Creating the Turk's Homeland: Modernization, Nationalism and Geography in Southeast Turkey in the late 19th and 20th Centuries

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ABSTRACT : Nationalism understood as a modern concept, is a project of political and social engineering, which works through the invention of history and the reproduction of geography, space and architecture. The "geography of nationalism" is the spatial expression of strategies of exclusion, displacement and dispossession of the externalized 'other', as well as of strategies of re-construction and re-production for the sovereign and hegemonic 'self' of the nation. The analysis of the case of Turkey in the late 19th and 20th centuries exposes an almost ideal-typical model of the discursive imagination and the material practice of nationalism and its geographical strategies, aimed at the creation of an ethnically homogenous 'homeland'. These strategies and their consequences, however, are not unique to the Turkish case, but comparable to the nation-building processes of other 'late' nations, which have emerged out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire.

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INTRODUCTION

The argument, which I discuss in this paper, is based on the hypothesis that the dynamics of nationalism and the production of geography and space are two inextricably linked processes, which constitute a central aspect of modernity. The example of Turkey and Turkish nationalism in the late

19th and 20th centuries and the case-study of (Sanli) Urfa[1] are the empirical template, on which I will pursue this discussion.

Firstly, following Gellner, I argue, that nations are entirely modern constructions borne of nationalism which is "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" (Gellner, 1983: 1). In order to achieve such congruence, invention and social engineering, as Hobsbawm asserts (1990), as well as imagination are necessary strategies, even more so if the political unit is to be carved out of the remains of a multi-cultural Empire, such as the Ottoman or the Austro-Hungarian Empires. Anderson, in placing great emphasis on the constructed nature of culture, proposes the following definition of the nation: "it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 1991: 5). The nation is limited, because even the largest has finite boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. It is imagined as sovereign, because the concept was born in an age, in which Enlightenment was destroying the legitimacy of the divine, hierarchical dynastic realm. Imagination and invention therefore produce boundaries, which include the 'self' as sovereign, and exclude the 'other', within and outside the territory of a certain political entity. In this project of imagination and its material practice, history plays an adamant role, as source of legitimacy, as well as a strategy of mobilization. Anthony D. Smith states:

> Perhaps the central question in our understanding of nationalism is the role of the past in the creation of the present. ... For nationalists themselves, the role of the past is clear and unproblematic. The nation was always there, indeed it is part of the natural order, even when it was submerged in the hearts of its members" (Smith, 1994: 18)

The modernist critique of Nationalism therefore perceives nationalism as a modern political movement, which seeks to establish an imagined national community within a territory through invention, imagination and social engineering, and therefore produces internal and external others. The process of nationalist imagination mystifies the "glorious past" of the compatriots (Smith, 1994:18), while it devalues and submerges the history of the other. Historiography and discourse therefore play an important role in this political project. Yet concepts, as Gellner (1990) asserts, are not free-floating, but socially, historically and locally rooted, and must be explained in terms of these realities. The "view from below", Hobsbawm sees as necessary to understand the workings of nationalism, might unveil rather unpleasant strategies of dispossession, deportation and massacres.

Secondly, I adhere to Smith's thesis that geography and space are not (at least not pre-dominantly) divine and unchangeable absolute phenomena, unalterable by man, but rather processes, which are historically contingent and socially mediated through the shaping forces of capitalist accumulation (Smith, 1990). In extending this argument and including Gruffudds (1995) quest for a "geographical understanding of nationalism", I hope to show that under certain conditions, the strategies of

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[1]   The case study is based in the city of Urfa, located app. 50 km from the Syrian border. Urfa has been renamed in 1984, and is now called Sanliurfa (Urfa the glorious), with reference to the national war of independence.

nationalist invention and engineering might become the determinative forces in the shaping of the material geography and (urban) space.

I contend that in the Turkish case throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries, the processes of nationalism and the process of reproduction of geography have worked hand in hand to the effect of creating a new homeland, on whose soil the Turks were to be the only rightful dwellers. The republican state, established after the war of independence in 1923, was to exclude non-Turks, or at least Non-Muslims from both the material reality and the collective memory and imagination. As I will discuss in chapter 3, the processes of Nationalism and Space/Geography have successfully re-produced this material reality -geography, quarters, buildings, squares- as well as the histories of these places as Turkish or at least Muslim. The Armenian, Syriac and Jewish heritage in both the material world and the discourse has been carved off the book.

While I claim that the Turkish experience is unique in that it is one of the most comprehensive and long-lasting examples of nationalist social engineering, I also believe that variations of nationalist reproduction of histories, architectures and geographies have been experienced in Southeastern Europe since the 19th century. Therefore, I intend to describe the interrelated process of nationalism and geography first as an ideal-typical model in order to supply a framework for comparative analysis and debate, and then, as a concrete case from a city at Turkey's southeastern border with Syria, Urfa.

As for the sources, this paper is based on primary data on nationalist culture policies from state archives, the National Library and local archives. For the local level, I have relied on testimonies and memoirs of foreign missionaries and foreign and Turkish soldiers and their accounts of the city of Urfa.[2] Furthermore, I have tried to work back from still existing artifacts such as houses and churches and inscriptions to reach hints on their history and their original owners. I have conducted interviews with people living or working in former Armenian houses.

However, as I will clarify in chapter 3, Turkish nationalism at work succeeded in rendering the history of the 'other', the Armenians, the Syriac Christians[3] and the Jews in Urfa more or less invisible. The reconstruction of their heritage therefore resembles Don Quixote's impossinle fight with the monstrous windmills. As an example, I had to work myself through a couple of dozen local publications on the history and architecture of Urfa, in order to encounter the name of one of the most important Christian communities of the city, the Syriacs.

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[2] Due to the limited access to bibliographic sources in Urfa, I have not yet seen the original publications of foreign missionaries. I also had to rely on the Turkish translations of a couple of crucial publications, which I hope to read in their original languages, once the fieldwork is completed.

