turkish ethno-nationalism in the Anatolian plain. After the war, Allied Powers occupied Ottoman territories. In 1918, Britain, France, and Italy seized Istanbul, remaining there until 1923.[72] In 1919, Greece advanced toward the Aegean coast, occupying Izmir.[73] When the French took control of Cilicia (modern-day Adana), thousands of Armenians returned to their homes in southern Turkey.[74]

In response to these occupations, Turkish leaders, among them Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938), gathered at Erzurum to make a plan for Turkish independence in June 1919. In accordance with the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, they made their first official statement calling for full Turkish independence at the Sivas Conference in 1919. This became

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[69] Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 31.
[70] Ziyâ Gökalp, "Türkçülük ve Türkiyecilik" in *Yeni Mecmua* 2-51 (4 July 1918), 482 as cited in Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 32.
[71] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 8.
[72] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 335.
[73] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 338.
[74] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 339.

the framework for Turkey's Constitution in 1921.[75] Although the Kemalist government denied its connection to the CUP, many former CUP members joined Kemal's national movement.[76] Allied powers signed the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, which partitioned the Ottoman Empire into European zones of influence. It included an Armenian state in the eastern Anatolian plain. Although Allied powers never actualized the terms of the treaty, it motivated both Turkish and Armenian nationalists. Mustafa Kemal, who by then had formed a government in Ankara that rivaled the struggling sultanate, used the threat of colonization to unite citizens in the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922).[77]

The war exacerbated ethno-nationalist tensions in the Anatolia. In February 1920, the French withdrew from Cilicia. In response, Turkish troops killed between five and twelve thousand Armenians, some of whom had fought alongside French forces.[78] On October 21, 1921, France negotiated a separate treaty with Turkish nationalists, the Ankara Treaty, and began retreating from the rest of southern Anatolia to Syria. [79] In this withdrawal, France took mandate power over the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Mustafa Kemal's Ankara government had previously declared that the national borders were defined by the presence of Islamic elements, which included Alexandretta in the south. [80] After the French withdrew, Turkish forces drove Greek forces out of Izmir in 1922. A fire razed the Greek and Armenian quarters of Izmir, and Greeks and Armenians fled. In the aftermath of these battles and the armistice at Mudayna in October 1922, the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 overturned the Treaty of Sèvres and ensured Turkish independence. It also mandated that Turkey rescind its claim to remaining Ottoman territories

[75] Turnaoğlu, *The Formation,* 199-204.
[76] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 338.
[77] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 341.
[78] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 340.
[79] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 19.
[80] Turnaoğlu, *The Formation,* 215.

outside of the Anatolian plain.[81] A few weeks later, Mustafa Kemal proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Turkey with Ankara as its capital.[82] The formation of the Republic and the Treaty of Lausanne further altered Turkey's demographics. Lausanne mandated a population exchange between the Turkish-speaking Greek Orthodox citizens of Turkey and Muslim citizens of Greece.[83] Armenians also left, following the French as they pulled out of Maraş in 1920, and all of southern Anatolia by 1922, retreating toward Lebanon and Syria.[84] Some ended up in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Haroutune's mother was among them.

The Sanjak of Alexandretta

When she reached the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1920, Haroutune's mother found a province struggling in the aftermath of World War I. A rural region devoted to largely agriculture, the Sanjak of Alexandretta was once an economic powerhouse of the Ottoman Empire.[85] However, everything changed during the early twentieth century. Like other communities across the Ottoman Empire, residents of the Sanjak of Alexandretta experienced genocide, migration and economic distress that tested the social dynamics of their communities. Sanjak resident and Turkish nationalist thinker, Ahmet Faik Türkmen (hereon referred to as Faik) wrote that a majority of Turkish and Arab Sunni Muslims were wealthy enough to afford food during World War I. However, several Alawite and Greek Orthodox communities went hungry. Alawites in the Sanjak were known for their work as farmers on the Amık Plain. In addition to decreased silk trade with Europe, a fire had destroyed their grain product during the

[81] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 342.
[82] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 343.
[83] Kemal Kirişci, "Migration and Turkey: the dynamics of state, society, and politics," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 4.*, 176.
[84] Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 340.
[85] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 19.

war.[86] According to Faik's analysis, the economic impacts of the war primarily affected the Sanjak's non-Sunni citizens.

Skirting the edges of the Republic of Turkey and French-mandate Syria, the Sanjak hosted one of the best natural harbors on the Mediterranean in the city of Alexandretta.[87] The port was a prime position from which to control trade and conduct war, and thus the envy of surrounding countries and colonial powers alike. The province was also home to the ancient city of Antioch, a cradle of Christianity.[88] These two cities had brought the province regional fame for centuries.

From 1923 to 1936, the Sanjak of Alexandretta experienced nationalism without being nationalized. Like the rest of the Ottoman Empire, the previous century of reform and upheaval had divided communities in the Sanjak along ethno-religious lines. The Sanjak of Alexandretta housed Arab, Turkish, Alawite, Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Roman Catholic, Kurdish, Jewish, Circassian, Druze, and other diverse communities.[89] During the Armenian Genocide, the Sanjak was home to the Armenian resistance at Musa Dagh in 1915, and it was the site of other violent encounters along the Mediterranean coast that pitted Christian and Muslim communities against one another.[90] During the late-nineteenth century, Arab Alawite communities from Latakia moved north for economic opportunity and settled throughout the Sanjak. Those who lived in the Sanjak's largest cities, Antioch and Alexandretta, reportedly began converting from Nuseyri Alawism (a heterodox Islamic sect) to Islam. However, they encountered resistance from local Sunni populations, many of whom believed that Alawite farmers were only posing as Sunni

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[86] A. Faik Türkmen, Mufassal Hatay Tarihi, 1939 06 Mil Yz Müs 50, Milli Kütüphane Yazmalar Koleksiyonu, Milli Kütüphane – Ankara. https://dijital-kutuphane.mkutup.gov.tr/tr/manuscripts/catalog/details/405285, 25.
[87] Avedis K. Sanjian, "The Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay): Its Impact on Turkish-Syrian Relations (1939-1956)," *Middle East Journal* 10, 4 (Autumn 1956): 379.
[88] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 17.
[89] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 22.
[90] Andreasian, "A Red Cross Flag," 800.

Muslims while they plotted to steal Sunni land. Throughout the late Ottoman period, Alawites in the Sanjak made repeated reports about anti-Alawite discrimination. During and after the war, Alawite nationalist movements gained footing, and Salih al-'Ali (1884-1950) began leading rebellions against French occupation of Latakia in 1919.[91] Although Salih al-'Ali interacted with Turkish nationalists, these Alawite rebellions did not entirely align with Turkish or Arab nationalist movements. In addition to these religious tensions, the Sanjak housed significant Arab and Turkish populations. During the war, Turkish and Arab nationalists alike had begun organizing in the Sanjak, forming national clubs and building local followings. The Arab Revolt (1916-1918) further divided these nationalist movements. In the Sanjak, Arab nationalists who supported Emir Faysal reportedly raised his flag in Antioch's square in 1918, infuriating Turkish nationalists in the province.[92] As a result of all of these sentiments, the terms of belonging in the Sanjak were particularly precarious.

However, the province's demographics never changed enough to remove it from the culture of difference that existed throughout much of the Ottoman Empire prior to the nineteenth century. It housed pluralities of many ethno-religious communities. As such, the Sanjak of Alexandretta was not conducive to simplistic, twentieth-century understandings of self-determination and majority rule. According to the Wilsonian concept of self-determination, nations existed in neat majorities. The majority population of a region was its nation, and the land upon which it sat was that nation's state. The Sanjak of Alexandretta did not fit cleanly into any specific nation. It became an autonomous district in French-mandate Syria in 1921. However, both Turkey and Syria would eventually argue that the Sanjak belonged to them.

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[91] Stefan Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic,* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016): 223-225, 246.

[92] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 27-29.

Dialogue among American and French diplomats in the region suggested widespread international disagreement regarding the intentions of the Republic of Turkey in the Sanjak from 1923 to 1936. In 1932, Third Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Istanbul, Robert D. Coe, compiled a comprehensive report on Turkish-Franco relations since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In his assessment, he wrote that Ankara did not have "any intentions of seizing the sandjaks [of Alexandretta and Antioch]." Coe also reported that the former Political Director of Syria, M. Chavel, had privately explained that "Turks were not in the majority in these districts but that they have the largest minority."[93] Thus, Chavel admitted that the Sanjak likely housed a Turkish plurality. In response to this, an unnamed editor took a pencil to the margins, writing, "No! See M. Kemal's comments at the time of Armistice of Mudros insisting that he would never admit of the separation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta from Turkey."[94] American diplomats were not alone in their muddled understandings of Turkey's claims to the region.

Between 1921 and 1936, France maintained mandate power over the province. However, even French diplomats did not envision the Sanjak of Alexandretta within the Turkish national narrative. Gossip struck diplomatic circles in October 1932, when the Sofian newspaper *La Bulgarie* reported that the Syrian newspaper *'Eleyyem* had written that France would "retrocede Turkey to the Sanjak of Alexandretta which is inhabited by a Turkish population.[95] One week later, American Ambassador Charles H. Sherrill had lunch with the Count De Chambrum, the French Ambassador to Turkey. Sherrill inquired with Chambrum about the authenticity of *La Bulgarie's* claims. Count de Chambrum laughed and replied, "Not a chance!"[96]

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[93] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 464, *French Influence in Turkey,* May 8, 1933, 751.67/92, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[94] Istanbul to State, *French Influence in Turkey,* p. 59. 1932, unpublished book, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[95] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 213, November 7, 1932 , 751.67/71, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[96] Istanbul to State, Despatch No. 213, November 7, 1932.

Despite this confident denial, France's claims to the Sanjak of Alexandretta crumbled in 1936, when years of Syrian protest against French rule resulted in a Franco-Syrian treaty, which called for an end to French-mandate status in Syria within the next few years.[97] Soon after the ratification of this Franco-Syrian treaty, the League of Nations intervened. The League sought to quell any nationalist contest between Turkey and Syria with the Sandler report. This initiative distinguished the Sanjak as a separate region, connected to both Syria and mandate French territory with Turkish as its official language.[98] The Sandler report implicitly tied the Sanjak to French-mandate Syria. Because Syria had just guaranteed independence from France, the report almost certainly declared that the Sanjak would become a state in independent Syria.

Given these circumstances, demonstrations within and outside of the province pushed the League of Nations to reconsider this solution. As U.S. Consul General Gilbert explained of the implication of the Sandler report, "The Turks feel it to be one thing for Turks to be under the rule of a great power like France and quite another thing to be under Syrians and that in this prestige plays an important part."[99] Following the Sandler report, Turkish Foreign Minister Rüştü Aras argued to the League of Nations that "the territory should be made an independent state" because "the matter was one of national importance to Turkey."[100] The Sanjak was also a Syrian issue. Syrians protested, worried that independence for Syria did not include a Syrian Sanjak.[101] Syrian independence questioned the two largest emerging nationalisms of the region: Turkish and Arab. The Sanjak of Alexandretta was the stage upon which these two competed.

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[97] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 27.
[98] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 78.
[99] Geneva to State, Telegram No. 504, December 11, 1936, 751.67/101, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[100] Geneva to State, Telegram No. 514, December 14, 1936, 751.67/103, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[101] Geneva to State, Telegram No. 516, December 15, 1936, 751.67/105, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.

Despite the diplomatic confusion, Turkey did have a cause in the Sanjak. During the late Ottoman period, Mustafa Kemal recognized the importance of staking a claim to the Turkish people within the Sanjak. Article Seven of the Franco-Turkish Ankara Treaty of 1921 explicitly stated, "A special administrative régime shall be established for the district of Alexandretta. The Turkish inhabitants of this district shall enjoy every facility for their cultural development. The Turkish language shall have official recognition." Article Six had guaranteed similar protections for minorities in Cilicia.[102] After the Sandler report, Turkey argued to the League of Nations that "identity" should dictate the future of the Sanjak, stating that, as a neighboring power, Turkey had a right to intervene if identity became an issue.[103] The Turkish language *was* an aspect of this national identity, Turkish Minister Aras argued before the League of Nations. Aras further compared the situation in the Sanjak to that of Cilicia, saying that it was also of "Turkish speech and race."[104] Aras's interpretation of identity, therefore, understood a Turkish race to be inherently intertwined with the Turkish language. Aras's claim was particularly contentious because language was a defining factor in both Turkish and Arab nationalism. In the Sanjak, pluralities of Turkish and Arabic speakers sought to claim land on the basis of linguistic identity.

Language and race were primary justifications for both Arab and Turkish nationalists in their interventions in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. When the Turkish campaign for the Sanjak began, Atatürk further related the importance of Turkish as a vessel for national identity with a story of being "overcome" upon hearing Turkish spoken in the region when he served in southern Turkey during the first World War.[105] Similarly, Arab nationalist leader Zaki al-Arsuzi

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[102] "Despatch from His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris, enclosing the Franco-Turkish Agreement signed at Agora on October 20, 1921." (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921.), Article 7.
[103] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 6-7.
[104] League of Nations Official Journal, 95th Session of the Council Fifth Meeting, January 1937. 3832: Question of Alexandretta and Antioch.
[105] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 6.

drew on his family's experiences in the Sanjak of Alexandretta to explain the Arab cause in the province. He wrote of his experiences growing up in Antioch, "I was before that an Arab, I felt that I had been born into an Arab family, I felt that I was different from my neighbors, the Turks, in taste and way of life."[106]

The Sanjak of Alexandretta became a pivotal cause for nationalist movements like the League of National Action in Syria and the Turkish Republican People's Party. In June 1938, a Turkish journalist, Ahmet Emin Yalman, wrote that Turkey had "always" considered the Sanjak of Alexandretta "as a part of the motherland, unfortunately left outside the national frontiers as a result of certain unhappy circumstances." [107] Although scholars and diplomats alike contested Turkish national rhetoric like Yalman's that claimed a perpetual relationship to the Sanjak of Alexandretta, as I will discuss further in Chapter Two, the story of a centuries-old Turkish claim to the region became an integral aspect of Turkish nationalist rhetoric.

Caving to both Turkish and Syrian pressures, the League enacted the "Fundamental Law" to temporarily differentiate the province as an independent state on November 29, 1937.[108] This decree deepened diplomatic tensions between France, Turkey, and Syria, all of whom had different understandings about which power would be guaranteeing the security of this new state.[109] Employing the nation-state model and concepts of self-determination to create a plan for leadership in the new province, the League continued its interventions throughout 1937, laying the groundwork for the formation of a national assembly. On April 21, 1938, the League of Nations initiated a registration process that required citizens to register according to a single

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[106] Zaki al-Arsuzi, *Complete Works of Zaki al-Arsuzi,* Vol. 3 (Damascus: 1975): 291 – 92 in Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 364.
[107] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 3 to Despatch no. 725, June 29, 1938, 751.67/224, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[108] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 141.
[109] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 141.

ethnoreligious "community."[110] Although the League claimed to be working on behalf of the region, this campaign for the enumeration of identity more closely paralleled European interventions in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the area had not been fully or formally colonized during the Ottoman period, local residents did remember the impact of European influence during the late Ottoman years and the occupation of its territories in the aftermath of Great War, prior to the establishment of the Republic. Most notably for the case of Alexandretta, French occupation of Ottoman Cilicia had represented a tangible threat to the autonomy of the Republic of Turkey on its southern borders.[111] What is more, looming just over that border, the French-mandate administration in Syria represented the formalization of the kind of colonial arrangement that Turkish nationalists feared. From the perspective of local nationalists, the League of Nations also presented a threat because it empowered mostly Western superpowers to intervene in their affairs.

The League's own registration process in the Sanjak of Alexandretta reflected simplistic, ethno-nationalist understandings of identity. Men of the province were allowed to register with one of seven ethnic communities outlined in the League's Fundamental Law: Turk, Arab, Kurd, Alawi, Greek Orthodox, Armenian, or Other.[112] The ensuing competition forced individuals to ascribe to homogenous nationalist concepts of community, regardless of their own understandings of ethnicity and religion. The issue of one's "community" became the primary issue of the annexation crisis. Although the League adamantly denied that the registration process was a census, its format eerily echoed the Ottoman Macedonian census efforts over thirty years prior and the statistical arguments of Armenian lobbyists in Cilicia in the post-war

[110] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 175.
[111] Kaplan, "Territorializing Armenians," 401.
[112] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 177.

years.[113] Both previous efforts supposed, in the words of historian Sam Kaplan, "a simple correspondence between an individual's ethnicity and race and the ethnicity and race of the community to which she or he belonged."[114] The duress of these registration processes encouraged nationalist movements in Ottoman Macedonia and Cilicia to influence local understandings of community and convince individuals to affiliate with a particular ethnic identity.[115] The Republic of Turkey soon followed suit in the Sanjak, beginning a calculated campaign to invoke passion for Turkish nationalism within the province itself.

The Port at Alexandretta [116]

[113] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 169.
[114] Sam Kaplan, "Territorializing Armenians: Geo-texts, and Political Imaginaries in French-occupied Cilicia, 1919-1922," History and Anthropology 15, 4 (December 2004): 403.
[115] Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies," et al.
[116] *Alexandrette – Vue du port,* Krt_013751, Türkiye_Hatay_Iskenderun, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.

The Turkish Republic

To understand the importance of the Sanjak of Alexandretta in the early twentieth century, one must also understand the origins of the Republic of Turkey. Building on the foundation of reform within the late Ottoman Empire, Turkey's Republican People's Party *(Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP)* transformed the empire and caliphate into a nation-state free of colonial influence and committed to the propagation of secular ideals. The nationalization of the Republic of Turkey required aggressive, sometimes violently authoritarian, tactics to dissuade its citizenry from the adhering to the old, Ottoman ways of life.

The first President of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Mustafa Kemal before 1934) led the Republican People's Party from the establishment of the Republic on October 29, 1923 to his death on November 10, 1938.[117] His party's policies reflected his unwaveringly republican and secular vision for the nation. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal abolished the sultanate and the caliphate in favor of a republican government, replacing Sharia law for socio-religious matters with European legal codes.[118] In 1924, the state shifted to a unitary educational system and eliminated religious education systems and civil servant positions.[119] In 1925, the Republican People's Party forbid Islamic brotherhoods and their places of worship, even declaring the fez illegal.[120] By 1929, the new regime had eliminated the Arabic letters and numerals of Ottoman Turkish, shifting to a Latin script.[121] [122] In 1930, women received the right to vote, and they could hold

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[117] Andrew Mango, *Atatürk* (London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd, 1999): 525.
[118] Alexandros Lamprou, *National-Building in Modern Turkey: The 'People's Houses', the State and the Citizen* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2015): "Introduction" Location 452. E-book.
[119] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 456.
[120] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 456.
[121] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 461.
[122] Per Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 45-46, Retrospective scholars have contended that the Turkish alphabet reform represented an attempt to distance the Republic of Turkey from its Islamic past and consciously remove it from Arab traditions. Alphabet reform has traditionally carried a nationalist flare, also evident in Stalin's Cyrillicization of Turkic and Persian languages in the Soviet Union. Regardless of its broader national implications,

office by 1934.[123] The ruling Republican People's Party pioneered this period of rapid change, and these top-down decisions widened the divide between the secular leaders and the rest of the country's population. Because the masterminds of these reforms typically lived in larger cities, held university degrees, and came from wealthier families, democratizing and universalizing these reforms became the primary obstacle of the Republican People's Party.

Beginning in the 1930s, the country entered a period referred to as "High Kemalism." Turkish national rhetoric became increasingly authoritarian, and censorship ran rampant.[124] In 1930, Mustafa Kemal conducted the Free Party experiment, which emerged as a result of his efforts to form a more legitimate democracy with an opposition party. He created this "loyalist" opposition party with the help of a close friend, but it garnered unexpected public support. Thus, Mustafa Kemal closed the experiment soon after its establishment. In that same year, Islamist militants entered the town of Menemen in the Izmir province, killing three policemen in their efforts to establish Sharia law. The subsequent Republican crackdown on the people of Menemen and the execution of involved individuals marked the transition to a stricter, authoritarian regime.[125]

In the midst of growing divide, the Republican People's Party constructed a community center model intended to spread the national agenda in cities, towns, and villages throughout the country. Turkish *Halkevleri,* or People's Houses, created space to curate practices of citizenship in favor of the new, national narrative. These houses operated across Turkey from 1932 to 1951.[126] The *Halkevleri* were not a new idea. Rather, they emerged as a result of the Turkish

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the alphabet reform effectively made the majority of the Turkish population illiterate as they worked to transliterate familiar words from a completely different alphabet.

[123] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 461.
[124] Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia,* 113.
[125] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 452.
[126] Lamprou, "Introduction," Location 132.

nationalizing project, modeled after the Ottoman-era *Türk Ocakları,* or Turkish Hearth Association.

This Hearth project educated the populous and encouraged national enthusiasm during the Ottoman Empire's later years. *Türk Ocakları* had functioned as the educational arm of the Young Turks' Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) since 1911.[127] The *Türk Ocakları* had been working on youth education initiatives in wealthier, pro-reform communities – creating and promoting publications, courses, and lectures for the youth and public.[128] The Republican-era *Türk Ocakları* then had to reconcile this earlier model with nationalizing projects that worked to promote the new national idea to poor, rural, and largely illiterate communities. The *Türk Ocakları* represented the ambitious goal of the new Republic: to actualize Republican theory through reform. However, these Hearths eventually became an echo-chamber for higher-educated circles of society, supporting a majority-membership of doctors, lawyers, officers, and state officials.[129] As Republican sentiments evolved in the elitist circles of Turkey's urban areas, leaders of the Republican People's Party hoped to consolidate control over these community centers and transform their ideals into an actionable reality for the rest of Turkish citizenry.

The Republican People's Party issued a document outlining its plans for the opening of the *Halkevleri* under the party name in 1932. The architects of the *Halkevleri* drew inspiration from the successes of other nations, "When compared to other countries, whose state treasuries are richer with more financial resources, they have literacy rates of 100 percent or 95 percent, which adds to the growth and importance of the people's culture every day."[130] The authors of

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[127] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 545.
[128] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 545.
[129] Lamprou, "People's Houses," Location 554.
[130] Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası*, Halkevleri Talimatnamesi,*(Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası:1932),TBMM Kütüphanesi Açık Erişim Koleksiyonu. DSpace @ TBMM. https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11543/2495/197603461.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y: 4.

this plan cited examples of hundreds of cultural homes in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, England, and even fascist Italy. They wrote, "For all of Italy, fascists have established a comprehensive national culture organization called Dopolavoro, and this organization has 1586 cultural societies with as many as 1000 amateur acting groups, composed of young people who perform nationalist plays."[131] The Republican People's Party drew their inspiration for this nationalizing project, particularly the *Halkevleri,* from emerging nationalist and fascist regimes in Europe.

The Republican People's Party had direct control over *Halkevleri,* empowering proponents of the Kemalist regime to dictate how and what was taught in these community centers. Of the *Halkevleri,* Atatürk proclaimed, "Our party opened its arms to all of our citizens with the *Halkevleri,* they inspired a social and cultural revolution in our homeland." [132] The *Halkevleri* became a symbol of how the Turkish revolution was meant to include all of its citizens. Nafi A. Kansu, a Republican People's Party parliamentary member from Erzurum, wrote, "Organizing a community life is not an easy task… Every new initiative adds a basic stone to this building of society. The *Halkevleri* is one of these basic stones."[133] The *Halkevleri* were intended to rebuild Turkish society in the Republican model, and proponents of the Republican People's Party understood it as their effort to reach the common citizen. The *Halkevleri* made the theoretical aspects of these Republican reforms tangible.

In 1936, this citizenship model faced its greatest test as the Republic of Turkey campaigned for the future of the Sanjak of Alexandretta. The *Halkevleri* system was a vehicle for

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[131] CHF, *Halkevleri Talimatnamesi,* 4.
[132] Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, Halkevleri 1932-1935: 103 halkevi geçen yıllarda nasıl çalıştı*? 1935, TBMM Kütüphanesi Açık Erişim Koleksiyonu. DSpace @ TBMM. https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/bitstream/handle/11543/2491/197404032.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
[133] Nafi A. Kansu in *103 halkevi geçen yıllarda nasıl çalıştı*?

Republican reform within the independent province, serving as a pseudo-government led by community members and responsible for the Turkification of this newly formed state. The *Halkevleri* infiltrated every aspect of cultural life in the Sanjak community – establishing cultural clubs, organizing sports teams, providing adults with language education classes, and importantly, representing the motivations of the Republican People's Party in the Sanjak.[134] By the time of registration in 1937, People's Houses had popped up across the Sanjak, forming strong Turkish bases in each of the province's larger cities.[135] The *Halkevleri* connected the national cause for the Sanjak of Alexandretta to broader practices of citizenship in the Republic of Turkey, inextricably tying the civic structures of the province to those of the broader nation.

The Arab Nation

The *Halkevleri* were not without competition. Prominent Arab nationalist, Zaki al-Arsuzi (1899-1968) moved to Antioch as a child in 1904, and his father, Najib al-Arsuzi was actively involved in Arab resistance organizations. After young al-Arsuzi watched his father swallow that list of Arab nationalists in 1915, Ottoman forces arrested Najib for sedition, and he was exiled to Konya. It was Najib's leadership in a local Arab-nationalist cell that inspired al-Arsuzi's later work in the region.[136] Al-Arsuzi's nationalist tendencies drew on the practices of the emerging Arab nationalist sentiments of the era. Scholars of Arab nationalism have long-debated to what extent "Turkish oppression" or Western colonial betrayal of Arab communities drove these early movements.[137] Traditional scholarship emphasizes the role that the Arab Revolt during World

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[134] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 62 and Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 375.
[135] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 176.
[136] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 364.
[137] Youssef Choueiri, "Pensée 2: Theorizing Arab Nationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, 1 (February 2009): 13.

War I played in tinging Arab nationalism with anti-Turkish rhetoric. However, nationalist circles similarly feared the threat of colonial rule. As such, Arab nationalism in the interwar period evolved in response to both of these threats.

Based on al-Arsuzi's background, it would be understandable to suppose that the primary driver of his nationalist work in the Sanjak was his desire to escape from "Turkish oppression." However, al-Arsuzi's League of National Action strongly distanced itself from the Syrian National Bloc and existing Syrian political parties because of their close ties to colonial powers.[138] The rhetoric of the League of National Action sought to unify Arabic speakers of all religions against the domination of both colonial and Turkish powers.[139] Al-Arsuzi's education at Institut Laïc in Beirut and his stint at the Sorbonne in Paris equipped him with the nationalist vocabulary to gain legitimacy in this era. Al-Arsuzi showed a preference for emerging nationalist philosophers, including Johann Gottlieb Fichte.[140] Al-Arsuzi's education at both of these institutions shaped his rhetoric regarding the importance of education as a nationalizing tool, and it allowed him to engage directly in nationalist debates taking place in Europe.[141] Armenian lobbyists in Cilicia following World War I had employed a similar tactic, using European nationalist rhetoric to gain legitimacy under the authority of colonial powers.[142] These national movements reflected the unfortunate circumstances of the era. Al-Arsuzi advocated for an Arab nation independent of colonial rule, but he had to employ western European colonial rhetoric in his theory to gain legitimacy under French rule.

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[138] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 30.
[139] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 31.
[140] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 365.
[141] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 366.
[142] Kaplan, Territorializing Armenians," 409.

However, al-Arsuzi's ideas were not completely western. In addition to his French education, he was an active member of Arab nationalist movements that drew on the legacy of the *nahda* period (the Arab Renaissance) and the work of twentieth century Syrian thinkers like those of the Damascus Academy. In 1933, al-Arsuzi joined the League of National Action, which had recently formed as a Syrian, pan-Arab response to faltering national leadership. Al-Arsuzi carried these ideals back to Antioch in 1934, becoming the representative of the League of National Action in the province.[143] In 1937, tensions between the League of National Action and other Arab nationalist movements increased when France allowed a coalition of older Syrian politicians called the National Bloc to form a government in Syria. Jamil Mardin was at the helm as Prime Minister. Al-Arsuzi and other, more progressive Arab nationalists felt that the National Bloc was not doing enough to further the Arab national cause in Syria.[144] The League of National Action wanted to overthrow French rule, which oversaw and controlled most of the governmental administration within the Sanjak and include the Sanjak in the Arab *umma,* or nation. In the Sanjak, the League of Nation Action aimed to unify Arabic speakers under an Arab nationalist ideology, regardless of religion.[145] In light of these conflicts, the organization of Arab nationalist movements in the Sanjak did not match the strength of the unified, Turkish national movement.

Al-Arsuzi had begun a nationalizing campaign in the Sanjak even before the 1936 crisis. In 1930, he returned to the province and eventually became a high school teacher.[146] Of his

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[143] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 368.
[144] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 378.
[145] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 31.
[146] Hiroyuki Aoyama and Malek Salman, "Zakī al-Arsūzī's Ideology of the Arab *Ba'ath,"* in *Spiritual Father of the Ba'ath: The Ideological and Political Significance of Zakī al-Arsūzī in Arab Nationalist Movements,* Middle Eastern Studies Series, no. 49 (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economics, Japan International Trade Organization, 2000): 119.

pupils he wrote, "The mind of the student took on a new condition. There were no longer Muslims and Christians in the class, rather the group became Arab and well-versed in the awakening of their community from its slumber."[147] Given his education and inclinations toward the national movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, al-Arsuzi emerged as the primary figure of Arab national resistance in the Sanjak.

Aside from their organizational differences, the nationalisms of both the Republican People's Party and the Arab League of National Action came to resemble one another. Like the Republic People's Party, the League of National Action established cultural and sports clubs and spearheaded Arabic language literacy initiatives.[148] Al-Arsuzi's nationalizing project sought to erase sectarian identities and replace them with a singular, Arab identity. This effort toward a common, national identity resembled that of the Republic of Turkey, where nationalists eschewed the idea that "Turkishness" had come to replace Ottoman religious identities in the secular era. As discussed further in Chapters Two and Three, some Turkish nationalist rhetoric and policies would call the universality of a Turkish identity into question. The League also began publishing a paper in the province, *Al-Uruba.*[149] In addition to imploring Arabs of the province to unify against colonial and Turkish occupation, the newspaper invoked pan-Arab rhetoric to establish a broader nation of the former Ottoman Empire.

Outside of Syria and Turkey, the Sanjak of Alexandretta became a crucial factor in broader Arab nationalist movements which focused on the unity of all Arabic-speaking peoples beyond geopolitical boundaries. As such, the Sanjak of Alexandretta represented much more than a missing piece of Syria for Arab nationalists. It was a missing piece of the entire Arab

[147] Complete Works, 5:419 in Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 368.
[148] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* et. al.
[149] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 370.

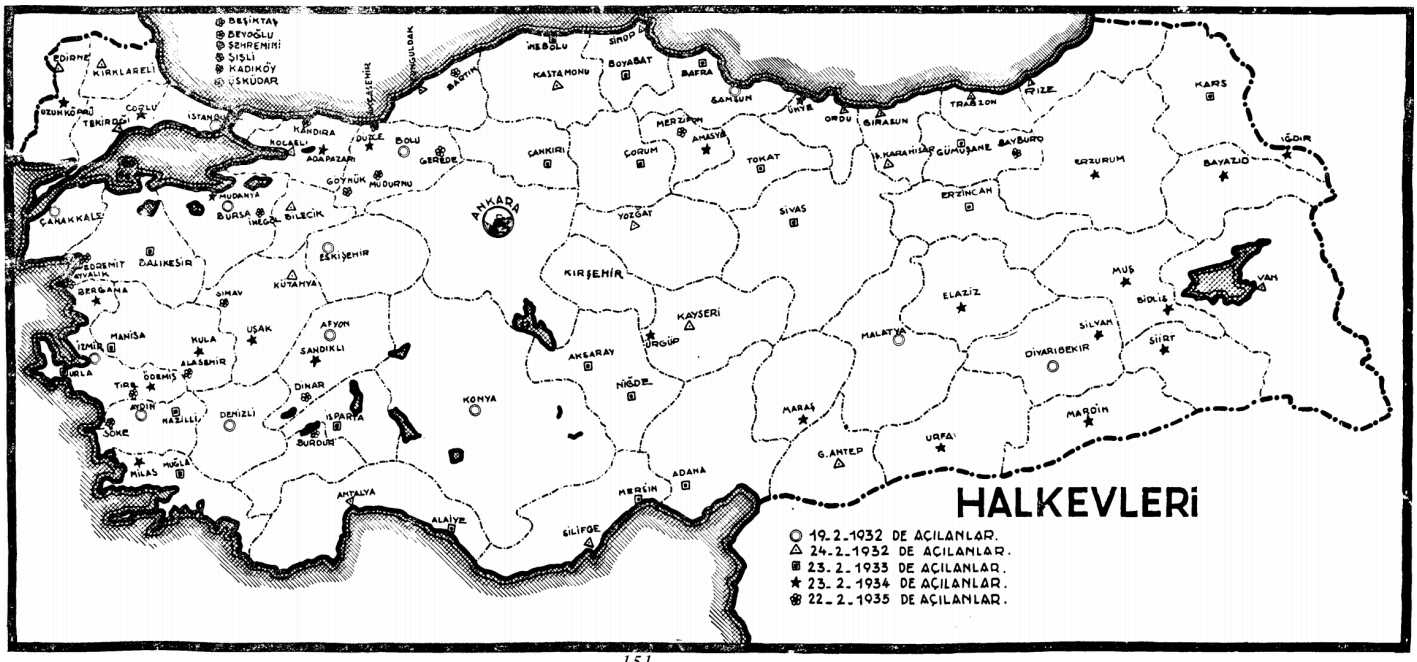
nation. These movements drew parallels between the occupied Sanjak and British colonial policies in Palestine. As historian Keith Watenpaugh explained in his analysis of al-Arsuzi's interactions with Palestine, the link between Palestine and Alexandretta "has remained central to Ba'athist irredentist politics to the present day."[150] Keeping Alexandretta became a prominent cause for pan-Arab thinkers, representing a resistance to Turkish and French occupiers in the age of self-determination. Despite the clarity in al-Arsuzi's rhetoric, it is more difficult to pinpoint the evolution of national awareness among the citizens of the Sanjak. As later chapters discuss, many residents participated in both Arab and Turkish nationalist movements. However, others did not. In the midst of these nationalizing experiments, the crisis permanently altered the state of the Sanjak, imposing sweeping national identities on people who previously may not have ascribed to the monolithic concept of a nation-state.

Conclusion

The crisis in the Sanjak of Alexandretta emerged as a perfect storm. Nationalism had peaked in Western Europe, and the idea had begun to propagate across the globe. The young Republic of Turkey was a nationalist state – inspired in large part by many previous reforms that had taken place in other emerging nations. For Turkish nationalists, the Sanjak of Alexandretta represented colonial intrusion. Concurrently, pan-Arab movements emerged in the Sanjak as mandate powers in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan began to loosen their grips on the territories, a trend that followed those of many heterogeneous, contested territories in the wake of colonial rule. The Sanjak of Alexandretta became a model through which both Turkish and Arab nationalists invoked new sentiments of national belonging, realizing that the history of the region

[150] Watenpaugh, "Phantoms," 371.

was an essential tool with which to validate claims to the concept of an Arab or Turkish nation-state. The ideological products of the Sanjak Crisis reveal how Turkish and Arab nationalists adapted their ideas of nation to lay claim to the Sanjak.



Map of all Halkevleri in Turkey as of 1935.[151]

[151] Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, *Halkevleri 1932-1935: 103 halkevi geçen yıllarda nasıl çalıştı*? 1935, Appendix A, TBMM Kütüphanesi Açık Erişim Koleksiyonu. DSpace @ TBMM. https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/bitstream/handle/11543/2491/197404032.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

II

"Language and history are the basis upon which to found a nation."
Writing the Sanjak

In 1943, Zaki al-Arsuzi published a book titled, *The Genius of Arabic in Its Tongue.* In its introduction, he wrote, "This thesis conclusively answers the problem of language."[152] Yet, in fact, Al-Arsuzi spent the rest of his political career continuing to search for answers to this problem. Prior to the book's publication, he had spent almost a decade in the Sanjak of Alexandretta trying to convince its residents that speaking Arabic was the basis of their identity. During his time advocating for the Arab claim to the Sanjak of Alexandretta, many Turkish nationalist writers and politicians were also writing the Sanjak into their national history. Although al-Arsuzi wrote largely in response to Arab nationalist writers of his time, his experiences in the Sanjak also brought him into conversation with Turkish Republican scholars.

Figure 1: Zaki al-Arsuzi, The Online Museum of Syrian History, 1936-1939, Web.

This chapter focuses primarily on Turkish Republican scholarship related to the Sanjak of Alexandretta, tracing its ideological claim to the province. It also weighs this literature against Zaki al-Arsuzi's later writings, published between 1943 and 1954. In doing so, it acknowledges points of coincidence and divergence between both Turkish and Arab national scholarship on the

[152] Zaki al-Arsūzī, *Al-'Abqarīyah al-'Arabīyah fī Lisān-hā* (Damascus: Maṭbʿaat al-Hīyā, 1954): 3.

Sanjak of Alexandretta. Ultimately, this chapter outlines the Republican nationalist ideology that formed the basis of Turkey's campaign in the Sanjak, inspiring the party's reforms, both in the Alexandretta and in Turkey's southern regions more generally. These efforts, we will see, significantly expanded existing definitions of Turkishness to include non-Sunni populations, most notably Nuseyri Alawites.

A Turkish History: Negotiating the History of the Hittites

In 1930, Mustafa Kemal established the Association for the Study of Turkish History *(Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti)* to research and write the history of the Republic of Turkey. In continuance with the Turkish nationalist movement of the late Ottoman era, the organization purposefully employed veteran members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and historians who had received their education during the Young Turk era.[153] This group hosted its first conference in 1932, of which Society President and influential historian of the CUP era, Yusuf Akçuraoğlu, wrote*,* "language and history are the basis upon which to found a nation."[154] Akuçuraoğlu's preoccupation with language and history reflected broader Republican sentiments of the time. Emerging from the Turanist (pan-Turkic) scholarship of the late Ottoman era, Kemalist reformers propagated the Sun-Language Theory and the Turkish History Thesis in the early Republic, claiming that the Turkish language and nation were the origins of all languages and all races. However, as other Republican reforms of the era and this chapter reveal, the actual applications of these theories were much more nuanced than the sentiments themselves.[155]

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[153] Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 229.
[154] Yusuf Akçuraoğlu, "Birinci Türk Tarihi Kongresi," *Ülkü,* February 1933, 25.
[155] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* 63.

Language and history became revealing sources of evidence through which to understand how Kemalists worked to relate the Sanjak's diversity to that of the new Republic.

Early efforts to construe Turkish history, like the work of the First Turkish Historical Society, implicitly excluded some and included others in the narrative of Turkishness. The Historical Society tied Turkish identities to specific groups and moments in history, most particularly the Hittite people. The organization concluded, "The vehicles of Hittite anthropology, language, and antiquities gave plenty of evidence that the Hittites were of the Turkish race."[156] The use of the word *ırk*, or race, distinguished the Turkish "nation" from the Turkish "citizen." It negated the idea that one could be Turkish because they lived on Turkish land, spoke the Turkish language, and participated in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Instead, to be Turkish was to be a descendant of the Hittites. Thus, the Historical Society expanded upon late Ottoman racial classifications and more distinctly defined who fit into the "Turkish" racial category of the new nation.

Prior to the crisis in the Sanjak, Republican historians wrote that the Hittite Empire was the oldest Turkish civilization in the Anatolia. In 1934, Mehmet Saffet clarified that he understood the residents of the Hittite Empire as a group of people descending from one, Hittite race. Although, Saffet never explicitly claimed that modern-day Hatay was the heart of this empire, he depicted an empire that had moved west from Central Asia to occupy most corners of the Turkish Republic.[157]

As the crisis in the Sanjak escalated, politicians worked to more directly tie Hittite history to the province. On October 10, 1936, the Siirt Deputy to the Turkish Grand National Assembly,

[156] Akçuraoğlu, "Birinci Türk Tarihi Kongresi," 23, 27.
[157] Mehmet Sahfet, "Anadolu'da En Eski Türk Medeniyeti: Eti İmparatorluğu," *Ülkü,* November 1934, 168.

İsmail Müştak Mayakon, published an article titled "A Page of History."[158] He asserted that "the Sanjak has been inhabited by Turks for forty centuries, and went on to say that the Turks, spreading out from their homeland in Central Asia, were known as "Hatay" when they reached the border of North China." He explained that "the same Turks came to Anatolia and eventually spread all over the world." He declared that the words 'Hatay,' 'Hata,' 'Ata' and 'Eti' all mean the same thing – ancestors of the Turks. Logically, the people living in the Sanjak should be called 'Hata,' and the state to be created there should be called 'Hatay.'"[159] Mayakon's 1936 statement was the first publicly explicit claim on the matter, and Saffet's earlier intellectual endeavor into the state of the Hittite Empire further suggests that the strategic coupling of the Sanjak with the origins of Turkishness emerged in an effort to redefine Turkish history and justify claims to the Sanjak.

Mayakon's statement—particularly his language about Turks spreading "all over the world," echoed the Turkish History Thesis, supposing that perhaps Turkish people were everywhere. Such language still indicates that Mayakon claimed a sort of Turkish ethnic superiority because it implied that Turks were the ancestors of *all races.* This language might also suggest a more inclusive understanding of Turkishness in the new Republic. Because Turks had spread all over the world, everyone in the new Republic could be Turkish. Republican leaders eventually employed Mayakon's language to expand the definition to Arab Alawites specifically, indicating that there were still limits regarding who could and could not be Turkish.

This argument for the Sanjak was not the only claim the Republic had made using Hittite history. In 1935, the Republican People's Party released a booklet titled "A Glance at Diyarbakir" that concluded, "The city of Amid [Diyarbakir] is not a city founded by the

[158] Istanbul to State, Review of Press, December 1, 1936, 751.67/106, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[159] Istanbul to State, Review of Press, December 1, 1936.