[3] The Syriac Christians (*Süryani*), also referred to as Assyrians (though this term is derived from the Assyrian nationalist project) are one of the oldest people of Mesopotamia, and one of the first Christian communities, whose language goes back to ancient Aramaic. Syriac Christians belong to a number of denominations. Yonan names four Syriac Churches, the Nestorians, the Jacobites, the Chaldeans and the Syriac Catholic (Yonan, 1999: 9). The large majority of the Syriac Christians of Urfa were adherents to the Jacobite (*Yakubi*) rite (Kieser, 2000: 261)

1. DEFINING THE TURKISH NATION IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

Turkey's last century has been shaped by the ideology and the social, cultural and economic policies of an aggressive and at times racist/ ethnicist nationalism. Giving an account of the history of nationalism in Turkey would certainly break the confines of this paper. Yet, before focussing on the geographical strategies of Turkish nationalism in chapter 2, I suggest a concise framework, through which to understand its basic tenets and development lines. I elaborate this framework based on the recent paradigm shift in the understanding of Turkish nationalism and modernization.

Up to the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the late 1980s, Turkish historiography and studies on Turkey had been largely in conformity with what we might call the "founding myths" of the Turkish Republic. Not only Turkish authors, but most 'authoritative' voices on Turkey such as Lewis (2001; original publication 1968) or Shaw (1976) and Mango (1998) have been analyzing the recent history of Turkey through the ideological framework of the Turkish Republic. According to this official paradigm, the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 under the leadership of the victorious Officer Mustafa Kemal, meant a complete break with Turkish/Islamic history and opened a blank page for a new nation, aspiring to reach the "level of contemporary civilization". Modernizing reforms such as the introduction of a secular and republican form of government, European legal codes, the emancipation of women, the abolition of the fez and of the Arabic script, were looked upon favorably. In the case of the rigorous language reform and the activities of the History Foundation (*Türk Tarih Kurumu)*, famous for its Turkish history thesis, according to which all civilizations emanated from central Asia (Özdogan, 2001), criticism was sympathetic and apologized for by the revolutionary fervor in their implementation (Lewis, 1999).

The formative power of the official historical discourse remained largely uncontested until the end of the cold war era, when internal and external changes opened the way for a re-consideration of the frozen official historiography of contemporary Turkey. After the nationalist reassertion of the 1980 coup d'état, the 1990's were characterized by the emergence of a plethora of writers and researchers questioning nationalist interpretations of history. Zürcher's "Turkey: A modern history" (1993), was the most influential among a number of books, which opened Pandora's Box in re-placing the Turkish national project as re-presented by its iconized leader Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) into the history of Turkish Modernization and Nationalism since the mid-19th century.[4] Zürcher argues that the central rupture in Turkish history was not the foundation of the Republic, as it took over the officials as well as the mindset of the Ottoman State, but if at all, the turn to multi-party politics in 1947.[5] Since the mid-1990s, identities, which the ideologues and practitioners of the Turkish national

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[4]   Naturally, the political and academic establishment in Turkey continues to adhere strongly to the core argument of nationalism, e.g. that nations –in this case, the Turkish nation- is a timeless and organic phenomenon. Any revision in the historiography of the Armenian question and the genesis of the Turkish Republic is regarded with deep suspicion.

[5]   At the end of WW II, which Turkey joined in the last possible moment, in order to be among the victorious nations, Ismet Inönü, then President gave in to internal and external calls for an end of the one-party rule. He opened the way for multi-party politics, and therefore for the strategic partnership with the United States of America and NATO. The

project had been industrious to submerge, have re-appeared in the writing of Turkish history, both in translated work and Turkish publications: Kurds, Armenians, Syriac Christians, Greeks, Women.[6] Despite the heterogeneity in their theoretical approaches and the variety of their subjects, in most of these critical works, the history of Turkish nationalism is seen as a project of modernization. It is understood as a process of gradual transformation of the attempt to save the remaining parts of the Ottoman Empire under the flag of a liberal, multi-religious state to an exclusionist and ethno-secular nationalism (Dündar, 2001; Özdogan, 2001; Yildiz, 2001).

Dündar and Yildiz agree that this transformation took place in three stages, which were heavily influenced by external developments. Firstly, the modernizing edict of 1839, the *Tanzimat*, sought to re-unite the people of the Empire through a universal citizenship of a modernizing state. Secondly, the restorative reign of Abdülhamid II turned towards a Pan-Islamist stance, as the secession of Bulgaria and Greece left the country with a Muslim majority. Finally, after the Balkan Wars in 1912/1913, which resulted in a next to complete loss of the Empire's European possessions, and therefore the loss of birthplaces[7] of its leading elite, the Committee of Union and Progress, the leaders of the Modernist paradigm turned towards an ethnically based Turkish nationalism. Retoulas (2003, forthcoming) asserts that the rupture in what he calls the "Byzantine Ottoman concept of neighborhood", which had facilitated a more or less peaceful co-existence of different communities, is rooted in the transition from an Orthodox-Islamic to a European-based modern worldview. Turkish nationalism developed along the lines of Herder's concept of organic nationalism, which formed the intellectual basis of aggressive German nationalism (Kedourie, 1993), as opposed to the more inclusive territorial nationalism of French or British origin.[8] Turkish identity, the normative reference of Islam and the multi-religious reality of the Ottoman Empire were regarded as the constituents of this modernist movement (Turkishness, Islamism and Ottomanism). Before the Balkan wars, there was still some space for the 'other' in the nationalist imagination: "Turkishness was in the center, Islamism right next to it, while the non-Muslim elements were close to the fringe".[9] Yet, in an essay published after the Balkan wars, Ziya Gökalp, arguably the most influential ideologue of the later

first free elections led to an almost complete loss of power for the Republican political elites, and made possible the accession of hitherto excluded social classes.