Assyrians, nor of the Iranians, Arabs or Greeks. It was founded in 2000 BC by Turkish Hittites who migrated westward from Central Asia… it never lost its Turkishness, national essence and language."[160]

Nor was this tactic entirely Turkish. In fact, Armenian nationalists had employed a similar strategy in their efforts to claim Cilicia. At the Paris Peace Conference after World War I, Armenian-Egyptian delegate Boghos Nubar Pasha declared, "The Armenian people possess sacred rights in this country [of Cilicia]; great ancient and recent memories attach it to this region; for centuries, the Armenians constituted the only factor of civilization."[161] Even before the twentieth century Armenian intelligentsia had advocated for the superiority of Armenian civilization, comparing its religion, history, and language with favor to those of the West.[162] Such rhetoric might echo the effects of European colonialism in the region. Advocates used words like "civilization" to convey ownership over contested regions in the same way that French and English colonists justified their interventions for the sake of "civilization." Furthermore, these efforts to displayed an "original" relationship with the land undermined the communities that had come to the region during later historical stages. In the case of Diyarbakir, and indeed the Sanjak as well, the Republican People's Party acknowledged Assyrian, Persian, and Roman occupations but argued that the Hittites had come *first* – and therefore had a right to the land.

Following Mayakon's publication, Turkish nationalists also rebranded the Arab Alawites of the Sanjak *"Eti Türkleri,"* or Hittite Turks, in an effort to incorporate them into this broader

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[160] *Diyarbekire Bir Bakış* (Diyarkbekir: Diyarbekir Basımevi ,1935): 24-30 in Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 233.
[161] Ministère des Affaires Etrangères [MAE], Syrie Liban #136, f 80/2, Paris, 11 May 1920 in Kaplan, "Territorializing Armenians," 405.
[162] Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia,* 119.

narrative of a Turkish homeland. The Republican People's Party had employed similar rhetoric with regard to the Kurdish communities of the Republic's southeastern regions, dubbing Kurdish people "Mountain Turks" and "Valley Turks." However, in 1939 and 1940, Turkish Republican leadership issued a report that called for a reversal of this terminology. The report read, "With this propaganda we cannot convince either them or anybody else that they are Turks… we have to acknowledge and admit than in a large part of the country a foreign element are living in a collective fashion."[163] This distinction acknowledges the increasingly racial rhetoric of the Republican leadership during this era and a shift away from language that claimed everyone was a Turk.

Precisely because the Party began to distinguish Kurds as racially separate from Turks, the inclusion of Alawite communities in Turkish racial rhetoric does offer a glimpse into the emerging ethnic hierarchy of the Republic. Both Arab Alawites in the Sanjak and Kurds in Turkey's east spoke languages other than Turkish, and both claimed unique cultural practices that distinguished them from Turkish narratives. The Republican People's Party had to incorporate both communities into the broader national narrative. However, Kurdish resistance movements may have dissuaded Republican nationalists from furthering the idea of Turkish-Kurdish unity. The 1939 and 1940 reports admitted a sort of defeat as Turkish Republicans conceded that they couldn't "convince" Kurdish people that they were Turks. The Republican People's Party's claim to Arab Alawites in the Sanjak as Turks evolved under unique circumstances, and was therefore different from that of Kurdish populations. The Republic of Turkey engaged in a demographic war with France and Syria to claim this region. Because the province had no majority, Turkish nationalists had to expand their interpretation of Turkishness

[163] Reproduced in Faik Bulut, *Kürt Sorununa Çözüm Arayışları (*Istanbul: Ozan, 1998), 185-189 in Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 161.

to construct a majority in the population. Arab Alawites, they decided, were a part of this "majority."

In addition to these racialization initiatives, nationalists began referring to the Sanjak as "Hatay" – land of the Hittites – in harmony with Mayakon's announcement.[164] Politicians, journalists, and everyday citizens across the Republic adopted this new name for the province. In doing so, the Republic of Turkey moved away from the Ottoman history of the province, ridding it of the term "Sanjak," and making an imperial claim to the region from ancient history rather than recent history. The widespread adoption of the name, Hatay, implicitly erased histories within the province as Turkish citizens gradually disregarded the region 's long Ottoman history in favor of portrayals that incorporated it into their concepts of the new Republic, complete with a Hittite history.

In 1954, Zaki al-Arsuzi made a similar argument reclaiming new origins for the Arab national cause. In the first volume of his book, *The Rebirth of the Arab Nation and Its Letters to the World (Ba'ath al-ummah al-'Arabīyah wa-Risālatihā ilá al-'Ālam),* he proposed that the era of Arab civilization before Islam, *al-jāhilīyah,* was the Arab nation's era of intellect.[165] While Turkish Republican politicians made historical claims to the Hittite civilization, al-Arsuzi combined philosophy and history to call for a return to pre-Islamic Arab civilization. He wrote, "for us, the *ba'ath* means we reach the conscious level which our ancestors depended on in creating our culture."[166] To al-Arsuzi, *ba'ath,* or rebirth of the Arab nation, required a conscious connection to the origins of Arab civilization. Just as Turkish Republican scholars had used calls to embrace their Hittite history as a means of nationalizing, al-Arsuzi campaigned for a return to

[164] Istanbul to State, Review of Press, December 1, 1936.
[165] Zakī al-Arsūzī, "al-'Ahid al-Jāhilī hua Ahidnā al- ḏahabī," in *Ba'th al-Ummah al-'Arabīyah wa-Risālatihā ilá al-'Ālam V. 1* (Sūrīyah: Dār al-Yaqẓah al-'Arabīyah lil-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1954): 1.
[166] al-Arsūzī, *Al-Mu'allafāt al-Kām'lah,* Vol 4, p. 201 and 311 in Aoyama and Salman, 105.

Arab tribal histories. However, unlike Republican scholars, al-Arsuzi did not make this claim with regard to a particular place. Instead, he wrote of the Arab nation as a people that seemed to transcend physical localities.

The Turkish Republican claim to the Sanjak was more directly tied to a physical space and the people that inhabited it. The Republican People's Party made an effort to "scientifically" establish the relationship between the Arab Alawites of the Sanjak and the Turkish Republic. In 1938, an Ankara University Turkology professor and representative to the Grand National Assembly named Hasan Reşit Tankut published a book titled "About Alawites and Alawism" in which he argued that the shape of the Arab Alawites' skulls differed from that of the Arab race and more closely mirrored the skull shapes of Anatolian Turks.[167]

Using pseudoscience to prove racial origins was not uncommon in the former Ottoman Empire during this period. In 1932, at the meeting of the first Turkish Historical Congress in Ankara, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Istanbul University, Dr. Şevket Aziz, conducted a presentation titled, "The Anthropology of the Turks." He utilized charts of skull measurements and pseudohistorical documents to present his argument for the racial superiority of Turkish people.[168] He was not an aberration. There were rumors that Atatürk himself had summoned a young musician working for the People's House in Diyarbakir to Dolmabahçe Palace to have his skull measured to verify his race.[169] A decade earlier, in Cilicia, Armenian nationalist David-Beg published a book in which he had outlined the anthropological characteristics of Armenians and "Armenoids," writing that this ethnic group had "long and oval faces" which distinguished them

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[167] Hasan Reşit Tankut, *Nusayriler ve Nusayrilik Hakkında* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1936): 14-15. in Hakan Mertcan, *Türk Modernleşmesinda Arap Aleviler (Tarih Kimlik Siyaset)* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2015), 191.
[168] Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 230.
[169] *Sırrını Surlarına Fısıldayan Şehir: Diyarbakır* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003) in Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 265.

from purportedly broad-head Turks. According to European pseudoscience, Western people had long heads, which made them more rational than groups like the Turks.[170] The Republican People's Party adopted these pseudosciences in an effort to distinguish and define Turkishness, but they also employed it to disprove negative European stereotypes about Turkish people that emerged much earlier, during the Ottoman Empire.[171] These applications of pseudoscience reflect the complex relationships that many former Ottoman subjects had developed with both European and Turkish powers. The late Ottoman era and the early Republic marked a renaissance of Turkish national pride as leaders made efforts to disprove the negative meaning of "Turk" in the past. Simultaneously, Armenian nationalists carefully negotiated the territory of the Armenian Genocide, using European pseudoscience to curry European favor and distance their new nation from that of the Republic of Turkey.

These racial theories influenced how theorists like Ahmet Faik and İsmail Müştak Mayakon incorporated Alawites – in both ethnic and religious contexts – into an expanding definition of Turkishness. In his forward to Ahmet Faik's 1937 history of Hatay, İsmail Hakkı responded to Faik's claims that Muhammad ibn Nuseyr had incorporated elements of Turkish Islamic sciences into his work and that his Turkish identity preceded the Arabization of northern Syria.[172] He argued: "Mehmed bin Nuseyr, founder of Nuseyrism, the Alawite sect found in the Sanjak and northwestern Syria, was originally of the Shi'i Twelvers. There were a number of Turks among the Twelvers, perhaps including Mehmed bin Nuseyr himself." [173]

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[170] Kaplan, "Territorializing Armenians," 409.
[171] An example of this negative stereotype is William Gladstone's late-19th century pamphlet, "The Bulgarian Horrors," which portrayed Turkish people as a "threat to Christendom whose principal quality was unbridled savagery." Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 1.
[172] A. Faik Türkmen, *Mufassal Hatay: Tarih, coğrafya, ekalliyetler, mezhepler, edebiyat, içtimaî durum, lengüistik durum, folklor, etnografya ve Hata davasını ihtiva eden 4 cild.* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaasi, 1937): 221.
[173] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 221.

İsmail Hakkı described the origins of the particular sect to which most Alawites in the Sanjak belonged: the Nuseyri sect, and incorporated their history into Turkish racial theory. Ninth-century Baghdadi scholar Muhammad ibn Nuseyr al-Namiri likely founded the sect. Nuseyri creed declared that Ibn Nuseyr had been a disciple of Ali al-Hadi, the tenth imam of the Shi'i Twelvers. Ibn Nuseyr deified 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth rightly-guided caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate. According to Ibn Nuseyr, 'Ali was not just the Prophet's chosen successor, he was God. Over time, the beliefs of Ibn Nuseyr and his followers diverged from mainstream Shi'i traditions and solidified into the Nuseyri sect. The Nuseyris had a larger presence in Syria and southern Turkey.[174] The Republican People's Party distinctly incorporated Nuseyri Alawites into the narrative of Turkishness during their campaign in the Sanjak, not to be confused with other Alawite sects of the Republic of Turkey.

In light of Faik's claims that the founder of Nuseyrism had been a Turkish resident of the Sanjak, Hakkı added that the most powerful evidence proving the Turkic origins of the Nuseyri sect is that the Nuseyri villages and neighborhoods all had Turkish last names.[175] He complimented Faik, stating that he has done a powerful job of analyzing these religious traditions and understanding them from a new, national perspective.[176]

The Turkification of Arab Alawite history in the Sanjak took place in academic circles in the Republic of Turkey. This scholarship did not emerge in conversation with Arab Alawites in the province, but rather within the boundaries of the Republic. The circumstances of this dialogue, most specifically Tankut's pseudoscientific investigation, required a study of individual Arab Alawites in the Sanjak to prove their Turkishness while simultaneously isolating

[174] Winter, 13-14.
[175] İsmail Hakkı, "Bir tetkik: Antakya tarihi," 10 in Türkmen, *Mufassal.*
[176] Hakkı, "Bir tetkik," 11.

them from the debate about their own racial and cultural identities. Such research revealed the deep divide between Kemalist policymakers who were working and writing in Turkey's larger, western cities and the reality of society in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. These conversations among scholars marginalized Alawite communities from conversations about their origins. Republican writers were working in conversation with one another, not with working class residents of Arab Alawite communities in the Sanjak. These histories may have been propagated to justify the cause of annexation to members of the Republican People's Party and other scholars participating in this research. Such written histories were intended for policymakers, not the people of the Sanjak.

A Language: Turkish as a Forgotten Mother Tongue

Having gained traction in the late Ottoman era as a defining aspect of Turkishness, the propagation of the Turkish language was an essential tool in reorienting identities in the Sanjak and other southern provinces. In 1937, *Halkevleri* leadership in the Republican People's Party met to discuss the importance of spoken Turkish as a means of shaping the Republic's national identity for minority populations.[177] They wrote that it was crucial to target important leaders within communities, especially highly-educated doctors and lawyers, and teach them to speak Turkish so that they could share their knowledge and contribute to the formation of modern Turkish scholarship .[178] Indeed an essential tenant of the nationalizing project was the spread of the Turkish language. In the 1933 premier issue of *Ülkü,* Secretary General of the Republican People's Party and Istanbul University professor of Republican Ideology, Mehmet Recep Peker wrote an article about the importance of promoting Turkish conversation. He hoped that citizens

[177] Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 58.
[178] Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 58.

of the new Republic would find a space to speak out and have conversations with one another in a common language. In the article, he portrayed the nation as a family table and asked to hear the voices of Turkish citizens. [179] These conversations, he believed, might form the "face" of the government.[180] If history was the essence of the nation, language became the vehicle of that propagation.

In the same issue of *Ülkü*, Kemalist linguist and politician Ragip Hulüsi Özdem outlined his perception of the power of language in the new Republic. He described in detail the fall of the caliphate in 1923 and the conflicts that had arisen between old and new. He then posited four vehicles of language: 1) religious culture spreads holy books with language 2) The wealth of a culture spreads classics through language 3) Religious culture propagates the nation with language and 4) that the wealth of a culture might propagate the nation with language. Ragip Hulüsi Özdem suggested that Modern Turkish fit in the fourth vehicle, and that it might be able to unite the nation in a common culture.[181] Hulüsi described language as a nationalizing element, and linguistic reforms represented one of the cultural revolutions essential to establishment of the Republic. Speaking Turkish was the means by which Kemalists thought themselves able to spread and cement this new, Turkish culture despite individual ethnic and religious identities.

However, some speakers began to understand language as a test of purity. Those individuals who were able to speak pure Turkish were genuinely Turkish, and therefore representative of the new Republic. Those who could not fell into a different, lesser class of Turkishness. In 1934, Turkish Republican politician and representative of the Grand National Assembly, Nafi Atuf Kansu wrote of the Turkish language, "Turks are the best at understanding

[179] Recep, "Konuşunuz ve Konuşturunuz," *Ülkü,* February 1933, 20.
[180] Recep, "Konuşunuz," 21.
[181] Ragip Hulüsi, "Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti," *Ülkü,* February 1933, 31-32.

Turkish including its relationships and comparisons to other languages in the most straightforward and correct manner."[182] Atuf argued that western interpretations of the Turkish language were incorrect because foreign scholars could not fully understand the value of Turkish. Atuf solidified his linguistic argument with the concept of ethnicity, writing that the history of the language traced back to the Turkish race and that Turkish civilizations brought value to the language itself.[183] His writing emphasized the importance with which the Republican People's Party viewed language. In conversation with Atuf, prominent Turkish nationalists like Ziya Gökalp and Şükrü Kaya had also argued that the Turkish language was essential to the definition of Turkishness.[184]

Years later, Zaki al-Arsuzi made a similar claim regarding the relationship between the Arab nation and the Arabic language. He wrote that Islamic expansion had led to the co-option of the Arabic language, removing the language from the essence of its people. He referenced a line from Qur'an 11:114: إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ, which modern interpreters had taken to mean, "good deeds do away with misdeeds." However, al-Arsuzi rejected this interpretation, writing that the true Arab nation, in the age before Islam, did work for its beauty, rather than its rewards. He then condemned "non-Arab" interpretations of Arabic, writing, "This literal interpretation unsuitably entered the nature of Arabic. When an organ is cut off, how can it be replaced?"[185] In this metaphor, the organ referred to the Qur'an, and al-Arsuzi suggested that such foreign interpretations of Arabic, without adequate context, "cut off" the Arabic of the Qur'an from the body of the Arab nation. Al-Arsuzi and Atuf both made claims that limited the definition of

[182] Nafi Atuf, "Türk Dili ve Kurultay," *Ülkü,* September 1934, 1.
[183] Atuf, "Türk Dili," 1.
[184] Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923-1945,* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013): 2.
[185] Al-Arsūzī, "al-'Ahid al-Jāhilī hua Ahidnā al- ḏahabī," 3.

belonging in their two nations. Even if individuals could speak Turkish or Arabic, ethnic identity was still the fundamental factor in determining *who* was considered genuinely Turkish or Arab.

This scholarship conflicted with the cautious efforts of the Republican People's Party and the League of National Action regarding language in the Sanjak. At least five languages were commonly spoken in the province at the time of annexation: Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Circassian, and Armenian.[186] Turkish officials noted the inherent danger of linguistic classifications in the Sanjak because most residents spoke at least two languages. They requested instead that residents be asked to choose a "community," which would allow Arab Alawites to register as Turkish, even if they spoke Arabic at home.[187] This nuanced rhetoric reveals the contradictions that emerged as the Republican People's Party campaigned to prove the Turkishness of the Sanjak. Previous linguistic classifications of identity, outlined in the 1921 Ankara Treaty, necessarily excluded non-Turkish linguistic minorities in the Sanjak. In the 1930s, however, the Republican People's Party both claimed the Turkish language as an essential element of national character and attempted to include non-Turkish-speaking minorities within this definition.

Given these tricky circumstances, it became particularly important that proponents of the Republican People's Party highlight the linguistic abilities of communities with unclear loyalties within the Sanjak. They campaigned to prove that minority groups were able to speak Turkish better than their other languages, suggesting that Turkish was indeed their primary identity. In the case of the Sanjak's Alawite community, Ahmet Faik contested that "Hatay Arabs spoke the worst and most deformed Arabic of all of the Arabic-speaking regions – from the Atlantic Ocean

[186] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 19.
[187] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 171.

to the Persian Gulf."[188] In contrast, "Hatay Alawites speak unbelievably clean and fluent Turkish" whereas the Arab families of the province "could never speak Turkish this cleanly."[189] His suggestion that all of the Alawites of the Sanjak spoke perfect Turkish contradicted earlier arguments that nationalizing elements in southern Turkey needed to "straighten out" the Turkish of Alawite communities.[190] Such discrepancies demonstrate the abundant chaos that emerged among supporters of the Republican People's Party. Although Kemalists used history and language to construct a Turkish national claim to the Sanjak, different scholars touted their own opinions. They revealed both the incongruences between this claim to innate linguistic ability and their own nationalist desire to re-write the history of the province.

Ahmet Faik Türkmen's writings suggest that the standardization of the Turkish language became a means by which to measure the nation's success. As Atuf concluded in 1934, "Every convention on the Turkish language will also indicate the triumph of Turkish civilization and Turkish science."[191] Successfully evidencing the Turkish language tendencies of Arab Alawite communities would imply that they too were Turkish, tying their language and history to the progress of Turkish civilization. Faik's evidence similarly navigated the obstacle that multilingualism had presented in the Sanjak. Multiple languages mirrored the fluidity of "identity" in the region: the convergence of language, religion, and ethnicity left people with more than one identifying classification. In writing that Arab Alawites spoke perfect Turkish, Faik implied that their most fluent linguistic ability must reflect their "true" ethnic identity.

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[188] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 225
[189] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 225.
[190] Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Hars komitaları talimatnamesi, pp. 49-56 from Cumhuriyet Arşivi as found in Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 407-414.
[191] Atuf, "Türk Dili," 2.

In this same book, Ahmet Faik listed the Alawite villages of the province and common family names, writing that all they were all Turkish.[192] The Republican People's Party government also approved name changes to any villages with non-Turkish names. Thus, Hanne Çayı became Kınalıçay, Cebeli Sem'an became Samandağı, and Kassar Çayı became Altınlıçay.[193] Such a renaming process mirrored the intention of the 1934 Surname Law. Although this law focused on the adoption of hereditary surnames in Turkish, its purpose was similar. Both actions banned non-Turkish names, which was particularly notable in Turkey's eastern provinces because names often reflected tribal and familial origins. Such linguistic erasure was part of the efforts of the Republican People's Party to use language as a tool to discourage diversity within the narrative of Turkishness.[194] This relationship between race and language was particularly important in claiming the Turkishness of the Sanjak of Alexandretta. The Republican renaming initiatives may have been an attempt to modernize names according to Turkish language reforms, if those villages were indeed majority Turkish. However, given the circumstances of the era and similar initiatives that examined the Turkishness of names in Alawite villages in Adana, it is more likely that the Republican People's Party renamed and rewrote Alawite history in favor of the new Republic. [195]

Language was a defining aspect of Turkish citizenship in the new era. Well after the Sanjak crisis, in a 1943 article titled "Love of the Mother Tongue," Doctor Şükrü Akkaya, a member of Ankara's *Halkevi,* suggested that the Turkish language formed the core of the nation. He wrote, "Our beautiful Turkish is alive in its exaltation and in the development of the Turkish

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[192] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 224.
[193] "Gerekçe" from T.C. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 189 – 3 -6 from Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 493.
[194] Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey,* 231.
[195] "Adana Merkez Hars Komitesinin Çalışma Raporu," (1937), from T.C. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi as displayed in Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 445.

nation, in awakening its lively culture and a symbol of good fortune in the important wars of our happy age."[196] Akkaya's language reflected the influence of the Sanjak crisis. The Turkish strategy in the Sanjak intended that Kemalists claim land on the basis of linguistic identity. The language itself had shaped the nation, and even those who had "forgotten" their mother tongue were expected to feel a linguistic connection to the larger Republic. Nationalists used the Turkish language as a tool in their effort to actively reclaim a portion of "Hittite" land. Therefore, Turkish would not just shape the people of the nation, but also the land itself. Just as Minister Aras had argued before the League of Nations in 1937, the Turkish language had become a symbol of identity, and nationalists intended to utilize language to expand the physical borders of the Republic. Akkaya's use of the phrase "development of the nation," implies that the Turkish language had physically altered the borders of the nation and increased the country's "good fortune," alluding to a sort of divine providence inherent to the Turkish nation.[197]

Although every citizen was officially Turkish in this new nation, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender, individual practices excluded some non-Turkish speakers.[198] Nationalist emphasis on the importance of the Turkish language sowed seeds of division across the new Republic between Kurds, Armenians, Greek Orthodox Christians, Arabs, and others who did not necessarily only speak Turkish. Even if they did, language did not always indicate belonging. The Greek-Turkish population exchanges of 1923 forced Turkish-speaking Greek Orthodox Christians out of Turkey and into Greece. In exchange, Muslims in Greek territories relocated to Turkey.[199] Thus, speaking Turkish was not the only term of national belonging in the

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[196] Dr. Şükrü Akkaya, "Anadili Sevgisi," *Ülkü,* December 1943, 13.
[197] Akkaya, "Anadili," 13.
[198] Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish,* 2-3.
[199] Christine Philliou, "When the Clock Strikes Twelve: The Inception of an Ottoman Past in Early Republican Turkey," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, 1 (2011): 173.

new Republic, and the ethno-religiously motivated practices of the late Ottoman era continued to define Turkishness. In January 1928, a group of law students at Istanbul University committed to enforcing the spread of the Turkish language. They posted signs throughout Istanbul that encouraged people to speak Turkish in public, and the students claimed that a refusal to speak Turkish was a failure of one's citizenship duties. The Turkish Hearth Association eventually took up this cause, and the Ministry of Education began funding the campaign. Because the goal of the Republican People's Party was to build "unity in language, unity in feelings, and unity in ideas," Turkish became an important vehicle for nation-building.[200] The campaign most commonly targeted Greek, Armenian, and Jewish citizens, and scholars Senem Aslan and Lerna Ekmekçioğlu contended that the "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" campaign disproportionately discriminated against non-Muslim communities.[201] Although the new Republic portrayed language as a fundamental aspect of citizenship, aspects of Republican policy in the Sanjak of Alexandretta and in Turkey more broadly suggest that religion still played a crucial role in the concept of belonging in modern Turkey.

A Religion: Negotiating Secularism in post-Ottoman Turkish Nationalism

Although the Republic of Turkey officially practiced *laïcité*, retrospective examinations of the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the new Republic suggest that Islam still occupied an essential role in the definition of Turkish citizenship. Scholar Soner Çağaptay made a case for the persistent influence of Islam in the definition of Turkish citizenship in his book, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*.[202] Indeed, because Turkish nationalism emerged

[200] Senem Aslan, "'Citizen, Speak Turkish!': A Nation in the Making," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics,* 13 (2007): 250-251.
[201] Aslan, "Citizen," 255 and Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia,* 116.
[202] Çağaptay, *Secularism,* et al.

from Ottoman nationalism during the later years of the empire, it is difficult to prove that the Republican People's Party had successfully rid communal understandings of citizenship from religion. Late Ottoman nationalist movements distinguished "Turks" as Turkish-speaking, Muslim citizens. Thus, the basis of early Turkish nationalism was – in some ways – religious. Although the true secularism of many Republican policies is still up for debate, the new Republic did makes attempts to distinguish the new nation from the religiosity of the pass.

Despite efforts to remove religion from definitions of citizenship, the crisis in the Sanjak resurfaced debates about faith and belonging in the new nation. The Republic of Turkey rooted its cause in the Sanjak of Alexandretta in the Protection of Minorities clause of the League of Nations because it claimed a right to protect the Turkish-speaking minority of the Sanjak.[203] However, this same clause had been written into the Treaty of Lausanne to guarantee the rights of "non-Moslem nationals" to their own cultural, linguistic, and religious practices under the new Republic. More importantly than religion, perhaps, these Protection of Minorities clauses codified European interventions in the relationship between Turkey and its non-Muslim citizens. As Ekmekçioğlu noted in her study of Armenian communities in post-genocide Turkey, this clause "eerily resembled the entitlements *dhimmi* enjoyed under the Ottoman Empire, rights they received in exchange for their agreement to defer to Muslims at all times and not aid enemies of the state."[204] Such a continuance of Ottoman policy supports the suggestion that early Republican nationalism had emerged from, rather than in opposition to, the Ottoman imperial nation. Although the clause resurfaced questions of belonging in the new Republic and called into question the religious binary of the Ottoman Empire, it also granted Western powers the

[203] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 244.
[204] Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia,* 13.

right to intervene in an independent state.[205] The Sanjak crisis presented major questions for these agreements at Lausanne because the Republic of Turkey used the Protection of Minorities clause to intervene, *on the basis of language,* in a province where French guarantors were supposed to be protecting non-Muslim minorities under the same clause *on the basis of religion.*

Although the Muslim/non-Muslim binary still emerged as an issue in the Sanjak of Alexandretta, the Republican People's Party had been making active efforts to secularize the history of the nation. Some of these early initiatives focused on defining Turkishness beyond the Ottoman Empire, since even before the dawn of Islam. Turkish scholars may have attempted to replace religion with nationalism in Turkish society. Such tendencies were not uncommon during the early twentieth century. Allusions between nations and divinity are found throughout nationalist literature, and Turkey is no exception. Nationalist writers used religious references and divine rhetoric to refer to the emergence of the Republic, Atatürk, and the Turkish people.[206]

Prior to the Sanjak Crisis, scholars of the Republican People's Party at Ankara's *Halkevi* wrote and performed Turkish origin stories in an effort to rally support for a new Turkish identity separate from Sunni Islam. However, it was difficult to rid these narratives of religious rhetoric. *Ülkü* writer and politician Behçet Kemal Çağlar wrote a script for the performance of "Ergenekon" in Ankara in 1933 for Ankara's Gazi Holiday. Ergenekon was a Turkish foundation myth that told of ancient Turkish people who had been trapped in a cave in Central Asia, only to be led out after centuries by a gray wolf named *Asena.*[207] Religious imagery in Kemal's version of "Ergenekon" alludes to the conflict that emerged in the new Republic as *Halkevleri* programming sought to unite rural and working class people in the bond of Turkishness. Kemal

[205] Lerna Ekmekcioglu, "Republic of Paradox: The League of Nations Minority Protection Regime and the New Turkey's Step-Citizens," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, (2014): 658.
[206] Kemal Irmak, *Atatürk'ün Büyük Hediyesi Türk Hatay Zaferi ve Tarihi* (Istanbul: Tecelli Basımevi 1937), 29-35.
[207] Behçet Kemal, "Ergenekon," *Ülkü,* February 1933, 14-15 and Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish,* 181.

wrote, "The first blood of gods passed from the Turkish heart," explaining that the Turkish people are the Lord's evangelists and that "the Turk" was the world's "first lover, first believer, and first writer."[208] Kemal's relation of the gods to the Turkish people suggests that early nationalist movements sought to replace Islam with a belief in the nation itself. His active rejection of the singular "god" aligned more with polytheism than mainstream Abrahamic beliefs. Just as Turkish historians had equated "Turkishness" with the Hittite civilization from before the emergence of Islam, so too did Ergenekon reject Muslim influence in the Turkish origin myth. This origin story further illuminates how nationalists had begun to perceive Turkishness. Ergenekon directly related Turks to a mythical moment and suggested that they were uniquely endowed with divine powers.

Turkish claims to the Sanjak of Alexandretta further bolstered previous rhetoric that had associated Turkishness with divinity. In 1937, Kemalist writer Kemal Irmak wrote an ode to the annexation of the province, calling it Atatürk's greatest gift to the nation.[209] He stated that Hatay "glittered" with light and that Atatürk served a "holy" role in the expansion of the Republic and protection of the Turkish people of Hatay.[210] Irmak's language suggests that some nationalist currents may have used the cause in the Sanjak as proof of the divine power of the new Republic. He strategically portrayed Atatürk as god-like figure, writing, "Atatürk may be God's favorite person" and "The Turks take life from you [Atatürk]."[211] This creation of a cult of personality around Atatürk aimed to redirect religious beliefs into nationalist beliefs, using the campaign for the Sanjak of Alexandretta as evidence of the nation's divine providence.

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[208] Kemal, "Ergenekon," 14-15.
[209] Irmak, *Büyük Hediyesi,* i.
[210] Irmak, *Büyük Hediyesi,* 29-35.
[211] Irmak, *Büyük Hediyesi,* 51.

In 1954, Zaki al-Arsuzi also wrote that the Arab nation was endowed with divine powers, perhaps in an effort to distance Arab nationalism from religion. He wrote, "When the universe narrowed to humanity, the path to heaven was found in Arabic, the path upon which wishes and hope materialized."[212] This reference to the primacy of both the Arabic language and thus, the Arab nation, echoed Turkish nationalist efforts to recall the divine in national rhetoric. Such depictions were not necessarily exclusive to these nationalisms, but a common tactic in nationalist rhetoric throughout the world. However, these suppositions of divine providence helped bolster both Turkish and Arab claims to the Sanjak of Alexandretta.

Although stories like "Ergenekon" attempted to cast away the Sunni legacy of the Ottomans, Republican historians found it difficult to completely distinguish the new Turkish identity from religion. When Ahmet Faik catalogued the great intellectuals of the Sanjak, he subtly related the intellectual class to Sunni Islam. He referred to the majority of the Arabic-writing scholars on his list of *münneverler,* or intellectuals, as *muhaddis* and *hadisci*, Turkish words for writers who interpreted the *hadith,* or religious writings on the acts and sayings of the Prophet.[213] This interpretation tied a history of Turkish scholarship to a specific religious sect. Even non-religious scholars like Davud bin Ömer Antaki bore a contextual religious legacy. Ahmet Faik claimed that Davud, a great medical and scientific scholar, was Hatay's Ibn Sina, who was a famous Muslim thinker and scientist. He wrote that "Davud's reputation spread all across the Turkish and Islamic world."[214] Faik did not separate the Sanjak's scholarship from the impact of Islam and the Arabic language because those forces influenced the thinking and writing of the intellectuals of the province. In fact, his reliance on this extensive list of Islamic

[212] Al-Arsūzī, "al-'Ahid al-Jāhilī hua Ahidnā al- ḏahabī," 4.
[213] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 127-139.
[214] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 139.

scholars further alludes to the great burden of the new Republic to separate itself from a deeply ingrained religious past. Furthermore, Faik's analysis of the legacy of Sunni Muslim scholarship implicitly excluded non-Sunni scholarship from narratives of innovation in the Sanjak. [215] He did not incorporate the intellectual religious legacies of Alawites, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Armenians, and others into these histories.

Faik's uniquely Sunni evidence might challenge his earlier claim that the Arab Alawites of the province were Turkish. Nuseyri Alawites were not Sunni Muslim, and their religion was often regarded as a syncretic Islamo-Christian practice. Although Faik did allude to an intellectual supremacy of Sunni Muslims in the province, the rest of his writing proposed that Arab Alawites were indeed Turkish. Faik was not the only one. The Republican People's Party systematically targeted Arab Alawites as purveyors of Turkishness with a degree of intensity that did not compare to that of any other group. Although party representatives met with Arabs, Orthodox Christians, Kurds, Armenians, and others to try to convince them to register as Turkish, Turkish Republicans placed a special emphasis on Arab Alawites in their efforts to use the history, language, and religion of the Sanjak in their favor.

The Republican People's Party likely focused on Arab Alawite communities for a number of reasons. Prior to the crisis in 1936, French statisticians estimated that about twenty-eight percent of the Sanjak's total population was Alawite.[216] Aside from Sunni Turks, Arab Alawites were perhaps the most populous minority group in the province. Accordingly, the Republic of Turkey would have a majority of the province's population if it could prove that Arab Alawites were, in fact, Turkish. Beyond the sheer impact of an Arab Alawite plurality, the nationalization of Nuseyri Arab Alawites was already common practice to some members of the

[215] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 127-166.
[216] Sanjian, "The Sanjak of Alexandretta," 380.

Republican People's Party who had been in leadership positions during the Ottoman nationalist era. Sultan Abdülhamid II had approved of mass efforts toward Alawite conversion in the southern Anatolian plain and modern-day Syria. These conversion efforts involved enrolling local Alawites in schools, and the Ottoman government kept careful track of Arab Alawite migration to Antioch during the nineteenth century and quelled efforts to establish places of worship.[217] When the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) took power in 1908, they attempted to address the ill-treatment of Arab Alawite communities in the region and integrate them into the emerging Ottoman nation. However, they achieved minimal success.[218]

During and after World War I, however, Arab Alawites experienced the pressures of Syrian nationalism, French-mandate rule, and Turkish nationalism. Because of their concentrated populations in southern Anatolia and Latakia, they became a prime target for emerging nationalist movements. Arab Alawites constituted a plurality in these regions. The Turkish decision to appeal to Arab Alawite communities in particular was not necessarily unique. In 1921, Armenian nationalist David-Beg claimed that Alawites were an Armenian religious sect in Cilicia, attempting to convince the French that Armenians constituted a majority in the region.[219] Given these precedents and the demographic circumstances of the era, Turkifying Arab Alawite populations represented a logical next step in the Turkish Republican campaign for the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Arab Alawites occupied land in Latakia, and proving their Turkishness in the Sanjak might also give Turkey the right to expand further south. Logistically, claiming that Arab Alawites were Turkish was the most efficient way to win the Sanjak of Alexandretta for Turkey.

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[217] Winter, *'Alawis,* 220-226.
[218] Winter, *'Alawis,* 234-236.
[219] Kaplan, "Territorializing Armenians," 410.

Conclusion

Scholars and politicians of the Republican People's Party wrote and contributed to the broader, national rhetoric that linked the political integration of the Sanjak of Alexandretta with the Turkish national cause. Their focus on the historical, linguistic, and religious traditions of the Sanjak both amplified and revealed complex aspects of Republic reform. Republican portrayals of the history of the Sanjak in favor of a Turkish national narrative aligned with many common nationalist practices of the era. The relationship between these writings and those of Zaki al-Arsuzi revealed the nuances of national scholarship in this region in particular. Turkish and Arab nationalisms evolved in conversation with one another, and the crisis in the Sanjak revealed the moments of divergence and coincidence in the theories. In the Turkish Republican writings of the 1930s, it became clear that the Sanjak of Alexandretta contributed to a Turkish national narrative. Prior to the Sanjak crisis, Turkish historians had not widely written of the region as an essential part of the Republic's history. Arab Alawites were important to Republican leaders, but many nationalist reforms still fell in line with a Sunni/non-Sunni binary. The crisis in the Sanjak pushed the Republican narrative further, questioning the role of religious binaries in a secular state and revealing much more complex understandings of Turkish identity and citizenship in the party itself. Despite all of these changes on a party-level, the question still remained of how this scholarship would affect understandings of belonging in the Republic and the Sanjak itself.

III:
"Before everything else, you are Turkish, my brother."
Borderlands and the Republic

Abdurrahman Melek was born in the Sanjak, but he received his education to become a doctor in Turkey.[220] He was a supporter of the Young Turk reforms, and he began engaging in nationalist discourse well before the establishment of the Republic. When he and three friends opened the first *Türk Ocağı*, or Turkish Hearth Association, in Antioch in 1914, they enjoyed the financial support of the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP). Soon after it opened, however, they had to abandon their project to fight for the Ottomans in World War I.[221]

In April 1919, Abdurrahman returned to Antioch from Istanbul. Much had changed in the city since he had left during the war. He noticed the French presence everywhere. He watched them arrest residents at random, threatening to throw them in jail if they couldn't pay or promise to pay in the future.[222] In his 1966 memoir on the Sanjak, he wrote that he had heard the French and Arabs were working together to establish "a great Arab Empire."[223] Meanwhile, he had learned that a few residents of the Sanjak who had connections to the CUP and the *Türk Ocağı* had secretly become members of the Turkish nationalist Association for the Defense of National Rights *(Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti)* under the leadership of Sanjak resident Ahmet Türkmen. Türkmen maintained communications with other branches of the same organization in Gaziantep and Adana, both within the borders of the Republic of Turkey.[224] Melek himself was highly connected to the Republican People's Party, traveling to Istanbul in 1922 to convene with Republican leaders after the Turkish victory in Izmir. He returned to Antioch toward the end of

[220] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938, 890D.00/749, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.
[221] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 27.
[222] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 30.
[223] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 31.
[224] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 32-33.

1923, eager to implement nationalist reform. He and his friends circulated propaganda on behalf of Turkey.[225] After this, he began traveling from Antioch to Ankara and Istanbul a few times a year, and he became involved in Republican government affairs, even helping establish a Turkish consulate in Aleppo.[226] As policymakers of Atatürk's Republican People's Party worked to orient the history, language, and religion of the Sanjak of Alexandretta toward Turkey, they faced the equally daunting task of inspiring a national consciousness surrounding the annexation itself. At the outset of the crisis, Melek sided with local Republican nationalists like Türkmen. Such figures were crucial to this movement. Building on the infrastructure they had established through the aforementioned committees, they utilized cultural organizations like the *Halkevleri* to connect the citizens of the Republic of Turkey and the Sanjak of Alexandretta to one another during the late-1930s crisis.

This chapter analyzes how the question of the Sanjak inspired and altered understandings of citizenship within Turkey's borders. It evaluates the relationship between the annexation and the structure of the *Halkevleri* during this era through a two-pronged approach—narrating the efforts of supporters of nationalist reform both within and outside of the province and incorporating stories of individual responses to *Halkevleri* initiatives during the annexation crisis. It also draws on narratives of exclusion and inclusion in the history of the early Republic,

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[225] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 39.

[226] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 40.
In Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938. Ian McEwan, an American archeologist in the Sanjak described Abdurrahman Melek as follows: "Dr. Malek, born in Alexandretta, was also educated in Turkey and was at one time a Turkish official; later taking part in Syrian politics and affiliating himself with the Nationalist Bloc, which he soon left, however, in order to be free to work for the independence of the Sanjak, where recognition of his strong Turcophile sentiments combined with a friendly attitude toward the French and a desire for autonomy for the Sanjak led to his appointment three months ago as *Mohafez*, Governor or *Directeur de l'Intériur,* of the Sanjak." The claims regarding his relationship to the Syrian National Bloc and his friendly attitude toward the French conflict with his memoir, which he wrote in 1966. This discrepancy could be due to his own memory and the ways in which the conflict affected his favoritism toward Turkey, and he does make mention of Syrian politics in his memoir and his efforts to ally with Arabs to overthrow the French. It might also be a result of inaccurate information, which comes from an American diplomatic telegram and not necessarily a resident of the Sanjak.

particularly those concerning the Alawite and Kurdish communities in Turkey's southern provinces, with an eye to understanding how different actors performed and contested citizenship at Turkey's margins. Ultimately, it suggests that the Sanjak Crisis was not only the result of policies pursued by the Republic of Turkey but also itself had an effect on those policies.

French soldiers in Alexandretta[227]

Halkevleri and the Language War

Within the Sanjak, activists like Abdurrahman Melek and Abdülgani Türkmen had been implementing *Halkevleri*-like initiatives for years before the outset of the crisis in 1936. Melek wrote that local residents had established a club called the Security of the City *(Selamet-i Belde)* in Antioch during the early years of French occupation. He wrote that it had Turkish, Arab,

[227] *Alexandrette. Rue du Maréchel Foch. Marechal Foch Street,* Krt_017111, Türkiye_Hatay_Iskenderun, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.

Alawite, Christian, and Armenian members, and it became a diverse "people's organization." However, he also recalled that later, Turkish nationalists in the organization began resisting "foreign influences." When the leadership of the club took a trip to Ankara, the French-mandate government shut it down.[228] These early obstacles did not stop Turkish nationalist leaders like Melek and Türkmen. When the Republic of Turkey switched the Turkish language to a Latin alphabet in 1928, two organizations in the Sanjak, The New Society *(Yeni Mecmua)* and Yellow Light *(Sarı Ziya)* began offering classes for citizens to learn Turkish in the Latin alphabet. Beginning with the alphabet change, these organizations attempted to propagate Turkish reforms in the Sanjak while it was still under French-mandate rule, bringing the people of the Sanjak closer to the Republic of Turkey. With the autonomous implementation of each new Republican reform, tensions within the Sanjak increased. Melek wrote that these efforts, "Multiplied the numbers of hat-wearers."[229]

Hats became a symbol of political allegiance in the young Republic of Turkey. When Mustafa Kemal outlawed the *fez* (or *tarboosh)* in 1925, pro-Republican citizens began wearing Western-style hats in support of the new government. In the Sanjak, wearing a particular hat became a way to prove one's affiliation with the old, Ottoman ways of life, Syria, or the Republic of Turkey. Pro-Republican residents wore *şapkalar,* or brimmed, Western-style hats. Pro-Ottomanists returned to the *fez.* Arab nationalists adopted the sedera in honor of Emir Faysal.[230] Melek wrote, "As the number of Turks who wore *şapkalar* increased, Christians who had worn *şapkalar* since long ago threw away their hats and started to wear long, red fezzes."[231]

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[228] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 36.
[229] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 53.
[230] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 91.
[231] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 55. Presumably, Melek is describing to Greek Orthodox Christian communities, whom he refers to as *Hristiyanlar* throughout his memoir. People likely switched hats to protest what they considered to be the new Republic's Turkish-Muslim ethno-nationalism.