[6]   Compare Bozdogan and Kasaba (1997), Özdalga (1998), Göle (1996)

[7]   Almost the entire state elite of the Ottoman Empire and the modernizing revolutionaries of the early 20th century were of Balkan, most of them of Macedonian origin (being born or educated in Macedonia) (Ahmad, 1969)

[8]   Herder's concept of organic nationalism is based on the nation as a natural community with a common past and a common cultural heritage, as well as strong ties to the cultural landscape (compare also the relation with German Romanticism). In the final analysis, it is an ethnicist and exclusionist nationalism. Territorial nationalism, esp. in France and the United Kingdom, understands the nation as a political, not an ethnic community. Membership in this political entity is gained through birth on the territory ("Ius Solis") (compare Birnbaum, 1992). Yet, Nikolas (1999) rejects this duality and claims that ethnic (organic) and civic (territorial) nationalism are not mutually exclusive concepts, but have to collaborate in order to render nationalism successful.

[9]   Köprülüzade Mehmet Fuat, "Türkcülük, Islamcilik ve Osmanlilik", Türk Yurdu, IV/9: 647; in Dündar, 2000:32-33

Turkish Republic, made clear that the nation of the future would not be Ottoman anymore, but Turkish (Gökalp, 1968; compare also ibid. 1992).[10]

It was in this intellectual climate and the political constellations of World War I that the Committee of Union and Progress issued, in 1915, the Deportation Law with the aim to expel 'unreliable' Christian communities from endangered border regions. While the following Armenian massacres certainly meant a serious rupture in the history of contemporary Turkey, the ideology and practice of Turkish nationalism was not deeply affected. The foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the canonization of Turkish Nationalism as Kemalism (after the founder of the Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) continued along these lines and declared conservatively religious Turks, non-Turkish speaking Muslims and Non-Muslim as its internal 'other' (compare Aktar 2002, Demir and Akar, 1994).

As Dündar asserts, Kemalist Nationalism defined the nation as an ethnic group (Turks), denying the existence of ethnic differences within the newly established Turkish Republic.

> The driving forces of the Kemalist national integration process were ethnically based policies such as assimilation and deportation. The practice of Kemalist nation building is the expression of an impressive project of political engineering aimed at the creation of national homogeneity as the basis of Turkishness (Dündar, 2000: 18; translated from the Turkish original).

It is precisely this practice Dündar mentions, which I will discuss in the next chapters, when I analyze the policies, which have shaped the material and discursive geography and history of contemporary Turkey and its southeastern provinces.

2. THE GEOGRAPHICAL STRATEGIES OF NATIONALISM: REPRODUCTION OF SPACE AND TIME

Cultural and social state policies, built upon the ideology and practice of an exclusive ethnic nationalism have been shaping Turkey's geography and history for at least a century. In this chapter, I intend to single out the core body of strategies, which have all contributed to the political engineering project of the creation of an ethnically homogenous Turkish homeland.

2.1 REMAKING THE MATERIAL REALITY: THE REPRODUCTION OF SPACE

The remaking of material reality according to the nationalist project might be divided into three clusters of interrelated state policies, which are either rooted in official nationalist development programs or are clandestine, due to their ethical ambiguity. The latter can therefore only be re-constructed on the basis of the traces, they have left in space. These policy clusters are the strategies

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[10] There remains a certain tension as to what extent Turkish nationalism has been genuinely Turkish, since e.g. in the case of the population exchange of the Lausanne Treaty, religion, not language was the decisive factor (Hirschon, 1998). It seems that there has been a tendency towards a secular and ethnic definition until the late 1940s, though the factor of religion appears to have remained decisive in the final analysis.

of destruction and neglect; the strategies of capital transfer to indigenous/local elites; and the strategies of reconstruction. While I do not cla im that these strategies are part of a coordinated program, I am certain that they are held together by the basic tenets of Turkish nationalism.

Strategies of destruction and neglect are directed at exterminating the 'other' as a material and historical entity and to render its traces in space and time invisible. Above all, the strategy of brutal destruction is employed during times of war, when the apparent barbarism of warfare tends to provide an apology for genocidal policies. The Armenian massacres of 1895/96 and the large-scale deportations and massacres of Armenian deportees by Turkish forces and Kurdish irregulars, as well as the destruction of the gardens, houses, churches, schools and cemeteries of Armenians and Syriacs are examples for such a strategy (Dündar, 2001; Yonan 1999).[11] Similar experiences were repeated during the Kurdish uprising in Southeast Turkey in the 1980s and early 1990s, when the government allegedly evacuated up to 3.000 villages (Union of Turkish Engineers and Architects, 1996).

The strategy of neglect of the cultural heritage of the excluded 'other' is a long-term policy linked to the cultural priorities of local and central governments, and might probably be seen as the continuation of the strategy of destruction in times of pe ace. While, at least some mosques and examples of Turkish/Islamic (indigenous) architecture are reconstructed with public funds, Christian churches or Synagogues are largely ignored by state agencies. As long as Christian or Jewish communities are present, these churches can be kept through communal efforts and even with the involvement of local municipalities. Yet, once the community is no more, as is the case in most of the Southeast of the country, the places of worship of the other are either used as stables or manufactories, are left in disrepair or converted to mosques. The few examples of conversion of churches to cultural centers and museums are mostly located in the western parts of the country, where some municipalities implement more humanistic cultural policies.[12]

Finally, the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects, as is the case in Southeast Anatolia since the early 1970s -construction of large dams and irrigation schemes, motorways, and the Southeast Anatolia Project[13]-, is another destructive strategy, which serves the aims of the appropriation of space. Through the inundation of villages, mosques, cemeteries, gardens, churches, the history of the other is literally submerged. Through the building of tunnels and irrigation systems, the topography is re-arranged. Once this process is completed, the geography has gained a new

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[11] Certainly, one of the most insightful, as well as cy nical, cases in the extermination and utilization of the 'other' is the example of German Fascism before and during World War II.