Wardrobe, therefore, became a symbol of one's allegiance in the province. Turkish nationalist reformers organized clubs and attempted to implement reforms similar to those of the *Halkevleri,* and their hats reflected their hopes for Republican reform. When some of these Kemalist residents learned that an imam named Kürt Hoca had condemned hat-wearers along with the kinds of secularizing reforms they supported, they wore their *şapkalar* to the mosque for Kürt Hoca's sermon. Afterwards, a fight broke out, and they fled.[232] Residents of the Sanjak had different visions for the future of the province. The conflicts that resulted ranged from the silent protests people issued when wearing one type of headgear over another to physical violence.

As the Republican People's Party expanded its efforts in Turkey, Abdülgani Türkmen decided to form his own "People's Party" in Antioch. He invited citizens of "every class," organizing a party modeled after that of the Republic of Turkey. However, even in his own telling this party did not universally appeal to all of the Sanjak's residents. "Among the Turks there were those who did not want to enroll in the party," Melek wrote.[233] Indeed, some local Turkish-speakers opposed Republican reform, while others may have been afraid of French backlash. Across the Republic, there were conservative Sunni Muslims who did not necessarily support the national, secular ideal. Ultimately, however, Türkmen successfully formed a party. The party represented a final step in Türkmen's and others' extensive efforts to gain recognition of the Turkish elements in the Sanjak. Melek wrote, "A newspaper, a party, youth propaganda organizations in schools, a sports club, a committee – all of these came to form a large presence [in Antioch]… After this, all of our answers and appeals on behalf of the Turkish people to the French, Syrians, and other opponents would all be expressed in [our] language."[234] All of these

[232] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 56.
[233] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 58.
[234] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 58.

reforms and organizations stemmed from Turkish nationalists' original language-teaching efforts. Melek believed that the Turkish language was the root of this change, unifying and inspiring Turkish-speakers of the Sanjak in support of the national cause.

In harmony with this idea, the primary objective of the *Halkevleri* in the broader Republic was to inspire and educate everyday citizens on the Republican reform. It is uncertain how many citizens *Halkevleri* programs actually impacted, and even more difficult to know how many wary citizens they "reformed." However, it is clear that the intention of *Halkevleri* programs was to make Republican initiatives accessible to every Turkish citizen. In this context, the *Halkevleri* in Turkey's southern provinces became essential in modeling the reformation of linguistic and cultural practices in favor of the early Republican party. Because the Sanjak of Alexandretta was more demographically similar to Turkey's southern borderlands, *Halkevleri* programs in these areas reveal the ethno-religious tensions that existed and evolved in diverse regions of the Republic.

In 1935, *Halkevleri* in the border regions of Adana, İçel (modern-day Mersin), and Gaziantep actively engaged in the propagation of Republican, Turkish reforms.[235] *Halkevleri* publications in these regions reflected the ongoing effort to teach citizens a specifically Turkish language and history in this region. Titles included: "The most necessary words for learning a language," "Special Turkish tales," "Research on the syntax of the dialect of Gaziantep," and "A travel guide for history and geography at home."[236] The rhetoric of these publications reflected a broader plan to spread Turkish language and history in the country's more diverse regions, even

[235] "Halkevlerinin neşrettikleri broşür ve kitaplar," *103 halkevi geçen yıllarda nasıl çalıştı*? (Appendix)
[236] "Halkevlerinin neşrettikleri broşür ve kitaplar," *103 halkevi geçen yıllarda nasıl çalıştı*? (Appendix)

dubbing the language spoken in Gaziantep a "dialect" or "accent," implicitly denying Kurdish and Arabic rights to linguistic distinction.

In Adana, the *Halkevleri* banned all languages except Turkish. This initiative mirrored the "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" campaigns of the 1920s that enforced Turkish-speaking in public spaces. In 1936, *Cumhuriyet* wrote, "The Adana *Halkevi* is starting a language war." The *Halkevi* did not start a war in a literal sense. Rather, a group of local *münevverler*, or intellectuals, and teachers gathered together to discuss how they would implement language reform. A few of these same leaders had already met together to discuss the issue of Arabic at the *Halkevi's* predecessor, the Adana *Türk Ocağı*, in 1931. During this earlier moment they had concluded that a contingency of the population still spoke a "discordant and gruff Arabic dialect," noting: "[There are] citizens whom live among us who speak a language completely different from ours."[237] In an effort to address this issue, members of the *Türk Ocağı,* and later the *Halkevi,* hosted frequent conferences and wrote articles about the importance of language. Thus, when the Adana *Halkevi* emphasized that speaking Turkish was mandatory in 1936, they were building on many years of work. They also proposed hosting more conferences and working with village teachers to ensure that they were enforcing Turkish learning in Adana's rural regions.[238] This narrative traces this history of the Adana *Halkevi's* Turkish language reform initiatives from 1931, but the renewed efforts in 1936 suggest that they had shifted their focus to rural areas. This transition exemplifies how the *Halkevleri* worked to reach everyone, not just urban elites.

These linguistic interventions called the definition of Turkish citizenship into question. Those who spoke Turkish were fully included in the new Republic, and those who did not

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[237] "Adana Halkevi bir dil savaşı açıyor" *Cumhuriyet,* 7 January 1936, 8. This article was published in 1936, but it recounts the history of this Turkish-speaking initiative from 1931. Thus, the quote refers to the logic behind the 1931 initiative.

[238] "Adana Halkevi bir dil savaşı açıyor" *Cumhuriyet,* 7 January 1936, 8.

became targets of reformist campaigns that sought to turn them into Turkish speakers. In eastern provinces like Mardin, local *Halkevleri* leaders led similar efforts, calling Arabic a foreign language and threatening their neighbors with fines for speaking languages other than Turkish in the streets.[239] In these southern and eastern regions, the tone of these Republican language reforms matched those of the Sanjak.

In 1937, a Hatay resident named Remzi Siliöz employed a similar tactic to that of the Adana and Mardin *Halkevleri* but took his campaign a step farther. In an effort to explain why he believed some Arabic-speaking residents of a group of villages in the Sanjak were actually Turkish, he proposed that they learned to speak Arabic recently, and that even their names were Turkish. Siliöz wrote, "In fact, these older people speak Arabic with a novice's accent."[240] Like the leaders of the Adana *Halkevi,* Siliöz disparaged Arabic speakers in particular – not for their poor Turkish speaking abilities – but for their purportedly poor Arabic skills. In doing so, he implicitly claimed that these individuals were indeed Turkish, made to speak Arabic in recent years because of Arab influence in the region. In addition to these language theories, the Republican People's Party also funded Turkish language initiatives in more diverse provinces.

During the Sanjak of Alexandretta's short period of independence in 1937, the Republican People's Party supported *Halkevleri* in the former *vilayets* of İçel and Seyhan, including centers in Mersin, Adana, and Tarsus.[241] The Party ensured that *Hars Komiteleri,* or Culture Committees, served as a branch of each local *Halkevleri,* policing spoken Turkish on the streets of their communities and allotting a portion of their yearly budget for the education of Arab Alawite citizens.[242] In 1937, Kemal Atatürk approved 30,000 lira in funds for the

[239] Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish,* 38.
[240] Remzi Siliöz, *Hatay İli ve Millî Mücadele Yılları,* (Bursa: Ankara Kitabevi, 1937): 17.
[241] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 230.
[242] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 230.

Halkevleri in the villages of Seyhan and İçel to teach Alawites who had "lost their mother tongues" of Turkish.[243] In line with these initiatives, a *Hars Komitesi* of the Republican People's Party gathered in Ankara to write a handbook for their subcommittees in the *Halkevleri* and Republic People's Party establishments of Tarsus, Mersin, İçel, Adana, Seyhan, and Ankara.

This Republican handbook instructed nationalist actors to work with Alawite communities to correct their Turkish language, encourage intermarriage between Turkish Sunni and Alawite families, and to teach the scientific and historical evidence of their Turkish racial origins.[244] This committee carefully defined both Sunnis and Alawites as Turks. Given that various members of the Republican People's Party considered Nuseyri Alawites to be Turkish, this marriage initiative may have been an effort to either encourage Sunni hegemony (based on the assumption that Alawites would assimilate into Turkish Sunni circles and not the other way around) or to replace religious allegiances with Turkishness. This language indicated a changing attitude toward assimilation practices in the Republican People's Party, encouraging the expansion of ideas about who fit within the bounds of the Turkish "nation."[245]

In Mersin, the *Hars Komitesi* organized an early education initiative to ensure that Alawite children would grow up speaking Turkish. Committee members wrote that they founded the kindergarten to ensure an effective education for "children who remain dependent on a

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[243] Communication 7009 from T.C. Başkevâlet Kararlar Müdürlüğü, 25 June 1937, 76 – 60 - 80, T.C. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, Ankara, Turkey. as found in Hakan Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler*, 401.

[244] Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Hars komitaları talimatnamesi, pp. 49-56 from Cumhuriyet Arşivi as found in Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 407-414.

[245] These same practices had their limits. During the Armenian Genocide, many Armenian women and children were forcibly placed in Muslim families and orphanage's, but they were not necessarily considered Turkish. This uneasy precedent tested the boundary between the late Ottoman past and the new Republic, and encouraging marriage between Sunnis and Alawites suggests that perhaps religion was still relevant to the definition of Turkishness. Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia,* 34. And Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert,* 323: "An orphanage in Harput sheltered seven hundred children under the care of Armenian women. The governor announced, 'We are raising our own enemies!' and shut down the orphanage, loaded the orphans and the caretakers into carts, and sent them toward Malatya. Later it was reported that they had been thrown into the Euphrates."

foreign culture," namely, Arab Alawite children.[246] In this respect, initiatives that encouraged marriage among Turks and Alawites enforced assimilation for future generations. Committee members may have assumed that children growing up in such a household would learn to speak Turkish and resonate with Turkish culture. Children became important weapons in the battle for Turkishness.

These *Halkevleri* education initiatives furthered their goal of "revolution and social progress in the homeland."[247] In Adana and Mersin, the *Hars Komiteleri* opened primary schools in majority-Alawite neighborhoods and villages for this very purpose.[248] In Mardin, a brochure from the local *Halkevi* called upon youths in particular to speak Turkish and encourage its use in communities that typically spoke Arabic. The author of this call, A. Özkan, also attacked the Arabic language, comparing it to a virus or an enemy attacking the homeland.[249] As historian Hale Yılmaz acknowledged, the fixation on Arabic in *Halkevleri* propaganda may not have been as targeted as it seemed. Rather, *Halkevleri* leaders often used "Arabic" to refer to all languages that were not Turkish, diminishing the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the communities in which they worked.[250] Similarly, the activities of southern-regional *Halkevleri* throughout the 1930s and 40s recruited Arab Alawites in particular and tasked them with learning Turkish and embracing a Turkish national identity.

This systematized effort to include Alawites in the changing definition of Turkishness indicated a change in the assimilation policies of the Republican People's Party. Because the League of Nations had implemented a registration process that required one to subscribe to a

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[246] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 490. 1 583. 11.1.49. in Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 209.
[247] Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, *Halkevleri ve Halkodaları 1932-1942*, 1942. TBMM Kütüphanesi Açık Erişim Koleksiyonu. DSpace @ TBMM, 3.
[248] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 230.
[249] *CHF Mardin Halkevi Broşürü,* Mardin Ulus Sesi Basımevi, 28 February 1935, 23 & 24 in Yilmaz, *Becoming Turkish,* 238.
[250] Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish,* 238.

certain "community," the *Halkevleri* attempted to define the meaning of "Turkish community" in the southern borderlands at the outset of the crisis. Just as the Republican People's Party had indicated that Alawite communities were ethnically Turkish in earlier academic writings, so too did these southern *Halkevleri* direct most of their initiatives at Alawite communities. Inclusion, rather than exclusion, became a primary tactic in recruiting Alawite communities into the Turkish nation. The systematic emphasis on the Turkification of Arab Alawite communities in this region suggests that *Halkevleri* were not only meant to preserve Turkish culture and history, but also to recruit citizens into this national community. The *Halkevleri* served as platforms upon which supporters of the *Halkevleri* attempted to expand the circle of Turkishness and nationalize their own communities.

Halevi in Mersin[251]

[251] *Mersin Halkevi,* Krt_017053, Türkiye_Mersin, Halkevleri, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.

Rallying the Citizenry

In addition to their assimilation efforts in the south, Republican leadership encouraged Turkish newspapers to invoke the national cause in their reporting to tie Turkish citizens to the Sanjak. Pro-Republican journalists often portrayed Turkey as a victim to France as the crisis unfolded, invoking sympathy toward the province as the character of national consciousness.[252] These tales of persecution drew on the language used in the Turkish War for Independence, inspiring Turkish citizens to protect and defend the Turkish Sanjak against the threat of Western European colonial rule. The Republican People's Party maintained control over Turkish press rhetoric throughout the crisis, stoking feelings of camaraderie among the Turkish citizenry. Prominent *Cumhuriyet* journalist, Yunus Nadi (1879-1945) was a close friend of Atatürk's and a politician of the Republican People's Party. He formed *Cumhuriyet* at Atatürk's request.[253] Pro-Republican newspapers pushed the Turkish narrative in the Sanjak further, using language and proposing radical initiatives often before Atatürk and other leaders publicly announced them. The press said what Atatürk could not say.

In 1936, Ely E. Palmer at the U.S. Consulate in Beirut reported that Arab Nationalist leaders in Damascus were reading Turkish newspapers.[254] Apparently, recent articles stoked fears among the Arab nationalist leadership that Turkey would claim rights to the Sanjak of Alexandretta.[255] After this leaked information muddled the diplomatic tensions surrounding the crisis, the Turkish Government denied any knowledge of press activities regarding the crisis in the Sanjak. As Ely E. Palmer wrote to the Secretary of State, "The Turkish Government has

[252] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 69 & 47.
[253] Turnaoğlu, *The Formation,* xvii.
[254] Beirut to State, Questions of the Tripoli and the Sandjak, November 28, 1936, 890D.00/657, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[255] Beirut to State, Questions of the Tripoli and the Sandjak, November 28, 1936.

disavowed the campaign in its press on the subject of these revindications, an act which, in view of the hard and fast government control of newspapers in Turkey, seems contradictory." However, Palmer noted that perhaps the Republican People's Party hoped to use the press as a tool to stoke nationalist sentiments, writing, "Nevertheless, it is taken here as indicating that the Turkish Government wishes to keep alive in the Turkish public consciousness the idea that rights exist in the Sandjack, which the Government does not care to press at the present time."[256] The Republican People's Party used national newspapers to instill and propagate evolving concepts of nationhood. The press continued to write of Turkish rights within the Sanjak. As a result, the Turkish government found widespread support for the Turkish cause in the Sanjak among Republican citizens. Although it is difficult to determine whether or not the press was entirely responsible for this activism, it is likely that these narratives played an important role in invoking passions within the Republic for a Turkish Sanjak.

During the spring and summer of 1938, as tensions surrounding the registration process boiled over in the Sanjak, the Turkish press attacked France and defended the Turkishness of the region. On May 19, 1938, Yunus Nadi, the editor of *Cumhuriyet,* an Istanbul-based, pro-Republican newspaper, published an editorial in the French-language Turkish newspaper *La République*. He headlined the article: "A Ravenous State Hiding its Beastly Teeth Under a Smiling Countenance" and explained that France had undermined the Turkish cause in the Sanjak of Alexandretta.[257] He wrote, "The agents of the country which pretends to be one of the principal representatives of European civilization, set loose upon Syria, are occupied in omitting nothing… of which they are capable in order to trouble and upset the elections which will give to

[256] Beirut to State, Questions of the Tripoli and the Sandjak. November 28, 1936.
[257] Ankara to State, Despatch no. 673: The Hatay Question, May 30, 1938, 751.67/224, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.

Turkish Hatay a local independent régime."[258] These attacks on France specifically recalled the rhetoric of the Turkish War for Independence. Using the threat of colonial rule to encourage activism for a Turkish Sanjak strategically invoked the same sentiments that had encouraged citizens to fight for the Republic after World War I. Thus, the Sanjak became a personal cause for Turkish citizens.

On May 28, 1938, a few weeks after Nadi's publication, the Istanbul-based newspaper *Le Journal d'Orient* published a statement of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rüştü Aras. "You all know the sad history of the Hatay. The Entirety of Turkey, for the last twenty years, resents the sufferings endured by the population of that country [Hatay], complementary to ours, remaining outside of the mother country."[259] Aras used language to rally the public around this cause. He proclaimed that the Sanjak was an essential missing piece of the broader Republic. Without it, the Republic of Turkey could not be complete. "The Hatay, with a Turkish majority, Turkish structure, and culture, is also the gate and the key to the security of a large and important mother country." [260] With these words, Aras depicted the Sanjak as more than just a piece of land. The Sanjak was essential to the completion of the Republic, and Turkey needed all of its citizens to support the reunification.

As the crisis escalated, Turkish nationalists called for unity against colonial powers. This same rhetoric had helped establish the Republic of Turkey, and perhaps some proponents of the Turkish cause in the Sanjak hoped that they could rally citizens around the same idea. In late June 1938, Yunus Nadi wrote the following:

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[258] Ankara to State, The Hatay Question, May 30, 1938.

[259] Ankara to State, Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch no. 673, May 30, 1938, 751.67/224, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA. This quote was translated by an official at the U.S. Embassy, and it is not the original French quote. Any translation inconsistencies appeared in this primary source.

[260] Ankara to State, Enclosure No. 1, May 30, 1938.

> We notice with profound stupor that the League delegates at Hatay are following in the footsteps of Durieux and Garrau in applying the classic policy of playing off one element against the other. The Arabs, Turks, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews must with all their power resist these vile intrigues, since all these races have in the past bitterly suffered from the consequences of such criminal machinations. These elements should once for all realize that their relations, especially with the Turkey of today, bear no resemblance whatsoever to the past, and that it is in their own interest to cooperate hand in hand with the Turkish element in Hatay… the foundations for a future happy Hatay will be laid the day these elements -- regardless of religion and race -- fully realize this truth.[261]

Nadi called upon all citizens of the Sanjak to resist French influence. Furthermore, he dissociated the new Republic of Turkey from its Ottoman legacy (presumably, the Armenian Genocide). He begged individuals to support the Turkish cause, portraying the Republican era as a moment of freedom and equality – regardless of one's ethno-religious identity. However, in this same week, editor Muhittin Birgin of the Istanbul-based newspaper, *Son Posta,* conveyed a veiled threat to the Armenians in the Sanjak, writing:

> With regard to alleged hostile activities engaged in by certain Armenian organizations in the Hatay, we wish to point out that reliance on Turkey's friendship is the best policy we can recommend to the Armenian element. History has amply shown that nothing whatsoever can be gained by the Armenians through being enemies of the Turks. On the other hand, however, Turkey can not only be a faithful friend to the Armenian people, but also their sincere protector.[262]

In these three sentences, Birgin alluded to the Armenian Genocide of the Ottoman Empire and employed it as a threat to dissuade Armenians in the Sanjak from supporting non-Turkish causes. His rhetoric suggested that the Republic of Turkey was an ethno-nationalist state, willing to use coercion or even violence, a stark contradiction from Nadi's portrayal of a "happy Hatay" inclusive of all "regardless of religion or race."[263] Moreover, Birgin conceptualized "the Armenian people" as a separate group, distinct from the Turkey. His proposition that the

[261] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 3 to Despatch no. 725, June 29, 1938.
[262] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 3 to Despatch no. 725, June 29, 1938.
[263] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 3 to Despatch no. 725., June 29, 1938.

Armenians of the Sanjak join the Republic of Turkey for protection illustrated the limits of the Turkish nation. Birgin wrote that Armenians could exist within the Republic's borders, but he did not go so far as to say that they would be Turkish. Such language suggests Birgin imagined a dichotomy between Turks and non-Turks in the Republic. Perhaps Armenians could be present, but not fully included. In contrast, Nadi seemed to have envisioned inclusion through assimilation, encouraging all residents to cooperate with the Turkish element for a happy Hatay. Nadi and Birgin's comments mirror the incongruity of the policies of the Republican People's Party regarding the Sanjak. Birgin begged for the support of non-Turkish citizens while simultaneously implying that Turkish people might be the only true citizens.

As the crisis in the Sanjak escalated, so too did calls from ardent Turkish nationalists to save the Alawites of the province because of their relationship to the Turkish race. In June 1938, *Cumhuriyet* ran a headline in an article about the Alawite Turks of the Sanjak that read: "Our *ırkdaşlarımız* in Hatay are living in hell."[264] The use of the word *ırkdaş* combined the Turkish word for race (*ırk)* with the word for sibling *(kardeş).* This headline portrayed the Alawites of the Sanjak as a racial group connected to Turkishness that needed to be saved from the French conquest and Arab nationalists of the Sanjak. This appeal to the Turks of the Republic to come to the defense of their Alawite siblings in the Sanjak also suggested that Turkish nationalists explicitly included Alawites in their definition of Turkishness, and they called upon a sort of ethnic loyalty to encourage Turkish citizens to save the Alawites from Arab and French rule.

These contradictions within the press reflect the complexity of the Sanjak's independence. Some individuals did believe that an independent state would form a collection of communities, submitting to Turkish rule. Others yearned for the province to become a part of

[264] "Hataydaki ırkdaşlarımız cehennem hayatı yaşıyor," *Cumhuriyet,* 3 Haziran 1938 in Mertcan, *Arap Aleviler,* 177.

Turkey or Syria. When the Sanjak of Alexandretta gained independence in 1937, it seemed temporary. The independence period served as an interlude in which nationalists and colonists alike would make their cause for the fate of the province.