[12] Compare, for instance, the Web-site of the municipality of Izmir, and its recent project of the restoration of the Greek Orthodox Church of Aya Vukla (Izmir Büyüksehir Belediyesi, 2002).

[13] The Southeast Anatolia Project (the Turkish acronym being GAP) is a monumental project of 22 dams, 12 Hydro-electric power plants and vast irrigation schemes, which will –if ever completed- fundamentally change the economic and landowner-ship structure of the predominantly Kurdish populated region. The building of the dams requires the flooding of vast river basin areas and hence, large-scale eviction and re -location. Indirect estimates of the numbers of people already displaced by the GAP project vary, according to source and methodology, between 197.732 (Morvaridi, 2000) and 181.2000 (Sociology Association, 1994: 2).

appearance, as well as a new history. The words of then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, which have been inscribed in large letters into some of the mountains in he southeast were "We have drilled through the mountains, we have drilled through the epochs" (Turgut, 2000: 19).[14]

Another strategy, which has been a guiding theme in Turkish state policies the first nationalist government of the Committee of Union and Progress in the early 20th century, is the creation of an 'indigenous' bourgeoisie through the capital transfer from non-Muslim minorities (Aktar, 2002; Dündar 2000; Keyder, 1987; Thornburg, 1949). Capital accumulation through dispossession is not alien to the logic of capitalist development, yet a closer look on how this has been done in Turkey might reveal how easily the market may be hijacked by nationalist forces. While the transfer of capital through dispossession took place at several occasions, even after the foundation of the Republic,[15] 1915, the year of the infamous law of deportation and the Armenian massacres, was probably the most important turning point in this respect (Akcam, 1995). Basically all the immobile and most of the mobile possessions of the Armenians and Syriac Christians of East and Southeast Turkey were expropriated by the state, virtually the moment they left their villages and towns (Dündar, 2001: 65). These properties were re-distributed by special state agencies to Muslim refugees from the Balkans, who were resettled in the East, or, to local leading families or the *aghas* (hereditary leaders) of Kurdish tribes, which the state hoped to urge to sedentariness (Dündar, 2001). In many cases, the houses of leading Armenian families or clergymen were given to the leaders of such tribes, who had been at the forefront in the realization of the deportations and massacres of Armenians and Syriac Christians. As local Kurdish/ Muslim families benefited from this transfer of capital, they gained the political and intellectual power to defend their newly acquired status of wealth.

The last strategy aimed at the material re-production of geography and the re-construction of urban space is a more recent and probably the most final stage in the process of nationalist appropriation. On the one hand, the dynamic of capitalist accumulation and profit maximization together with a process of rapid migration leads to a creeping destruction of the civil architecture of old cities in Turkey, as the former residential areas are transformed into Central Business Districts. On the other hand, recent efforts of municipalities or state agencies to conserve the historical heritage of multi-cultural city centers opens, at least in the still troubled Southeast, the way to a complete renewal of this heritage. As vernacular architecture is renewed, references to the non-Muslim or non-Turkish past of the building, such as crosses or inscriptions are exterminated.

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[14] The strategy of inscribing nationalist slogans such as "Happy, who calls himself a Turk" (*Ne mutlu Türküm Diyene)*, or "The Homeland First" (Önce Vatan) on hills and mountains, is another example of both discursive and material appropriation of the landscape. During the 1980s, many hundred of such inscriptions and signs were installed all over the Southeast (one of the biggest is on the hill between the city of Mardin and the Syriac Monastery Deyr-ul Zaferan).

[15] Compare Aktar (2002) for the expulsion of the Jewish community from Thrace in 1934, the Wealth Tax in 1944, mainly imposed on Christians, Jews and Dönme (a break-away sect of Jewish origin) and the deportation of 40.000 Istanbul Greeks from Turkey, in relation to the Cyprus conflict (Demir and Akar, 1994). The cited authors agree in that the driving force of these incid ents was the state's insistence on creating a national bourgeoisie and on devaluing the cultural and political status of non-Muslim minorities.

2.2 REMAKING THE DISCURSIVE FRAME: THE PRODUCTION OF TIME AND HISTORY

Most influential and effective for the creation of an ethnically homogenous geography are the discursive strategies developed in central state agencies and carried out and implemented by the local state to win people's consent to nationalist domination through cultural institutions. With reference to Gramsci, we might call them hegemonic strategies for legitimating the injustice of policies of nationalist appropriation by depicting their outcomes as normal, natural and inevitable (compare Gramsci, 1994; for an overview of his thought: Kinchloe and McLaren, 2002; Pozzolini, 1970). I will only refer to two examples with relevance for the spatial/geographical aspects, the strategies of linguistic hegemony and the production of the past, and of myths on national and local levels.

To determine the name of a place means to exert power on this place. When the government of the Committee of Union and Progress declared the deportation law for "the ones opposing the government in times of war" on May 27, 1915, many hundreds of thousands of Armenians, Syriac Christians, Greeks and even some Muslim (Kurdish) communities were forced into exile, destruction and extermination. Only a few weeks later, the government initiated the name change of evacuated villages (Dündar, 2001: 65). In a directive, the chief of the General staff and one of the three leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, Enver Pasha declared:

> It has been decided that provinces, districts, towns, villages, mountains and rivers, which are named in languages belonging to Non-Muslim nations such as Armenian, Greek or Bulgarian, will be translated into Turkish. ... In order to benefit from this suitable moment, this aim should be achieved in due course (Translated from the citation in Dündar, 2001: 82).