These calls for action in the Turkish press did indeed affect the citizenry, which was most noticeable in the activities of the *Halkevleri* during this period. After the League deemed the Sanjak independent and began planning a registration process, *Halkevleri* around the country campaigned for the annexation of the province. In 1937, men and boys gathered at the *Halkevi* in Kilis to recognize the province's newfound independence.[265] On November 29, 1937, Ankara's *Halkevi* invited an agricultural engineer from the Sanjak named Ömer Ekenel to speak. He proclaimed, "Your brothers from Hatay apologize to all of you here. In a near future, all together we will sincerely celebrate the night of Hatay's independence like that of Adana and Erzurum." He went on to rally his listeners behind this cause, proclaiming that the fight was not yet over and that the Sanjak had the power of seventeen million Turks and Atatürk behind it.[266] Ekenel's speech called upon citizens of the *Halkevi* to understand the Sanjak as another piece of the Republic and a continuation of the war of independence following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. He referred to Adana and Erzurum as the diverse edges of the Republic of Turkey. In comparing these provinces to the Sanjak, he implicitly described the fight for the Sanjak as the final battle in the establishment of the Republic.

This same *Halkevi* invited an "Alawite-Turk" to speak on the matter of the Sanjak. His name was Memduh Alkaya, and he was an officer of the Sümer Bank at the

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[265] Gaziantep. *Kilis'te Hatay Erginlik Mitingi hatırası*, Krt_026382 [31.01.1937] from İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo. Accessed via http://ataturkkitapligi.ibb.gov.tr/yordambt/yordam.php?aDemirbas=Krt_026382. See postcard at the end of this section.

[266] Ömer Ekenel, "29-11-937 gecesi Ankara Halkevindeki toplantıda söylenen hitabe, konferans ve şiirler," *Hatay* (Ulus Basımevi Ankara, 1937): 17.

time.[267] Alkaya made an argument for the Alawites of the Sanjak, proclaiming that for centuries the Alawites of the Mediterranean had been subjects of foreign rule who wanted to inculcate Alawite communities with their culture. He proclaimed, "The free air created through Atatürk's Turkish country may be the only chance we have to breathe."[268] Alkaya's statement reveals the complexities of how the Sanjak's autonomy affected a diverse Turkish citizenry. Perhaps the Republican People's Party did not write the cause for the Sanjak into a narrow Turkish national narrative. Rather, the crisis pushed the party to expand the definition of "Turkish." Alkaya did not reject his Alawite community in favor of a Turkish one. Instead, he implied that he believed Turkish citizenship would allow him to still exist as an Alawite within the borders of the Republic.

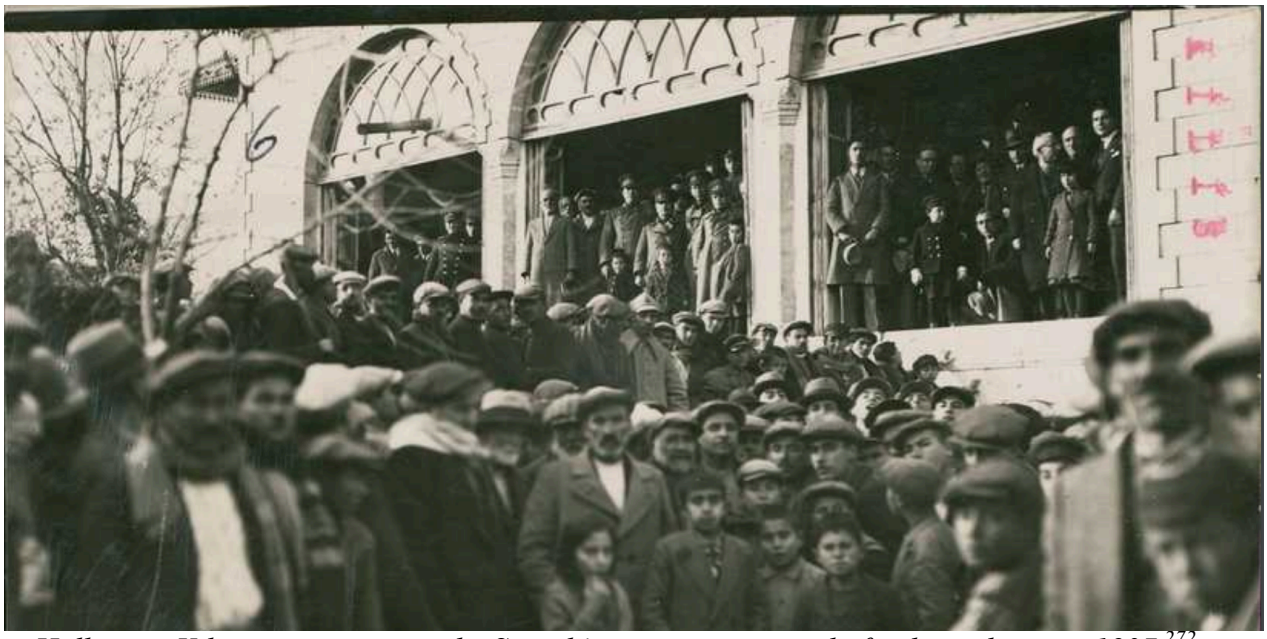
In this same publication, a poet named "Çağlar" addressed Alawite communities in his piece entitled, "To my Alawite brother." He wrote, "He who makes an instrument of religion is a bad person – religion is the work of the heart, the work of the conscience. Before everything else, you are Turkish, my brother."[269] This address seemed to contradict Alkaya's message, proposing that being Turkish was the most important aspect of belonging. Çağlar still addressed Alawite communities as distinct, calling them Alawites instead of *Eti Türkleri.* However, he implied that belonging in Turkey meant embracing Turkishness over other loyalties – religious or otherwise. This statement questioned Alkaya's belief that the Turkish country would give Alawite communities room to breathe, free from the threat of foreign cultural impositions. Its underlying

[267] Memduh Alkaya, "Eti türkü konuştu," *Hatay* (Ulus Basımevi Ankara, 1937): 21.
[268] Alkaya, "Eti," 21.
[269] Çağlar, read aloud at the Ankara *Halkevi* by Küçük Güneş, "Alevi Kardeşime," *Hatay:* 22.

sentiment suggests that perhaps for some, Turkishness was yet another one of these impositions.

In addition to these collective commemorations of the Sanjak within civic institutions, individuals began to experience active efforts to claim Hatay as an expression of belonging in Turkey. In February 1938, Christian T. Steger at the U.S. Consulate in Beirut reported, "numerous Turks are immigrating from bordering regions of Turkey, in the guise of émigrés born in the Sanjaq (sic) returning to their homeland."[270] This influx of individual immigrants occurred as a result of the League's policy in the Sanjak: "All citizens of the Hatay, after having established their identity at the electoral bureau, may freely select their (community) list on which they will inscribe their names."[271] Likely encouraged by the passionate campaigns of the Turkish press, individual Turkish citizens appear to have chosen to migrate to the Sanjak of Alexandretta to participate in the League registration process. This collective movement of individuals suggests that some citizens perceived their commitment to the Turkish Sanjak as a display of their own nationalist beliefs. Indeed, the Republican model had empowered many, garnering widespread support among Turkish people throughout the country.

[270] Beirut to State, Syrian Political Situation, January 7, 1938, 890D.00/684, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[271] Ankara to State, Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch no. 589, April 5, 1938, 751.67/215, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.



Halkevi in Kilis commemorates the Sanjak's temporary period of independence in 1937 [272]

Opposition

The Sanjak also attracted attention outside of the Republic. In Syria, citizens reacted to the events of the Sanjak as a reflection of the fate of the whole of the country. Coupled with the uneasy precedent of Ottoman rule and a history of tension with Turkish leadership, the Turkish campaign in the Sanjak posed a credible threat to Syria as well. On May 15, 1937, the League of Nations issued the Statute and Fundamental Law for the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Among many provisions, this agreement dictated that "The Sanjak shall constitute a separate entity. It shall enjoy full independence in its internal affairs. The State of Syria shall be responsible for the conduct of its foreign affairs, subject to the provisions contained in No. (3) below." Provisions numbers Two and Three were particularly contentious. The second declared Turkish an official language of the Sanjak, and the third separated the potential independence of Syria from that of

[272] *Gaziantep. Kilis'te Hatay Erginlik hatırası,* 1937, Krt_026382, Türkiye_Hatay_Iskenderun, "Kartpostallar," İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.

the Sanjak. Officials wrote, "no international decision having the same effects [that is, sovereignty of the State of Syria] may be applied to the Sanjak without the express consent in advance of the Council of the League of Nations." Furthermore, the document entrusted France and Turkey with the responsibility of maintaining and protecting the territory of the Sanjak[273] In response, Arab citizens in Damascus, Aleppo, Antioch, and Alexandretta called for strikes on June 2nd and 3rd. These strikes closed the major bazaars in these cities and triggered public demonstrations at mosques and in front of the Parliament house in Damascus.

The behavior of the Syrian Government was central to this reaction. Apparently, the Syrian Government had "made every effort to conceal their knowledge from the general public, lest in the excitement of the return of Dr. Chabandar popular reaction should turn against the Government and the Parliament vote them out of office."[274] At the time, Dr. Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar (referred to as Chabandar in diplomatic telegrams) was a prominent opposition leader in Syria. The Arab League of National Action corresponded with nationalist leaders like Shahbandar, signifying the growing importance of the Sanjak in internal Syrian opposition movements. On May 19, 1937, leaders of the League of National Action in the Sanjak sent a letter to pro-nationalist Syrian leaders (Shahbandar among them), stating, "We await precise declarations. Arab sons of the liwa [Sanjak] are ready to spill their blood for its defense."[275] These correspondences indicate the complex dynamics that had evolved between citizen and state with regard to the Sanjak Crisis in Syria.

Unlike many pro-Republican Turkish citizens who used the Turkish cause in the Sanjak as a means to voice their support for Atatürk's single-party regime, Syrian citizens used the fight

[273] American Consulate Beirut to Department of State, Reactions to Statute of Sandjak No. 228, June 9, 1937, 751.67/178, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[274] Beirut to State, Reactions to Statute of Sandjak, June 9, 1937.
[275] CSG Alexandretta Information, May 21, 1937, CP 511 in Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 102.

for the Sanjak of Alexandretta to practice opposition to their own government. The matter of the Sanjak emerged in a contentious time for the state of Syria as it gained independence from French mandate power and negotiated its own political state. Opposition movements like that of Shahbandar and the League of National Action stoked nationalist sentiments within Syria and asked leadership to do more to protect the interests of the country itself. Whereas the Sanjak of Alexandretta served as a unifying force for pro-Republican Turkish citizens, it became a point of contention for Syrian citizens to measure their own government's performance within Syria. These practices of citizenship encompassed a diverse Syrian population. According to an initial report from the Deputies of Aleppo, the protests and closures "united thousands of persons belonging to every religion and every social class."[276] Within Syria, the uncertain status of the Sanjak inspired citizens to voice their own opinions on the fate of the province, and as a consequence, the nation as a whole. As such, resistance in Syria operated as a dual protest against both the Syrian regime and the Republic of Turkey.

The matter of the Sanjak of Alexandretta also inspired citizenship practices far from the affected region. In the United States, the Third Arab Convention of Detroit gathered from September 24 to 26, 1937 to draft a resolution entitled "Protesting the Autonomy of Alexandretta."[277] The Convention reported that "the Turkish Republic, successor of the Ottoman Empire, relinquished its claim to all Arab sections of the former Ottoman Empire."[278] The Convention then stated that it was "unanimously opposed to any international dispensation, agreement or treaty setting aside the Sanjak and the city of Alexandretta as a separate, semi-autonomous or autonomous state" and it further opposed "the creation of parallel governments

[276] Beirut to State, Reactions to Statute of Sandjak, June 9, 1937.
[277] H.I. Katibah to Cordull C. Hull, Letter from the Arab National League, September 30, 1937, 751.67/188, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[278] Katibah to Hull, Letter from the Arab National League, September 30, 1937.

for Arabs and Turks, on the basis of bi-nationalism."[279] This distinction recognized the Arab and Turkish nationalist claims to the province, and it served as an endorsement of Arab nationalist causes in the region.

Importantly, this same convention issued a similar statement with respect to Palestine, and the Sanjak of Alexandretta and Palestine became parallel causes in global Arab nationalist movements. The convention cited the same evidence for both regions, explaining that they were advocating for "the Arabs who have for centuries inhabited Palestine" and that the Sanjak of Alexandretta "for untold generations has been of Arab stock."[280] The Sanjak of Alexandretta inspired more than just regional practices of citizenship. In the United States, Arab Americans exercised their rights as citizens to openly protest the autonomy of the Sanjak. Such a phenomenon reveals the transcendent power of nationalism during the era. The sentiment was not confined to a nation's borders. Rather, individuals felt a tie to a nation – even if they were not citizens of the nation – and a desire to advocate for its fate.

Conclusion

As Turkish nationalists like Abdurrahman Melek, Ahmet Türkmen, and Abdülgani Türkmen campaigned both within and outside of the Sanjak to bring the province into the Turkish fold, Turkish *Halkevleri* within the borders of the Republic embraced the cause of the Sanjak and tested how Alawites would be included in the narrative of Turkishness. In Syria, efforts to claim the Sanjak illuminated complex allegiances to a Syrian nation over the current Syrian state. Outside of the region entirely, Arab nationalists understood the Sanjak Crisis as an example of the refusal of Arab territorial claims across the Middle East. As all of these

[279] Katibah to Hull, Letter from the Arab National League, September 30, 1937.
[280] Katibah to Hull, Letter from the Arab National League, September 30, 1937.

individuals and groups related their cause in the Sanjak to that of their own national identities, people within the Sanjak itself negotiated this complex territory. Although some Turkish and Syrian nationalist rhetoric made efforts to include Armenians, Greek Orthodox Christians, Jews, and others in their campaign in the Sanjak, Alawites seemed to be the community that all of these actors were most set on incorporating into their national narratives. In this moment, these residents of the Sanjak—whose numbers in the region were so significant—found themselves in the midst of sweeping nationalist movements. In response to these claims, some residents resisted. Others embraced Turkish and Syrian nationalist narratives as their own.

IV

"The spirit of Atatürk should rejoice."
The Creation of Hatay

On October 11, 1972, Sarkis Khabaghian sat down for an interview with the Armenian Film Foundation at his home in Anjar, Lebanon. Nearly fifty-seven years after he joined in the Armenian resistance at Musa Dagh, he recalled the violence with a vivid intensity. "They were shooting us! They were destroying us!" *(Onlar vuruyorlar! Bize berbat ediyorlar!)*[281] Sarkis escaped Musa Dağı, rescued when Allied warships passed by the coast and saw the Armenians at Musa Dağı holding a sign that read, "CHRISTIANS IN DISTRESS – RESCUE." Sarkis and his compatriots fled the Sanjak, staying at Port Said in Egypt for the remainder of the war.[282] When they returned to their villages at Musa Dağı in 1919, the Sanjak was part of French-mandate Syria. Thus, when the Sanjak Crisis rose to a fore in 1936, it did not only raise the question of Syrian and Turkish autonomy. It also brought the citizenship of thousands of Armenians, still living with the memory of the genocide, into question. The Sanjak Crisis tested the circumstances of belonging in the Republic of Turkey. For pro-Turkish residents of the Sanjak, the crisis was an opportune time to express their desire for Republican reform. For people like Sarkis, however, it recalled the tensions of the past that had resulted in violence. As the crisis evolved in Turkey's favor, residents like Sarkis had to negotiate how they would resist – or belong – as citizens of the Republic of Turkey.

The Republican Campaign

When the issue of the future of the Sanjak of Alexandretta became an international crisis, Abdülgani Türkmen drew on his already-established network of Turkish nationalists to lead the

[281] Interview with Sarkis Khabaghian, October 11, 1972.
[282] Andreasian, "A Red Cross Flag," 803.

efforts of the Republican People's Party on the ground. Türkmen founded the *Halkevleri* in the Sanjak of Alexandretta, and he was "the president of the people's representatives in Hatay."[283] Just as he had prior to the years of the crisis, Türkmen continued his campaign to implement citizenship reforms of the People's Republican Party. In 1936, he formed the Hatay Committee with fellow Turkish nationalists, and they quickly joined the Republican People's Party.[284] He opened a *Halkevi* in Antioch in 1937, followed by the opening of many *Halkevi* branches across the region by July of 1937.[285] The *Halkevleri* inside Turkey began distributing brochures on the importance of Hatay to *Halkevleri* in the surrounding provinces.[286] Within Hatay, Türkmen's Hatay Committee waged a propaganda war against pro-Syrian and French elements. As the crisis escalated, they photographed military parades in the Sanjak to send to the government in Ankara in a plea for military reinforcement.[287] Through their community center, Türkmen and his followers represented pro-Kemalist nationalists hoping for union with the Turkish Republic. Their campaign garnered widespread support from the Republican People's Party and effectively waged a culture war with competing nationalist and religious groups in the province.

Although the *Halkevleri* promoted and propagandized Turkish culture and language, violence became the reality of *Halkevleri* activities in the Sanjak. The region's *Halkevleri* skirted around the cultural education model of its predecessors, serving instead as pseudo-military institutions. These *Halkevleri* did not have the resources to employ the Republican People's Party's standard model, which organized projects that fell into one of nine branches: "(1) Branch of language, history, and literature; (2) Fine arts; (3) Theater; (4) Sports; (5) Social welfare; (6)

[283] Türkmen, *Mufassal,* 167.
[284] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 91.
[285] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 240.
[286] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 91.
[287] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 91.

Public lesson centers and courses; (7) Branch of libraries and publication; (8) Village improvements; and (9) Museums and exhibitions."[288] Instead, the 1937-era *Halkevleri* of the Sanjak of Alexandretta worked with three arms: "security, rights, and propaganda."[289] The "Security" arm gave power to a "People's Police" unit that carried weapons in the Sanjak of Alexandretta and protected Turkish nationalists in the region.[290]

The League of Nations had forbidden an army for the Sanjak, but delegates did decide that "Only local police forces not exceeding [number redacted] men may be organized in the Sanjak, and no armaments other than those required for the said police force may be introduced or maintained in the Sanjak."[291] The *Halkevleri* pushed the legal limits of the League of Nations treaty on the Sanjak of Alexandretta, forming a pseudo-Turkish government through their community centers. They even held their own tribunals for police cases, encouraging citizens to avoid French legal processes and extending Ankara's legal authority to the province.[292] Unlike the campaigns of Adana and Mardin that sought to build citizenship with the Turkish education of each new generation, these *Halkevleri* were not attempting to gradually acclimatize citizens to the new Republic. Rather, they served the immediate need of the Republic to expand and annex through the Sanjak of Alexandretta.

Establishing a Turkish majority in the League registration process was the top priority of the *Halkevleri* in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. The Propaganda arm garnered the most membership, working in cities and villages to prepare and educate people for the League vote.[293]

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[288] CHF, *Halkevleri Talimatnamesi,* 6.
[289] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 240.
[290] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 240.
[291] "I. Report Adopted by the Council of the League of Nations on January 27, 1937," Article 6 from *Collection of Texts Concerning the Sanjak of Alexandretta* (C. 282 M. 183. 1937: Geneva, June 21, 1937), 3. Accessed via https://biblio-archive.unog.ch/Dateien/CouncilMSD/C-282-M-183-1937_EN.pdf.
[292] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 168.
[293] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 241.

In its very structure, the *Halkevleri* of the Sanjak of Alexandretta changed the practice of Turkish citizenship in the province. They represented a Turkish opposition to French rule, circulating information through the Turkish journal *Vahdet* about their new commissions that could replace the French mandatory government.[294] Unlike the *Halkevleri* of the rest of the nation, the Sanjak's *Halkevleri* were alternative governing institutions that subverted French and Arab claims to the province.[295] Ultimately, pro-Turkish activists hoped that establishing a Turkish majority in the semi-independent Sanjak would lead to parliamentary efforts to join the Republic of Turkey. Thus, the registration process was essential to their long-term goals.

The French recognized the threat of the *Halkevleri* and did everything in their power to eliminate their activities. French intelligence services characterized the *Halkevleri* as "an administration of a state within another state, ready to function immediately if a change of regime would take place."[296] They cited finding "annexes" in "Alexandretta, Kirikhan, Reyhanlı, El-Urdu, Shaykh Koy, Kuseyr, etc." French intelligence officials also reported the arrest of two *Halkevleri* representatives who had been visiting villages of the province encouraging them to agitate for annexation to Turkey. Charged with insurrection, a judge stated that they had been telling villagers that, "The Sanjak has no connection with Syria. Turkey will immediately occupy the Sanjak and punish with pain of death each person who did not inscribe as a Turkish citizen at the *Halkevi*."[297] These accused individuals may have been operating independently, outside of the Sanjak's *Halkevleri* jurisdiction. However, their supposed relationship to the *Halkevleri* indicates how these centers functioned in the Sanjak. They were not simply spaces for cultural

[294] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 168.
[295] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 168.
[296] Antioch Security Information, February 23, 1937, CP 511 517 and 524 as cited in Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 168.
[297] Antioch Security Information as found in Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 169.

reform and education, rather, they were clearly a political arm supporting the Republican People's Party.

The Turkish nationalizing campaign within the province divided residents of the Sanjak. In April 1938, the editor of the Turkish daily newspaper in the Sanjak, *Yeni Gün* was sentenced to six months in jail for conducting a press campaign against the Orthodox Christians of the province for their solidarity with the Arabs.[298] In response to his arrest, pro-Turkish residents of the region boycotted Orthodox Christian businesses and artisans.[299] As the divide between pro-Turkish residents and pro-Syrian residents intensified, residents like the aforementioned artisans negotiated a precarious environment as both nationalist campaigns used violence and persuasion to convince them to inscribe as "Turkish" or "Arab." From 1937 to 1938, citizens of the Sanjak began negotiating their role in each community under these tense circumstances, standing in solidarity with their preferred power and operating as individuals to resist – sometimes violently – other possible futures for the province.

Despite the League of Nations' plan for registration, ethno-religious identities within the Sanjak did not fit neatly into seven categories. On February 11, 1938, William S. Farrell at the American Consulate in Beirut wrote that the "Parti Union des Races" and "Parti-Arabo-Arménian" (anti-Turks)" were preparing to go on strike in protest against the electoral arrangements made by the League delegates."[300] A few months later, on May 13, 1938, Dr. Ian McEwan, who ran the Oriental Research Institute in Antioch reported, "The demi-battalion regularly stationed in Antioch is composed of Alaouites, Arabs, and Armenians. Naturally they are anti-Turk, but they are pretty poor excuses for soldiers. The local Turks would doubtless

[298] Beirut to State, Political Affairs of Syria, April 11, 1938, 890D.9111/166, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[299] Beirut to State, Political Affairs of Syria, April 11, 1938.
[300] U.S. Consulate Beirut to Department of State, Sanjak question, February 11,1938, 890D.9111/163, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.

have run them out of town."[301] This unity of Alawites, Arabs, and Armenians in opposition to the Turkish occupation suggests that community boundaries were not as neat as the League of Nations or many Turkish Republican People's Party members might have liked to imagine. Some members of these communities joined this battalion, perhaps not out of loyalty to an imposed understanding of ethno-religious identity, but out of opposition to the threat of Turkish annexation.

The determination of one's "identity" in the 1938 registration process became the crux of the conflict. Turkification efforts encouraged citizens to register as Turkish. Prior to McEwan's report in September 1938, Squadron Leader Greenlaw, British Liaison Officer to the High Commission had declared in June 1938 that he did not "believe that Alaouites and other non-Turkish elements will register as pro-Turkish in as large numbers as the Turks expect."[302] He also suggested that some Arab Alawites took advantage of the Turkish nationalizing campaign. He said, "many of the Alaouites, and possibly some members of other non-Turkish groups, were accepting from the Turks 18 Syrian piastres apiece daily up to the time of the suspension of the registrations and continued to accept 14 piastres daily during the period when the registrations were suspended."[303] Similarly, William S. Farrell reported to the Department of State in June 1938 that Turks were attempting to postpone election registrations over fears of local Alawites voting in favor of Syria.[304] He wrote, "Arabs, Alaouites and Kurds resident in the Sanjak are reported as miserably poor, and easily bribed to vote Turkish; where upon they are stated to have voted Arab after receiving Turkish gifts."[305] Turkish nationalizing campaigns had identified

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[301] U.S. Consulate Beirut to Department of State, Review of the Press for the States of the Levant Under French Mandate for the Period May 1 to 15, May 21, 1938, 890D.9111/169, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.
[302] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 42, June 10, 1938, 890D.00/724, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.
[303] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 42, June 10, 1938.
[304] U.S. Consulate Beirut to Department of State, Review of the Press for the States of the Levant Under French Mandate for the Period May 16 to 31, June 18, 1938, 890D.911/170, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.
[305] Beirut to State, Review of the Press for the Period May 16 to 31.

economic coercion as a means to attract followers. Meanwhile, non-Turkish residents were able to navigate the system of privileges guaranteed to certain citizens. Instead of practicing an idealized version of Turkish citizenship, some individuals found ways to take economic advantage of the Turkish nationalizing process.

Sentiments within Turkish-speaking communities of the Sanjak were similarly complex. A telegram sent from the U.S. Embassy in Ankara on April 5, 1938 stated, "there are signs that certain elements of the Turkish race may vote against the Turkish cause either because deep-rooted local jealousies prevent the Turks of the Hatay from presenting a solid front on a national issue, [or] because some do not wish to become 'Kemalized.'" The same telegram further related a story about a group of Turkish residents who identified as "Mussulman Sunnites" and had experienced opposition when they attempted to register as "other" instead of inscribing as "Turkish." It went on to explain that "the Alaouites and the Armenians are special objects of solicitude." The Turkish press often skewed portrayals of allegiance in their writings to the Turkish public, writing that Turkish residents who did not register as Turkish did so because they were being "terrorized" and that "the majority of the Alaouite Turks and Armenians wish to vote for Turkey," but that they were being "attacked and beaten."[306] This information reveals how the circumstances of the crisis exacerbated and accentuated existing tensions in the Sanjak. The registration process triggered violence among many residents and intervening actors, further muddling the already blurred lines of "community" in the province. Additionally, it exposed the complexities of defining Turkishness in this region. Some Turkish residents did identify more with their religion than their spoken language. Perhaps some Alawites and Armenians had wanted to inscribe as Turkish, and perhaps pro-Republican actors violently persuaded others to

[306] U.S. Embassy Ankara to Department of State, New Electoral Regulations for the Hatay, April 5, 1938, 751.67/214, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.

do so. Ultimately, however, the Republican People's Party leveraged these claims of violence against residents who wished to inscribe as Turkish in their push for a Gentlemen's Agreement between France and Turkey.

On March 10, 1938 France and Turkey made a secret deal that essentially guaranteed that "Turks" would compose the majority population in the League registration process.[307] This agreement came to light in May 1938 when Turkish minister Hüseyin Numan Menemencioğlu insisted that French Delegate to the Hatay, Roger Garreau, behave "in the spirit of the accord of March 10." Garreau responded to this attack, saying, "The population of the Hatay, with its Turkish majority, will realize its desire."[308] The agreement between France and Turkey emerged because France encountered tough diplomatic circumstances on the eve of World War II. As soon as the certainty of a Turkish Sanjak became public knowledge, non-Turkish citizens began to renegotiate their place in society. Joining the Republic of Turkey meant that all citizens, regardless of race or religion, would participate in Republican reform. Campaigns like "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" and other Turkish language initiatives encouraged homogenization through reform. The Republic of Turkey had also limited certain Ottoman-era freedoms, banning *fezzes* for men and veils for women. Thus, the Gentleman's Agreement foreshadowed much more than just a change in name, it entailed a series of strict reforms aiming for a modern, secular ideal.

Before this moment, locals practiced more traditional forms of violent resistance. Indeed, many diplomatic archival sources recounted almost daily violence among residents of the Sanjak throughout this process.[309] Later, the circumstances of independence forced residents to passively resist, rather than face the Turkish military. "The Alouites in the registrations now

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[307] Shields, *Fezzes in the River,* 189.
[308] U.S. embassy Ankara to Department of State, Visit to Ankara of M. Garreau, Delegate in the Hatay of French High Commissioner to Syria, May 7, 1938, 751/67/217, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.
[309] USNA, et al.

taking place will show themselves, possibly under inducement, to be pro-Turk," wrote Commander Hillhouse on June 10, 1938. However, four days later, 250 Alawite women staged a protest calling for the release of Zaki al-Arsuzi in front of the prison in Antioch and the headquarters of the League Commission at the nearby Hotel de Tourisme.[310] Moments like this suggest that the circumstances of ethno-religious citizenship were not as clearly defined as western observers like Commander Hillhouse believed. The reality was much more complex. Some Arab Alawites supported the Turkish national cause, while others opposed it. Still others claimed neutral ground to protect themselves from the violent repercussions of nationalism in the province. As the tide of the annexation turned in Turkey's favor, many citizens worked to position themselves for the best possible outcome. Because the Sanjak was almost certain to become a part of Turkey, residents had to prepare themselves for Republican reform. They might have been able to practice passive resistance by speaking non-Turkish languages and wearing religious attire. Joining the new Republic meant that they would be equal under law, but equality would also mean full participation in Republican reform.

Opposing Turkey presented little benefit as the registration process began to favor a Turkish majority. After his arrest, prominent Alawite leader and Arab nationalist, Zaki al-Arsuzi, returned as a refugee from the Sanjak to Syria, and Ely E. Palmer wrote that al-Arsuzi assured him that it was true that, "although Arab and other non-Turkish resistance continues to be of a passive character it may well be that it is a case of 'biding one's time.'"[311] Palmer voiced Al-Arsuzi's claim that "in the local Sanjak force there have always been a great many Alaouites, whose sympathies are naturally with their own people."[312] However, he also admitted "as long as

[310] U.S. Consulate Beirut to Department of State, Telegram No. 57, July 1, 1938, 890D.00/726, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.
[311] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 77, August 1, 1938, 890D.00/741, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, USNA.
[312] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 77, August 1, 1938.

Colonel Collet and the French Army units now at the latter's disposal remain in the Sanjak there is little likelihood of any attempts at armed resistance or any organized attacks on Turkish 'oppressors.'"[313] Even one of Turkey's fiercest opponents, Zaki al-Arsuzi, recognized how his role needed to change in the face of an almost certain, Turkish future. Although al-Arsuzi wrote from a position of opposition, Turkish nationalists had indeed gained some Arab Alawite support throughout the annexation process. When Turkish troops marched from Alexandretta to Antioch on July 7, 1938, State Department officials identified "Alawite horsemen" who participated in public displays of Turkish citizenship, joining a triumphal procession celebrating the Turkification of the province.[314] The contrast between al-Arsuzi and these Alawite horsemen represents the true conundrum of classifications of "community" that emerged during this annexation crisis.

During this same period, officials started implementing Republican reforms into law in the Sanjak. In late July 1938, the interim regime of the Sanjak decreed that Turkish would become the language used in mosques, that the *tarboosh,* or Ottoman *fez,* was to be outlawed, and that women would no longer be permitted to wear veils. After Turkish troops occupied the territory in July 1938, Ely E. Palmer reported that "Aggressive members of the Turkish community were not slow in finding opportunity to grab and throw in the Orontes river *tarbooshes* from the heads of Arab passers-by."[315] However, Palmer noted that some Arab women kept wearing their veils in the streets, practicing a form of resistance in the midst of rapid secular change.[316] Stories like this suggest that some individuals chose to remain in the Sanjak

[313] Beirut to State, no. 77, August 1, 1938, 890D.00/741, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[314] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 77, August 1, 1938.
[315] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 77, August 1, 1938.
[316] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 77, August 1, 1938.

without fully compromising their religious and cultural values. People carved out their own pockets of protest and resistance in the margins in the face of sweeping Turkish nationalism.

Halkevi in Antioch [317]

The First National Assembly of Hatay

Under the occupation of Turkish troops, the League registration process came to a close at six p.m. on August 1, 1938. Persistent violence throughout the process and the secret French guarantee of a Turkish-majority suggest that the process itself was not entirely fair or democratic. Regardless, this violent year resulted in the League's following determination of population statistics for each "community" in the province:

Total Registered	**Number of Electors**
35,847 Turks 11,319 Alawites 5,504 Armenians 2,098 Greek Orthodox 1,845 Arabs 395 Miscellaneous	358 Turks 113 Alawites 55 Armenians 20 Greek Orthodox 18 Arabs[318]

[317] *Bayram Kartları – Antakya Halkevi,* Krt_018120, Türkiye_Hatay_Antakya, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.
[318] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.

Members of the self-identified Arab and Armenian communities had boycotted the registration process itself, and they also chose to forego the election process. On August 10, 1938, the League of Nations announced the names of the electors who would choose the new National Assembly. Some members of Arab and Armenian communities were not pleased with the list of names, claiming "these lists included the names of no Arab or Armenian residents of the Sanjak of any prominence."[319] Despite these protests, the Assembly elections proceeded as planned.[320] This boycott symbolized a collective resistance on the part of some members of these communities. This action suggested that the actual numbers acquired by the League were invalid and that individuals had still found ways to resist, in spite of the almost definite fate of a Turkish Sanjak.

On September 2, 1938, citizens of the Sanjak commemorated the inauguration of the first National Assembly of Hatay. The end results favored Turkish nationalists: twenty-two Turks, nine Alawites, five Armenians, two Greek Orthodox Christians, and two Muslim Arabs composed the first Assembly. The President and Prime Minister of Hatay, as well as the President of the Parliament were all pro-Republican Turkish nationalists. Abdülgani Türkmen, President of Antioch's *Halkevi,* was elected President of the Assembly.[321]As Arthur MacMurray wrote of Türkmen, "He apparently is a Turkish resident of the Hatay who during the past years has worked for the domination of Turkish interests there and has now received the reward his successful collaboration merited."[322] Ely Palmer suggested that Türkmen would be "representing the proletariat" because of his origins in the province and work as a prominent pro-Turkish

[319] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.
[320] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.
[321] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.
[322] Istanbul to State, Telegram No. 814, September 7, 1938.

activist in the region.[323] Tayfur Sökmen became the President of Hatay.[324] As MacMurray explained in a brief to the Department of State, Sökmen's election was a clear indicator of the Assembly's associations with the Republic of Turkey:

> The Embassy had no difficulty in confirming the contention of the local press that President Tayfur Sökmen is a Turk. He was, in fact, until he resigned on September 1, a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly – as Deputy from Antalya. Born in what is now officially to be known as the Hatay, Sökmen was an early associate of Atatürk whom he served during the War of Independence… Although his local reputation is little more than that of a brigand chief, the Turkish press has taken pains to refer to him as one of Turkey's, and of the Hatay's, most distinguished patriots.[325]

Dr. Abdurrahman Malek, who had originally served as French-appointed *Mohafez,* or governor, of the Sanjak during the registration period, became the Prime Minister of Hatay. Like Sökmen, Malek came from a prominent family in the Sanjak, but received his education in the Republic of Turkey. Unlike Türkmen, Sökmen and Malek came to represent the "wealthy landowning class."[326] Despite distinct class differences among the candidates, their common Turkish interests united them. The election of all three pro-Republican nationalists outlined a clear direction for the newly independent Hatay: it was to become a part of Turkey.

Malek and Sökmen were connected to a more elite Turkish nationalist class. In this regard, the rejection of upper-class, non-Turkish candidates for parliamentary positions suggested that Turkishness – not class – was the deciding factor in these elections. Like Sökmen and Malek, candidate Mohamed El Atali came from one of the most influential wealthy families of Antioch. He served as Minister of Agriculture in the Syrian Government of Hakki Bey Azem, "but retired to the Sanjak following the formation of the Mardam Bey Government and soon

[323] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.
[324] Istanbul to State, Telegram No. 814, September 7, 1938.
[325] Istanbul to State, Telegram No. 814, September 7, 1938.
[326] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.

identified himself with the pro-Turkish element." Another candidate, Soubhi Bey Barakat had even closer ties to Syria. Barakat served as President of the Syrian Federation until 1925 and he later became the President of the reorganized Government of Syria. From 1933 to 1936, he was President of the Syrian Chamber of Deputies and campaigned for the rejection the 1933 Franco-Syrian treaties. He lost candidacy for the Presidency of the Syrian Republic in 1938 and returned to Antioch after falling out with the Syrian Nationalist Bloc.

Members of the *Halkevi* in Antioch opposed the proposition of both Mohamed El Atali and Soubhi Barakat. In response to Barakat, they "insisted that the Premier should be a Turk who had never occupied an important post in the government." They voiced a similar complaint with regard to El Atali.[327] Such nuanced opposition reveals a more complex understanding of Turkish identity in the Sanjak. Some pro-Turkish voters opposed the institutional norms of the Republican People's Party, insisting instead that they be able to elect their own government with its own conceptions of what it meant to be Turkish in this era.

The election of Jemal Alpar, Jemil Yuptman, Setir Jemil, and Ahmed Faik to Ministerial positions reveal the influence of this same, *Halkevi*-driven Turkish community in the formation of the new government.[328] All four Ministers were "Turks of Sanjak origin but resident for many years in Turkey."[329] These elections suggest that Turkish nationalists in the province had indeed gained a strong following during the registration process. The *Halkevi* had functioned as a pseudo-governmental arm for Republican Turkish elements in the Sanjak, and the results of this election reflect the power that these People's Houses held during these contentious years. More

[327] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938. (All above evidence comes from this telegram.)
[328] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938. It is believed that Ahmed Faik, appointed as Minister of Public Instruction and Hygiene, is the same as "Ahmet Faik Türkmen," who wrote the geography book referenced extensively in this thesis.
[329] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.

than just community centers, the *Halkevleri* laid the groundwork for a preliminary government in Hatay and ultimately determined the fate of its annexation to Turkey.

Outside of the *Halkevi,* citizens of the Sanjak recognized how the newly elected parliament's version of Turkishness included some people who lived in the region and excluded others. Members of Arab and Armenian communities who had boycotted the registration and election processes also claimed that Malek's leadership represented a more moderate understanding of Turkishness. These citizens perceived members of the *Halkevi* and others belonging to the Turkish community as extreme Kemalists. However, they did not allege the same for Malek. This evidence suggests that more nuanced understandings of Turkish nationalism that had begun to developed in the province. In addition to these Turkish officials, an Alawite was elected to a role as Counselor in the Ministry of the Interior, an Armenian to the Ministry of Public Instruction, and a Roman Catholic to the Ministry of Finance. Although these positions may have served as acknowledgements of the non-Turkish communities of the Sanjak, the results of the elections overwhelming favored Turkish nationalists. The appointments of majority Turkish leadership, the adoption of Turkish constitutional norms, and the unanimous decision to name the new state "Hatay" all revealed a pivot toward the Republic of Turkey. As Palmer reflected, those who opposed these elections concluded that "the ultimate outcome will be Turkish annexation of the Hatay at the request of its Parliament." [330]

Soon after the formation of the assembly, *Cumhuriyet* ran a headline titled, "The Hatay Celebrated Its National Holiday by Acclaiming the Name of Atatürk."[331] Mehmed Adali, temporary Chairman of the Assembly, commemorated its establishment, saying that Hatay's independence was "made possible through the inspiration and will of the great Turkish nation

[330] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938. (All above evidence comes from this telegram.)
[331] Istanbul to State, Telegram No. 814, September 7, 1938.

and our great Atatürk, I consider it a glorious and national duty to reiterate our sentiments of infinite attachment to Turkey and to our Great Chief."[332] In response to this same holiday, an Armenian deputy named Isaie Kazandijan and a Greek Orthodox deputy, Dr. Basile, both made statements associating Hatay's independence with Turkey and Atatürk.[333] These statements of support reveal the complexities that emerged as the League of Nations asked to define "communities" in this region. Armenian and Greek Orthodox Christian communities were internally diverse. Indeed, the cases of Kazandjian and Dr. Basile complicate narratives of ethno-religious allegiance in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Their statements in the Assembly suggested that they may have even favored joining the Republic of Turkey and identified with the Turkish community, despite the Assembly referring to them as "Armenian" and "Greek Orthodox" representatives. Such evidence reflects a more nuanced understanding of "community" than the League of Nations had posited in their initial goal of registration according to ethnoreligious identity.

Outside of the Assembly, it was obvious that the elections symbolized a joining of Hatay with the Republic of Turkey. On September 6, 1938, Syrian newspapers *Echos de Syria* and *Le Jour* published articles claiming, "Petitions *(mazbatas),* according to reports from Antioch, are being circulated by Turkish elements, demanding annexation by Turkey."[334] These same newspapers wrote, "The Sanjak, no longer Syrian, but Franco-Turkish, will be reunited with Cilicia. Turks from the Balkans will come to take the place of the Arabs who have fled from the Sanjak."[335] Such fears would be validated when the Republic of Hatay became the sixty-third province of Turkey less than a year later. However, the composition of the Assembly itself

[332] Istanbul to State, Telegram No. 814, September 7, 1938.
[333] Istanbul to State, Telegram No. 814, September 7, 1938.
[334]Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.
[335] Beirut to State, Telegram No. 108, September 7, 1938.

revealed how the definition of "Turkishness" might have been changing in the Sanjak. Despite its overwhelmingly Turkish majority, stories of non-Turkish individuals endorsing pro-Republican ideas in the Assembly revealed that "community" was not always the determining factor in individual allegiances after the Sanjak Crisis.

During the formation of the Assembly, locals began negotiating their role in this new Republic. Some fled the province entirely, while others remained. In August 1938, Dr. McEwan reported back to the U.S. Consulate again, saying, "While most of the Alaouites remained in the Sanjak and are generally regarded as no longer anti-Turk, and while a considerable numbers of Armenians have left, the principal exodus has been on the part of the Greek Orthodox residents of Antioch and particularly on the part of Arab peasants."[336] Most refugees, regardless of religion, fled to Syria. McEwan's reports suggest that allegiances changed quickly in the Sanjak of Alexandretta, particularly given the threat of annexation. Individuals may not have been entirely loyal to one "community," rather, they opted in and out of these "communities" to preserve their own best interests in these violent times. Those who chose to stay may have changed their outside affiliations. Others, like some Arab women who continued to veil themselves, used their dress to embody their own forms of passive resistance to new political arrangements while remaining peacefully in their homeland.