The campaign, however, was not very successful, as the CUP government collapsed and its leaders were tried before Turkish and European courts for the atrocities, they had committed in 1915. Yet, this first example of the material *and* discursive appropriation of a multi-cultural geography might also be understood as the initial trial for more effective policies to come. Attempts of changing geographical names were repeated throughout the first three decades of the Republic, yet it was not before 1956 that "The Special Commission for Name Change" (*Ad Degistirme Ihtisas Komisyonu*) was established under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior (T.C. Icisleri Bakanligi, 1977, 1968). The commission brought together representatives of the general Command of the Armed Forces, the Defense Ministry, the Education Ministry, the Faculty of Letters, History and Geography of the University of Ankara and the Turkish Language Foundation. It embarked on the task of the "Turkification of place names, which are of non-Turkish origin and might therefore lead to misunderstandings" on the basis of maps with a scale of 1:25.000. While in 1968, already 12.000 out of a total of approximately 40.000 village names had been changed to Turkish, the Ministry of the Interior in 1977 published a guide with 1.819 new topographic names, which had been turkified between 1965 and 1975. In the publications of the Ministry of the Interior and related works such as the Provincial Law of 1948 (Olgun and Argun 1949; Pamuk, 1956), the language used, is more revealing than the content. Instead of a discussion of the necessity of name change, one finds the consensus that 'foreign' place names have to be changed, as it is an abnormality to have foreign

village names in Turkey. The policy of name change is regarded as a mere technicality.[16] This policy has been implemented on the urban level as well –especially on the level of quarter names-, yet as the implementing agencies were municipal bodies, this process is less well documented.

While the name change commission was concerned with the present, the Turkish history foundation (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*) has been the central institution in canonizing the official historical discourse of Turkey. In the foundation's publications, Armenians and Greeks appear, if at all, as traitors during the war of independence, Kurds are euphemistically referred to as mountain Turks, while Syriac Christians are ignored completely (compare, Özdogan, 2001; Yildiz, 2001). The sort of historiography, which has emanated from the foundation to schools, universities and state agencies, determines the nationonal war of independence as the genesis of the Turkish nation. Together with a cult based on the personality of Mustafa Kemal, it accepts only a Turkish/ Muslim perspective of he events of that time. Moreover, the adamant contributions of members of non-Muslim communities to Ottoman civilization and culture, above all of Armenian architects or Syriac artisans are concealed. It might be useful to note that the re-production of the official historical discourse and its emanation is a process, which has continued throughout the history of the Turkish Republic up to our days, and which is used as the historical template of official publications and speeches. As I hope to show in the next chapter, the analysis of the re-production of this official history on the local level unveils the relationship between local elites and their involvement in the expropriation of non-Muslim minorities.

To sum up briefly, we might state that the reproduction of space and time in order to create a Turkish, ethnically and religiously homogenous homeland, worked through a number of interrelated strategies on the material as well as the discursive level. The final outcome of this century of nationalist appropriation is a material geography and a collective memory, which is distinctly different from the multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic geography of the late 19th century.

3. TURKIFYING THE LOCAL: THE CASE OF URFA

Urfa, up to the 1920s, was a polyglot town with thriving Muslim, Armenian, Syriac and Jewish communities, today is a Muslim and Turkish/Kurdish city. The nationalist appropriation of the history and the material reality of Urfa appear to be largely completed. In this chapter, I will extend the analysis to the late 19th century, in order to demonstrate the gravity of the transformation, nationalist policies of appropriation have caused.

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[16] I have found no source, in which the rules and principles of name change are discussed. Yet, official directories, in which both old and new village names are listed (T.C. Icisleri Bakanligi, 1946, 1968, 1977; T.C. Harita Genel Müdürlügü, 1948), indicate that almost all village and topography names, which were etymologically non-Turkish, or non Turkish-sounding, as well as names with religious reference were replaced. The names were not translated, as the committee members had no knowledge of the relevant languages. Nor had they knowledge of the geographical location of the village, as they worked on maps with a very big scale. It seems that the commission in its fervor and excitement even changed names of Turkish origin, for which it was criticized in a decidedly right-wing journal (Mollaahmetoglu, 1998: 17).

3.1 URFA AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH CENTURY: A MULTI-CULTURAL OTTOMAN CITY OF THE ORIENT

Urfa, the Roman Edessa, is one of the oldest cities of the upper Mesopotamia region. Edessa was the settlement of one of the first Christian communities and has been a very important cultural and religious centre of early Christianity up to the Arab conquest in the 12th century (Segal, 2002: 101, 102). For Armenians, the city has a great symbolic value, as the Armenian alphabet was invented there, thanks to a group of scholars and clergy headed by Mesrop Mashtots in the 5th century.[17] Yet, the history, which is of relevance to the focus of analysis of this paper is much more recent and goes back to the late 19th century.

In the late 19th century, Urfa was a multi-cultural, wealthy Ottoman market and agricultural city on the road between the two major commercial centers of the region, Aleppo to the south and Diyarbakir to the northeast (Urfa Vilayeti, 1928: 21). The city in the 1890s had approximately 50.000 inhabitants with a slight majority of Muslim residents (Turkish officials, Arab merchants and few Kurdish families) and about 20.000 Christian residents of different denominations (Kieser, 2000: 261; Karlikli, 1998: 86).[18] The Jewish community seems to have been small, yet influential, as many of its members were leading merchants in the bazaar.[19] Many Armenian and Syriac families owned the gardens and vineyards, the surroundings of Urfa have been famous for until recently, as well as land in the fertile Harran plain (Doganay, 1997: 19). The artisan sector seems to have been dominated by Armenian and Syriac craftsmen. Probably even more consequential was the fact that almost the entire architectural production was in the hands of Syriac architects. As an elderly local of Urfa readily explained "everything which has been built in this city up to the 1920s is the work of Syriac craftsmen, be it houses for Muslims, Armenians or Syriac Christians, be it churches or mosques".[20]

After the massacres of 1895/1896, during which several hundred thousand deportees were killed,[21] the city witnessed material destruction and a serious economic and demographic decline. Yet, the dramatic turning point came in 1915 with the "Deportation Law", which was declared by the nationalist government of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). The law was not

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[17] Interview with the Chairman of the Parish of the Armenian Orthodox Church Surp Takavor in Istanbul, Kadiköy

[18] Karlikli refers to an estimate by Cuinet (La Turquie d'Asie, Paris 1892), according to which the Christian community numbered at least 12.000 members. Kieser estimates on the bases of missionary reports about 30.000 Muslims and 20.000 Christians, most of which (12.000) were of Armenian-Gregorian faith, 5.000 of Syriac – Jacobite rite, 1.000 – 1.200 Armenian Catholic and app. 2.000 Armenian Protestants (2000: 261).