In a later report from October 14, 1938, McEwan reported that Turkish officials "have recently approached Armenian and other non-Turkish elements in the Hatay and have urged them to let bygones be bygones and to cooperate with the Government, with the assurance that there is nothing to fear from the present Turkish policy." He wrote that many members of Arab, Armenian, and Greek Orthodox communities were still refugees within Hatay, waiting to make

[336] Beirut to State, Telegram no. 78, September 1, 1938, 890D.00/742, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.

arrangements to leave. He told the story of an Armenian who explained that, "in the absence of any prospect of refuge elsewhere the Armenians, at least, feel that they had better remain where they are and hope for the best, even though it may be difficult for them to forget what they have suffered in the past at the hands of their Turkish 'neighbors.'"[337] Without family ties or property in Syria, the promise of belonging elsewhere may not have appeared much better than remaining in a Turkish Hatay. Accounts such as these force us to recognize, however, that even the incorporation of Hatay into Turkey did not succeed in making the region entirely "Turkish."

Narratives of resistance within the Sanjak define the annexation itself. Pro-Turkish and pro-Syrian activists used the Sanjak Crisis to convince residents to inscribe to their national communities, and others resisted these inscription efforts to maintain their own conceptions of self and history in this period of growing geopolitical tension. Inclusion and exclusion, therefore, were fluid states of being in this province. Individuals adapted to the ever-changing norms of the time. Even Turkish nationalism took diverse and varied forms, fomenting divisions within a seemingly unified front.

Hatay

On June 29, 1939, at the will of its First National Assembly, the Republic of Hatay joined the Republic of Turkey as its sixty-third province. On that day Turkish Foreign Minister Şükrü Saracoğlu recalled a tale before the Grand National Assembly of Hatay. He explained that the new boundaries with Syria would exclude three Armenian villages from the Republic of Turkey. In return, however, he proudly told the story of the village of Köminid. As France and Turkey entered negotiations with one another for the final demarcations, officers had been patrolling the

[337] American Consulate Beirut to Department of State, Turkification of the Hatay (Sanjak of Alexandretta), October 14, 1938, 890D.00/752, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.

new boundaries in the daytime, using rocks to separate Hatay from Syria. Night after night, the villagers of Köminid had moved the rocks to their southern border so as to be included in the Republic of Turkey. Eventually, France conceded and placed Köminid within Turkey's boundaries. The foreign Minister exclaimed, "The boundary has been rectified in such a manner as to leave to Turkey this Turkish village which has given concrete evidence of its attachment to Turkey and Hatay!"[338] The story of Köminid suggests that some citizens may have found ways to maintain power in the midst of this diplomatic chaos.

Saracoğlu also addressed the issue of residents who wished to leave the Hatay, saying, "non-Turkish elements who do not wish to become Turkish citizens shall be authorized to apply within six months to the local government and utilize their right of option." He continued by proclaiming, "However, my personal belief is to the effect that in view of the attachment manifested by the population of the Hatay for Turkey nobody will use this right of option regardless of race and creed and that nobody will depart from the Hatay."[339] His statement reflected evolving understandings of Turkishness in the Sanjak Crisis. Saracoğlu implied that all Turkish citizens would want to remain in the Hatay, and he distinguished between them and non-Turkish residents. However, he also indicated that he believed all citizens would want to become a part of Turkey, whether or not they were necessarily Turkish.

Saracoğlu finished his speech by describing the Hatay as "an unconquerable fortress on Turkey's frontier. A fortress of which every stone should testify to the force, culture and civilization of the Turkish people." He concluded with a proclamation honoring Atatürk. A few weeks later, on June 29, 1939, journalist Falih Rifki Atay made a similar statement in the

[338] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 2 to Despatch no. 1145, July 11, 1939, 751.67/283, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[339] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 2, July 11, 1939.

newspaper, *Ankara.* He explained that victory in the Hatay honored Atatürk's legacy, who had worked for it "all the last years of his life." He proclaimed, "The Hatay belongs to us, it is now only a department of the Turkish Republic. The spirit of Atatürk should rejoice."[340]

Although the Hatay belonged to the Republic of Turkey, individuals continued to take it upon themselves to define their own terms of belonging. For some, this meant enforcing Republican reforms. Others continued to speak non-Turkish languages, wear religious clothes, and practice their own cultural traditions. In Antioch, an important local nationalist named Aşur Bey founded the maternity ward of Antioch and used his role in the community to enforce the Turkification of the province.[341] He began policing language in the streets.[342] Upon hearing children speaking Arabic with one another while they played soccer near the ward, he would reprimand them, shouting, "Don't speak Arabic!."[343] Indeed, according to the Secretary General of Antioch's *Halkevi*, the spread of the Turkish language became the most important task for their organization throughout the 1940s.[344] The people of Antioch were still speaking Arabic with one another, and residents like Aşur Bey worried that this was furthering the spread of Arab cultural influences.[345] The residents who were still speaking Arabic defined their own sense of belonging in Antioch, refusing to succumb to the order that all citizens speak Turkish.

The annexation of the Sanjak also impacted people within the Republic of Turkey. Citizens across the Republic rejoiced at the annexation, understanding it as a victory – not just for the citizens of Hatay – but for the entire Republic. In 1939, *Halkevleri* around the country organized public celebrations for the annexation and founding of the new Hatay province. Within

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[340] Istanbul to State, Enclosure No. 2, July 11, 1939.
[341] Testimony from E.A., August 15, 2011, interview by Levant Duman in Antioch as written in Duman, *Hatay'daki*, 372.
[342] Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 371.
[343] Testimony from E.A., 2011 in Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 372.
[344] B.C.A. (490.01.845.345.1) 31-32 in Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 372.
[345] B.C.A. (490.01.845.345.1) 31-32 in Duman, *Hatay'daki,* 372.

Hatay itself, pro-Kemalist elements organized celebrations for "joining the motherland."[346] The *Halkevleri* and other Turkish citizens documented these celebrations in the form of postcards. This symbolic propaganda circulated within and outside of Turkey as those in favor of the annexation sent pictures of celebration to friends and relatives. The photographic elements of this propaganda depict how individuals perceived the annexation of Hatay in the broader Republic. Demonstrations organized at *Halkevleri* documented a bond between the Turks of the Sanjak and the Republic itself. Because of the extensive efforts that the *Halkevleri* had waged during the annexation crisis itself, some citizens may also have understood the annexation of the Hatay as a result of their own actions.

Postcards on next page: *Celebrations in Adana and Istanbul for Hatay, "joining the motherland."* [347]

[346] *Hatay'ın ana yurdu katılış kutlamaları*, Krt_026885 [t.y.] from İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo. Accessed via http://ataturkkitapligi.ibb.gov.tr/yordambt/yordam.php?sayfaOturumAc#.

[347] Adana. Hatay'ın anavatana katılış kutlamaları, Krt_026079, Türkiye_Adana, Törenler, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.
İstanbul'da Hatay'ın ana yurda katılış kutlamaları, Krt_026919, Türkiye_Istanbul, Giyim & Kuşam Bayraklar-Türk Bayrağı Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.


İstanbul/ Hatay

The victory in Hatay also became an important tool for the Republican People's Party, and they made active efforts to incorporate the new province into the Republic. In 1939, a group of history students from Istanbul University took a trip to Hatay. They met with the Hatay Ministry of Public Instruction, welcoming the new region into the Turkish educational system. In that same year, a group of teachers visited the province to present "traditional Turkish plays."[348]

Narratives of exclusion also defined the new Hatay. Arab and French influence became the targets of these exclusion campaigns. In 1939, all automobiles and trucks with Syrian and Lebanese license plates were banned from entering Hatay. That same year, employees of the Hatay Public Works Ministry (which was formerly connected to an electric company in Aleppo) were fired if they were not originally from Hatay. [349] Even though the region was a part of Turkey geopolitically, the Republican People's Party still had to enforce and implement Republican reforms in the province. Turkification continued long after the close of the crisis itself.

The events of the Sanjak Crisis had a long-lasting effect outside of the province and pushed nationalist thinkers in both Syria and Turkey to redefine their definition of their "nation." In Turkey, efforts to construe Alawite histories and languages within the Turkish narrative indicated a shift toward forced inclusion, rather than exclusion, in the new Republic. Although these carefully calculated efforts were not necessarily the result of the desire of the Alawites themselves to become Turkish, they did symbolize a shift toward an expanded definition of Turkishness. These initiatives similarly impacted Alawites throughout Turkey, not just those in the Sanjak of Alexandretta. After the annexation, the *Halkevleri* continued employing tactics to

[348] American Consulate Beirut to Department of State, Current Situation in Hatay, February 3, 1939, 890D.927/97, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.
[349] Beirut to State, Current Situation in Hatay, February 3, 1939.

renegotiate the circumstances of language and history to convince more communities to identify with being Turkish. In 1940, the language, history, and literature branch of a *Halkevi* in the Aegean province of Aydın produced a pamphlet titled "A Conference About Hatay." In the first pages of this pamphlet, the writer, Etem Menderes, wrote, "We are going to discuss the history of our forefathers, the Hittites and the Hurrians." He explained that the Hurrians had dwelt in the southern Anatolian plain and occupied northern Syria and Hatay during the fifteenth-century B.C.[350] Turkish historical research during the crisis tended to focus on the Hittites as the important proto-Turkish civilization of this region, while this post-annexation discussion of the Hurrians alluded to further expansions of the definition of Turkishness and the rewriting of Turkish history.

Conclusion

Although the outcome of the Sanjak Crisis favored the Republic of Turkey, it did not end the conversations that were taking place in both Turkey and Syria about what it meant to belong in each of those nations. Language emerged as a preeminent factor for both strains of nationalism. In Turkey, speaking Turkish became a way to enforce assimilation and expand the definition of Turkishness to communities that had not always been considered Turkish. In Syria, thinkers like Zaki al-Arsuzi focused on the Arabic language as the defining factor of the Arab *umma,* or nation. In the midst of these philosophical changes, citizens had to negotiate their own place in these countries. In Turkey, the seemingly expanded definition of Turkishness may have allowed more people to experience a sense of belonging. However, the forceful expression of this expansion limited belonging itself. To be included, citizens had to practice being Turkish.

[350] B. Etem Menderes, Hatay Hakkında bir Konferans, Aydın CHP Basımevi 1939, 9-10.

Postcard of women wearing veils in Antioch after joining the Republic.[351]

Postcard of women not wearing veils in Antioch after joining the Republic.[352]

[351] *Antakya'nın yurda katılışı,* Krt_013742, Türkiye_Hatay_Antakya, Gündelik hayat, Giyim & Kuşam, Hatay'ın kurtuluşu, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.

[352] *Hatay'ın ana yurda katılış kutlamaları,* Krt_026995, Giyim & Kuşam, Türk - Türk Bayrağı, Hatay'ın kurtuluşu, İ.B.B. Atatürk Kitaplığı Sayısal Arşiv ve e-Kaynaklar Depo, Postcard.

Conclusion

After his exile from Aintab in 1915, George Chamichian made every effort to resist the Ottoman Empire. Skirting travel restrictions for Armenians in Damascus, he headed south to present-day Jordan's al-Azraq Oasis. There he joined the Arab Revolt, serving alongside Emir Faysal and Lawrence of Arabia before renaming himself George Haig and moving to America in 1920, where he became a captain in the Reserve Corps. Fifteen years later, Haig returned to Syria and Palestine, staying there for two years on his own accord and acquainting himself with nationalists in Syria, Palestine, and Transjordan. In 1938, Haig took it upon himself to pen a letter to then-Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. With no apparent connection to the Department of State of his own, he wrote to declare that Eastern Mediterranean countries would be of great importance in "the next war" and he wanted to offer his own ideas on the matter. In the late summer of 1938, it was apparent that the Republic of Turkey was in a position to annex the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Haig wrote to warn the United States against permitting the occupation of Alexandretta by Turkish troops. His primary issue was not a military concern, but a matter of human rights for, he wrote, "there is a price other than the occupation of Alexandretta being paid for this problematical guarantee to England and France – the possible sacrifice of the lives and well-being of over one hundred seventy-five thousand Armenians and Arabs in that District who know what it is to live under Turkish rule."[353]

Soon, many of George Haig's fears became a reality: thousands of Armenians, Arabs, Alawites, Greek Orthodox Christians, and others ended up fleeing the Sanjak of Alexandretta, now renamed "Hatay." The Sanjak did indeed become a part of Turkey in 1939, and it remains an official province of the Republic today. What Haig could not have predicted was that on June

[353] George Haig to Secretary of State, "The Anglo-Franco-Turkish Friendship Pact and the Alexandretta Affair" by George Haig, July 22, 1938, 751.67/235, 1930-1939 CDF, RG 59, NARA.

29, 1939, forty-one families from a village called "Vakıflı" would send a representative to the Assembly of Hatay to declare that they hoped to become a part of Turkey. One of the six villages that had stood under siege at Musa Dağı in 1915, Vakıflı was entirely Armenian.[354]

The choice of the villagers of Vakıflı to remain in the Republic of Turkey contradicts the typical narrative of the Turkification of the Sanjak of Alexandretta. While many individuals fled the region during the period of annexation, still many others chose to stay. A range of individuals shaped the contours of the new state, many carving out pockets of resistance and adapting to this reality in the midst of sometimes violent nationalizing campaigns. In these ruptures, communities and individuals preserved their own histories and diversified the realities of Turkishness. Likewise, the stories from the edge of the Republic at the Sanjak of Alexandretta suggest that some people found ways to exist in Turkey without necessarily becoming Turkish.

Over time, people's understandings of belonging change. In 1975, George Haig sat down for an interview with Armenian Film Foundation. His interviewer, J. Michael Hagopian, asked Haig why he supported the Turks more than any other Armenian he had interviewed, in spite of ongoing oppression of Armenians in Turkey. Lt. Colonel Haig replied, "Armenians do not have a chance now to fight the Turks, I don't mean actual warfare." He elaborated that dialogue was the only way forward. He supported reconciliation, and he clarified that he believed that it had principally been high-ranking Turkish officials who were responsible for the Armenian Genocide. Enver Pasha, he said, was the antagonizer.[355] Perhaps Lt. Colonel Haig had redefined his own understanding of resistance. He called for a public acknowledgement of the genocide,

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[354] Nigân Doğru, et al., "*Vakıflı Köyü Bir Köy Monografisi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi Mimarlık Fakültesi, 1966): 17-29.
Vicken Cheterian, *Open Wounds: Armenians, Turks, and a Century of Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 227.

[355] Testimony from George Haig, March 4, 1975, interview by J. Michael Hagopian through the Armenian Film Foundation, https://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=56608&returnIndex=0# (accessed 31 March 2020).

and he suggested that sitting down with the Turkish government might achieve that. In this context, any official Turkish acknowledgement of genocide would be proof of Armenian resistance.

For the villagers of Vakıflı, perhaps their mere continued existence in the area they had long inhabited was their own form of resistance. They had fought Ottoman troops and won. When the time for annexation came, they chose to stay. Perhaps to them, leaving would have meant that the Turks had won. The Turks did finally claim Musa Dağı. For the surrounding villages, however, resistance took the opposite form. The five other villages of Musa Dağı settled just over the border, in Anjar, Lebanon, setting up six little neighborhoods with the same names as their now Turkish counterparts had once borne.[356] Their community was united, free of Turkish rule. For them, leaving the Sanjak was a form of protest. The cases of George Haig, the village of Vakıflı, and the neighborhoods of Anjar illustrate the various faces that resistance took in the Sanjak of Alexandretta.

The reality of the Sanjak was much more complex than most narratives of the region allow. French colonial influence, Wilsonian ideals of self-determination, the legacy of the Armenian Genocide, Turkish nationalism, and Arab nationalism all contributed to the escalation of the crisis itself. The Sanjak of Alexandretta is a diverse region with a complicated history. The failures of annexation and the exceptions to the narrative reveal the complexities of the Sanjak crisis. This crisis emerged for many reasons, but its legacy reverberates today because it called for the *enumeration* of identity. It asked residents to compile their complex family histories, language practices and religious traditions into a neat little package and call themselves "Arab," "Turkish," "Alawite," "Armenian," "Greek Orthodox," "Kurdish," or "Other." The crisis

[356] Cheterian, *Open Wounds,* 227.

escalated because the structure of the League's intervention called for the formation of a western-style, nation-state formed around the identity of an ethnic majority. Turkish and Syrian nationalists invested themselves with such passion in the province because the stakes of the registration process itself required such levels of engagement. There was no majority in the province, and because both movements wanted the Sanjak, they had to convince people to become Turkish or Arab even if they did not already identify as such already.

Stories of emergent nationalism in the chaos of census-taking are not uncommon. In this sense, the Sanjak crisis was not necessarily unique, even in the region. The 1903 Ottoman Census in Macedonia, the efforts of Armenian lobbyists in Cilicia from 1918 to 1922, and the 1923 Greco-Turkish population exchange all exemplify efforts within the former Ottoman Empire to quantify and regulate citizenship according to "identity." However, in each of these cases people found ways to resist all of these top-down impositions of order. They bent the rules, redefined neat understandings of belonging, and co-opted identities to make their own order. Similarly, resistance – not just annexation – defined the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Through resistance, individuals found ways to preserve their own sense of belonging. When the annexation became a reality, both staying and leaving were potentially forms of resistance.

Today too, the province is experiencing rapid change. As Syria enters its ninth continuous year of civil war, violence encroaches the borders of Hatay. Syrian civilians flee north, seeking refuge in the cities of Alexandretta and Antioch. Many of them are the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of former residents of the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Their families have now lived in Syria for generations, having fled the threat of Turkish rule. Today, their descendants return home, this time escaping the threat of instability in Syria. The province's demographics change on a daily basis.

The circumstances of Hatay today speak to the potential transience of modern nation-states. Less than a century ago, the fate of the Sanjak of Alexandretta seemed sealed forever. With the annexation, it became Turkish, while many of its former residents fled only to become Syrian. These distinct identities fueled two national narratives. Today, however, all of that is changing. It is possible that some of the Syrian refugees will stay in "Turkish" Hatay—the home of their forebears, in some cases. Some might eventually return to Syria. Some might move north. Will they become Turkish citizens? Will their children attend Turkish schools? If so, they will become a part of the same Republic of Turkey their ancestors so desperately fled. However, as George Haig explained in his interview, with each new generation, countries change. Yet, what defines countries, land or people or some combination of the two? During the conflict over the Sanjak, various actors had sought to prove that the province was both territorially and ethnically their own. This was certainly the case of the Turkish officials who did all they could, not only to incorporate the territory into the Republic, but also to prove the Turkishness of many of its residents. The list of people on whom they set their sights included both Turkish-speakers and Arabic-speakers, Sunni Muslims and Alawites. The case of the Sanjak challenges the idea that belonging in the modern Turkish Republic was necessarily exclusive to Sunni Muslim Turks alone.

Acknowledgements

I could not have written this thesis without the help of many people, but I would not have had the inspiration to choose this topic without Gürhan and Seçil Fakioğlu. When I lived with them in Izmir for a year during high school, they taught me much more than just Turkish. They taught me to think critically and question often. They also shared their world with me, and encouraged me to think about my own understandings of belonging. Gürhan and Seçil were open and honest about Turkey's history, and they made a point to introduce me to people who would teach me more. Without them, I would not have met all of the wonderful people who showed me to the nuances of what it means to belong in Turkey.

I am incredibly grateful for my advisor, Professor Cohen. I know that I put her through long nights of editing and made her read the word "explicated" one too many times. Her encouragement, insights, and selflessness shaped this project, and I owe a lot to her. To Professor Harrington, thank you for reading countless drafts and listening to my tangents. Thank you for providing necessary guidance (and deadlines!), but also for lending your ear and offering words of encouragement when this thesis was difficult. To Professor Greble, thank you for being so willing to meet with me earlier this year and offer both encouragement and advice. I am incredibly appreciative of the time you took out of your life to read my initial draft and offer suggestions. I would also like to thank Professor Eido, who has taught me Arabic for the past three years. He sat with me for hours on Zoom while I tried to translate Zaki al-Arsuzi and lent necessary perspective on the history of Syrian nationalism. I would also like to thank Uğur Akgül and Hakan Mertcan, for encouraging me to push forward with this project and offering me countless primary sources. I could not have written this thesis without the help of my entire Honors cohort. Thank you for lots of laughs, Zoom citation sessions, and open and constructive advice.

I could not have done this without my best friend, Mine Müezzinoğlu. She was always there to lend a hand on Turkish translations, and she took time to share her own perspectives on belonging and Turkish history. For her insights, support, and encouragement, I am eternally thankful. To my roommates, Chloe Davis and Nico Gardner, thank you for letting my books take up our entire living room and for encouraging me to keep writing. I would also like to thank my mentor, Samar Ali. She gave me days off when thesis deadlines hit, shared her own family's history in Syria, Palestine, and Jordan with me, and motivated me when the going got tough.

Finally, I want to thank my family. To my grandparents, Ann Marie and Martin McNamara, thank you for supporting me throughout my time at Vanderbilt. I am so grateful for the four years I spent at Vanderbilt, the professors from whom I learned, the lectures I attended, and every weekend you let me spend at your house when I wanted a little time away. To my brothers, Sam and Mac, thank you for everything you do. I am so proud of both of you. Lastly, I need to thank my parents, Margaret and Larry Tezak! I admire them more than words can express, and I would not have been able to do this without their support. From teaching me how "rip apart" my writing to letting me move to Turkey, I never would have been able to write this thesis without them. They put up with me for the past month while I was at home writing, and they were an endless source of positivity and encouragement.

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