[19] So far, I found only very few sources on the Jews of Urfa. A virulently anti-Semitic publication on the expulsion of the Urfa Jews was written by the son of the former mayor of Urfa (Hacikamiloglu, n.y.) Yet, from interviews with older people in Urfa and members of the Jewish community in Istanbul, I have learned that the community was indeed well known, and, once in Israel, must have developed quite a strong identity as "Urfali" Jews (Jews from Urfa).

[20] Interview with Naci Ipek, former proprietor of a number of local newspapers and owner of a bookstore and publishing house.

[21] Kieser discusses different sources and some testimonies of American missionaries, which estimate the death toll as between 2.700 – 10.000. According to the same sources, up to 3.000 Christians were killed in the Armenian Church on February 28, 1895 by fire or suffocation (Kieser, 2000: 261).

implemented in Urfa before August 10, when the CUP sent two representatives to the city to supervise the deportations and killings (Kieser, 2000: 275). Yet even before the expulsion of great parts of the Christian community of Urfa started, the city witnessed one of its most traumatic moments; moments, which seem to have been wiped out of the collective memory entirely. The law prescribed the deportation of all Armenians and some other unpopular communities to the Syrian dessert, and to cities such as Aleppo and Damascus. As the main road between the northern provinces of Van, Erzurum and Bitlis, which had large Armenian populations, led through Urfa, in the year 1915, several hundred thousands of deportees were pushed through the streets of Urfa on their way to Aleppo (Kieser, 2000: 278; Holmes, 1923: 31).[22]

Although the surviving Armenians and Syriacs of Urfa were allowed to return after the collapse of the CUP government –and many thousands did- (inferred from Dündar, 2000; Shaw, 1998), the city's ethnic and religious composition had changed irretrievably to the favor of the Muslim and Turkish/Kurdish populations. Most of the immobile possessions -houses, gardens and fields- of Christians had been transferred to local Muslim merchants or leaders of Kurdish tribes by local war and expropriation commissions.[23] It might be noteworthy that in many cases, the *aghas* or leaders of Kurdish cavalry groups, who had actively participated in the massacres, were appointed the houses of the clergymen, teachers or bourgeois of the local Armenian or Syriac communities.

The same policies were repeated during and after the war of independence in Urfa in 1920, when Kurdish irregular cavalry took over most of the military action against the French occupation forces. When the Republic was declared in Ankara in 1923, Urfa had become a largely Muslim city, with the remnants of its Armenian and Syriac community, devastated and broken both materially and psychologically. Members of the Armenian and Syriac communities lived in the city until the 1970s, when, according to locals, the last Armenian of the city, the medical Doctor Vanes, is believed to have died.[24] The entire Jewish community was evacuated to the newly established State of Israel in 1948.

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[22] The principal of the American orphanage for Armenian children in Urfa –a member of the American Near East Relief Mission- Mary Caroline Holmes refers to a remarkable incident in the city in these days. "It would have been a town devoid of every human instinct which would not have been moved with pity for the three hundred Armenian women refugees who approached Urfa stark naked, having been robbed off their clothing some days before. These were all cared for in the town, and many lived the four years following in Moslem homes. Some of them were legally married to Moslems, others served as domestics in their houses unmolested and unafraid." (Holmes, 1923: 31).

[23] Kieser cites the Swiss missionary and Doctor of the local Swiss Mission Hospital, Jakob Künzler (2000: 279) to this effect.

[24] I have been told the story about the "Last Armenian" independently by three research participants, all of whom declared their gratefulness to his doctoral and human qualities. However, according to many Research Participants and some documents, at least 200 families of Armenian origin, probably more, live in Urfa. They have converted to Islam, have Turkish names, and would feel offended if called Armenian in the public. Yet, locals of Urfa and merchants working in the bazaar know the background of the person, whom they are talking about perfectly well (As another Research Participant told me: "This is the shop of Mustafa. He is Armenian. (*O Ermenidir.*) He belongs to one of the old families of Urfa.") When the Armenian Church was turned into a mosque in the early 1990s, the governor of Urfa allegedly received 200 petitions to stop the conversion, yet could not react, because the petitioners did not identify themselves.

3.2 TELFUTUR, THE CHURCH OF ST JOHN AND AFADIYAN'S HOUSE: RE-PRODUCTION AND LOCAL DISCOURSE

In 1984, four years after the military coup, a Parliamentarian from Urfa, Osman Dogan, son of a leading local family, initiated a law to change the city's name into *Sanliurfa* (Urfa the Glorious), with reference to the city's role in the national war of independence (Karlikli, 1998: 36). By this time, almost all village and topographic names in the province of Urfa had been replaced by Turkish names (Sanliurfa Valiligi, 1985). The municipality had renamed the Arabic/ Syriac name of the Armenian quarter, Tilfindir (a corruption of Tell Futur) into the Turkish *Kocayol* (Broad Street) in the 1970s. Most Armenian and Syriac churches had been turned into mosques after being used as manufactories, prisons or electric power stations.[25] The cemetery in front of the Armenian Church of St John, the city's largest building at that time, had been leveled in 1926 by the first governor of the Republican regime, Fuat Pasha, to make space for a new street, circumventing the old town (Kürkcüoglu, 1995:18; Urfa Vilayeti, 1928: 69). A former Syriac school had been turned into a state school and named after the liberation day of Urfa, the 11th of April, when the French occupation forces had left the city and were killed in not so glorious ways.

In 1991, at a time when separatist Kurdish forces were gaining momentum within the Kurdish population of the Southeast, the conservative governor of the province of Urfa, Ziyaeddin Akbulut, initiated the establishment of a "Foundation for Culture and Research in Sanliurfa" (*Sanliurfa Kültür ve Arastirma Vakfi SURKAV*). The aim of the foundation was the conservation of the architectural heritage, which was becoming the victim of an increasingly rapid migration into the old town of Urfa, caused by the displacement of tens of thousands of villagers after the flooding of the Atatürk Dam reservoir. The second aim was the publication of material on the architecture and the history of Urfa.

The first project of the foundation was the restoration of a mansion situated opposite the former Armenian Church of St John, in 1991, next to the broad street, which had been built on the grounds of the Armenian cemetery. After the restoration, it was opened as a guesthouse under the name of one of its former owners, *Kücük Haci Mustafa Kamiloglu*. The hotel leaflet as well as other information material of the governor present the building as the mansion of a rich Muslim merchant, its architecture being shaped by local climate and the rules of Islamic religion.[26] Yet, taking the locally produced official discourse to the side, we might reach a very different reading of the history of this mansion. As the house is located in the former Armenian quarter, right across from the largest

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[25] Kürkcüoglu, a historian of Art, lecturer at the local University and member of one of Urfa's established families (which has had two of its members appointed as mayor in 1930 and 1946), in his book on the mosques of Urfa, names three churches, which have been converted since the 1950s. The Church of the Twelve Apostles (probably Armenian), was used as a prison, before it was turned into the *Firfirli Camii* in 1956. The probably Syriac Church of St Sergius and St Simeon was converted into the Mosque *Circis Peygamber Camii* in 1965, while the Armenian Church of St John the Baptist, at the time of writing, was considered for conversion (Kürkcüoglu, 1993: 75-83).

[26] A guidebook published by the governor on 1998 describes the traditional Urfa house as follows: "Those houses are palatial, and in their design reflect many influences and considerations. These are the climate, the use of calcareous stone, Islamic beliefs, traditional life style of the family..." (Governorship of Urfa, 1998: 11)

Armenian Church in town, and as its architecture does not at all correspond to the architectural conventions of traditional Islamic houses,[27] it is not very likely to have belonged to a Muslim originally. In one of the rooms, I found an inscription in Armenian dating from 1922, which identifies the house as the mansion of a certain Afadiyan.[28] Kucuk Haci Mustafa, the later owner, was a tribal leader of Kurdish origin, who, as his son, the later mayor of Urfa, Cemil Hacikamiloglu, acknowledges unintentionally in a written defense of his father, forced the Armenians out of town in 1915 (Hacikamiloglu, n.y: 115).[29] The bride of the grandson of Kucuk Haci Mustafa claimed in an interview that they were given the house by the state during the years of World War II, after being evacuated from an even larger house, allegedly also of former Armenia n property. [30]

The large building opposite the House of Afadiyan/ Kücük Haci Mustafa was the Armenian Church of St John the Baptist, built on the foundations of the Roman Courts (Kürkcüoglu, 1995: 18; Segal, 2002: 328, 329). After years of neglect and usage as a power station, the building was restored and re-opened as the mosque of *Selahaddin Eyyubi* in 1994.[31]

The SURKAV Foundation continues to restore old mansions and to publish books on the architecture, culture and the history of the national war of independence of Urfa, most of them written by a very small number of local Academics. The local version of the official discourse, which classifies Armenians as traitors, while it completely ignores the Syriacs, is re-produced in all of these publications, which simply submerge the real history of the craftsmen, who have built the houses, and of the Armenian and Syriac families, who lived in them.[32] The SURKAV Foundation therefore

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[27] There is no spatial gender-separation into *Harem* (the women's rooms) and *Selamlik* (the representational rooms open to foreigners), which would be appropriate for a Muslim house of the late 19th century.

[28] "Bedros Ermesyan has written this inscription: I have stayed in Afadiyan's house for 25 days in 1922. Now, I am leaving for Aleppo. Farewell Friends! Whoever reads these lines shall remember me." Translated from a photograph of the inscription by the Chairman of the Parish of the Armenian Orthodox Church, Surp Takavor, in Istanbul.

[29] In an aggressive attack on the Armenians, whom Hacikamiloglu holds responsible for the backwardness of the Muslims of Urfa, he notes triumphantly that thanks to his father, mayor of Urfa between 1917-1923, not a single Armenian is left in town. "They all migrated to Aleppo. The Muslim Turks have benefited from the departure of the Armenians, as the Turks learned many different arts, which had been the domain of Armenians earlier." (Hacikamiloglu, n.y.: 115)

[30] When I told the lady that I had the impression that the house must have belonged to an Armenian, she responded sharply and somewhat worried: "We did not buy it from the Armenians directly. It was much later, during the Second World War, when we had to leave our house in *Halepli Bahce*. We bought the house from the *Emval-i metruke* (the agency responsible for left property). The house was in a very bad state then, and my father had to invest a great sum in order to make the place a house, where the family could live. There were beautiful wood carvings in the ceiling, yet we had to build a concrete roof, because everything was in such a state of decay."

[31] During the conversion and restoration of the Church, all references to Christianity such as crosses or inscriptions were removed. The two plates at the entrance of the building use quite euphemistic wordings, when they mention the "Date of Repair" (*Onarim Tarihi*) and the "Date of Opening for Religious Service" (*Ibadete Acilis Tarihi*) as 1993/1994. Apart from these two plates, there is no information about the history of the building.

[32] E.g. Riza (1995) and Akalin (1997) discuss the role of Urfa in the war of independence, based largely on the overtly racist accounts of nationalist historians published during the one-party rule of the Republican People's Party in the 1940s (Firat 1940, 1944). Firat's descriptons of the "Heroes of Urfa" in turn is based on the book of Ali Saip Ursavas, the commander of the nationlist forces in Urfa (Ursavas, 2000). Kürkcüoglu (1993, 1995, 2002) bases his architectural history of Urfa on these sources.

appears as an institution with Orwellian powers. It produces an officially acknowledgeable history of the architectural heritage, while it renews these buildings according to this newly constructed history as Muslim houses. In its efforts, it can fully rely on the leading families of Urfa, who own local newspapers, TV stations, who send the Members of Parliament to Ankara, and whose members are regularly re-elected as mayors in municipal elections. They owe their wealth to the Armenians, Christians and Jews, their forefathers have dispossessed, expelled or killed.

The strategies of a nationalist reproduction and appropriation of space and time, I discussed as abstract state policies in chapter one and two have all been implemented in Urfa. The interest networks, which have emerged between state agencies and the beneficiaries of the dispossession of Armenians and Syriac Christians, seem to have resulted in a continuous reproduction of official, nationalist and exclusionist discourses. The reason for this constant re-production of history appears to stem from the fear of being questioned for the sins, their forefathers have committed.[33] While the process of nationalist appropriation and Turkification might be judged as largely successful, it is worth mentioning that despite all concerted efforts, many hints and indicators such as the inscription in Afadiyan's house remain in place, and therefore may prevent a complete and ultimate destruction of the collective memory.[34]

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[33] This might well be the case on the national level as well. I have yet no sufficient evidence, but I suspect that one of the reasons, why the Armenian issue continues to remain a taboo, and still incites extremely strong emotions, must be a very deep feeling of guilt of the political and economic elite of Turkey.

[34] I believe it to be central to discuss the reasons of this contradiction. Were the inscriptions left with the same feeling of arrogance and security, Adolf Hitler was planing to establish a Museum of Jewry, once the Jews would be extinguished as a race? Or, is this behaviour an expression of a very basic residue of respect to the dead?

CONCLUSION

The project of nationalism, its discourses, cultural policies and ideology are not the only driving force in the re-production of urban space and geography, as the forces of capitalist accumulation are more determinative most of the times. Yet, as I have sought to demonstrate in this paper, under the specific historical conditions of creating a nation-state on the ruins of an Empire, nationalism might indeed be a very momentous, if not the decisive driving force in shaping the material reality and the history of a place.

The process of nationalist imagination and appropriation seems to develop a dynamic of its own, once it shows its first success, as it is fuelled by the interest of local beneficiaries and elites, who need to conceal the material basis of their wealth and power. However, in my view, the perpetuation of official discourses and exclusionist ethnic histories is also a perpetuation of the deep trauma and sense of guilt, which is rooted in the fact that the policies of dispossession and capital transfer to create an indigenous bourgeoisie, were ultimately unjust and inhuman. One way of dealing with such a trauma is to repeat the actions, on which it is based, as has been done throughout the early 1990s in the war between Kurdish separatists and the military. The way in which the discourse of nationalist imagination has been literally inscribed into the geography of a place, as we have seen in the example of the Atatürk Dam and the hill opposite the Monastery of Deyr-ul Zaferan, is another example for such a perpetuation of trauma. The other option is to face the trauma and to allow the 'other' back into the frame of reference. This re-humanization and re-valuation of any nationalist project's view of the 'other' is a central pre-condition for a more inclusive and human approach towards the mosques, churches, houses and histories of expelled communities.

While the example of geographical strategies of nationalism in Southeast Turkey might be unique in their scope and tenacity, I am certain that the traumata, which strategies of nationalist appropriation may cause, is present in the societies of most late nation-states, built upon organic theories and practices of nationalism. Therefore, I believe that comparative perspectives on how nationalism worked through the geographies, the landscapes, the urban spaces of the societies of Southeast Europe, which share the Ottoman heritage and the history of late nation-building, might contribute to an understanding of the working of nationalism on the ground.

An important obstacle to such a research, which starts from the surviving material heritage of the 'other', is the object of research itself. A lot, if not most of this heritage has been destroyed completely, as is the case, for instance in Sofia, where all except one mosque were torn down after Bulgarian independence. Yet, as I have seen in Urfa, there remain hints, inscriptions and signs, which survive even the most fervent nationalist zeal or the most biased re-construction. Furthermore, local

collective memory appears to be much more reluctant to adopt official discourses, especially if the source person has no family history of involvement in the practice of appropriation.[35]

Excavating the histories of the excluded, submerged and hated 'other' and acknowledging the contributions, they made to the 'self', might open paths to a richer past and to a less traumatic present. To use the geography of nationalism as an analytical frame can facilitate this attempt to save the submerged 'other' from the final, the discursive extermination[36], and to overcome the deep 'pathologies of nationalism'. I believe that in a time, in which most countries of Southeastern Europe have embarked on the way to a common European future, the need for such a revisionist research agenda is gaining importance.

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[35] Even in the case of such involvement, people might share their historical knowledge frankly. Many of the Kurdish research participants, to whom I spoke to, and who were not established residents of Urfa, but more recent migrants, were unexpectedly clear on their forefathers' involvement in the killing of Armenians.

[36] To end on a cautiously optimistic footnote: Some signs and voices of the other, which appeared to have been muted for ever, may return unexpectedly: A number of music groups based in Istanbul, above all *Kardes Türküler* (Brotherly Songs), have been excavating the musical traditions of the Southeast in the last few years. They perform Armenian and Syriac as well as Turkish and Kurdish songs of the region. These songs are played by two local radio stations, and in some cafes in Urfa. The return of these songs to Urfa, in my view, signalize a change in perspective at least among the younger and more educated people.

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