

BOOK REVIEWS

ULRIKE FLADER
VERA ECCARIUS-KELLY
CLEMENCE SCALBERT-YÜCEL
MICHAEL M. GUNTER
TOZUN BAHCHELI
ETHEM ÇOBAN

Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (eds.), **The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation and Reconciliation**, London: Routledge, 2014, 288 pp., (ISBN: 978-0-415-83015-7).

With its 12 chapters each addressing a specific aspect of the Kurdish question, the edited volume *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation and Reconciliation* reflects the growing output of research in the field of Kurdish studies. This increase has been apparent in the comparably high number of accomplished PhDs located in a whole range of disciplines and applying a variety of methods. This volume, which includes a foreword by Hamit Bozarslan and a comprehensive introduction by the two editors, echoes this multiplicity of approaches and brings together articles engaging with three different areas: the various forms of state violence, discourses and strategies within the Kurdish movement and questions of peace and reconciliation.

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Instead of ordering the chapters according to these three topics, the authors have chosen to distribute the chapters regarding the first two areas evenly throughout the volume and leaving the chapters on reconciliation to the end. Four chapters specifically address forms of state violence, understood in a broad sense, including the judiciary, media and language policies.

The first chapter by Derya Bayır presents an analysis of a range of legal documents and court cases from the past decade, including the current trial against alleged members of the Union of Kurdistan Communities (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan*, KCK). This substantive chapter shows how under the present Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government the judiciary continued, as in the past, to eradicate the Kurdish movement by criminalising their political claims and forms of activism.

Derya Erdem explores how the mainstream media reproduces the militaristic state discourse by refusing to recognise the Kurdish question in itself. Erdem presents a comprehensive examination of mainstream print and visual media outputs from the end of 2008 to the end of 2009, a period which witnessed local elections, the beginning of the AKP's democratic initiative and the closure of the Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, DTP), and illustrates the way in which the DTP

was represented as a promoter of terrorism and separatism in order to delegitimise their claims for recognition.

The chapter authored by Ramazan Aras gives an overdue in-depth analysis of the narratives of people's experience of violence. Although arguing that the state used terror and surveillance as a mechanism of control will not seem unfamiliar to anyone in the field, this form of analysis of interview material is still novel in academic research on the issue. However, unfortunately his chapter leaves the difference between the experience of violence and the use of fear as a political strategy slightly underexplored, which becomes clear especially when he suggests that *both* the state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK) utilised such a "culture of fear". This suggestion, which he only hints at in this chapter, will certainly generate some future debate.

While all contributions are led by contemporary questions, Welat Zeydanlıoğlu specifically discusses the policies of the current AKP government. This significant inquiry provides a detailed review of the AKP's policies towards the Kurdish language, contextualising them historically within the state's language policies towards Kurdish and convincingly argues that despite the AKP's more pluralistic discourse of brotherhood, its policies are strongly dominated by nationalist and militarist discourses which deny the question of collective rights.

Another four chapters then explore different facets of the Kurdish movement from its ideals and programme to its discourses and strategies. Delal Aydın takes the reader through the history of the Kurdish national movement from its early beginnings via the Marxist organisations of the 1970s until today's PKK, analysing the different ways in which the myth of Newroz and the legend of *Kawa the Blacksmith* were narrated to construct a Kurdish identity and form a counter-hegemonic discourse. This chapter draws on her earlier work which already exists as an important point of reference for many scholars despite being unpublished (Aydın, 2005).

Kariane Westrheim's chapter adopts a unique approach to addressing questions of mobilisation and recruitment within the Kurdish movement. By specifically focussing on the processes of learning within the PKK and the impact of participation on individual political activists, she makes an original contribution both to the analysis of the Kurdish movement as well as social movement studies in general.

Analysing three different Kurdish women's journal from the 1990s, Necla Açık critically engages with the dominant discourses on the role of women within the Kurdish liberation movement. Acknowledging the importance of feminist discourse to open spaces for women to fight gender discrimination, Açık argues that the essentialist and static understanding of women's role, especially regarding the intersection of gender/nation, have impeded far-reaching changes within Kurdish society. With this chapter Açık revisits arguments made in an earlier article which has recently become central reading in gender studies in Turkey (Açık, 2002).

The chapter co-authored by Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden turns to the PKK's project of democratic autonomy and confederalism, which has, hitherto, not received much attention from other scholars. Although the shift in the political objectives of the PKK has been discussed elsewhere (Gunes, 2012), what makes this chapter invaluable is the thorough discussion of this political concept in relation not only to the work of Murray Bookchin, but also to the concept of *prefigurism* as developed in social movements theory. Furthermore, the authors include rare ethnographic material on the topic, the full significance of which, however, remains slightly concealed by the wide scope of the chapter.

Adding another central aspect to the scope of the volume, the chapter by Zelal B. Kızılkcan Kısacık examines the implementation of EU policies in Turkey regarding minority rights in two specific periods: after being granted candidate status in 1999 and when accession negotiations started in 2005. Besides illustrating the dependence of this process on the willingness of the government, Kızılkcan Kısacık shows that the impact of the EU must not only be seen by its effect on the central government, but must equally be assessed by how it has empowered the Kurdish movement and therefore enabled an internationalisation of EU norms from below.

Finally, the last three chapters deal with the question of possible reconciliation in different ways. While Ozan E. Aksoy's more affirmative than analytical piece gives an optimistic take on already existing forms of reconciliation through music, Cengiz Gunes and Cuma Çiçek come to less positive conclusions in their scrutiny of party politics.

Aksoy's chapter provides an ethnomusicological account of the history of musicians and groups, such as *Kardeş Türküler*, which took a deliberate stance in promoting solidarity and mutual understanding. He maintains that despite the detrimental conditions and violence towards artists, all aspects of music – whether the lyrics, the process of production, the performance or dancing to it - have contributed to enhancing recognition and have the potential to facilitate a dialogue and reconciliation. In this sense, his chapter touches on an area of great importance for the Kurdish question which warrants further attention.

Focusing on the AKP's "democratic initiative", Çiçek's contribution analyses the underlying conditions and the actual outcomes of the current government's initially promising steps to end the conflict. The chapter, which was originally published in 2011 and therefore before the negotiations with PKK-leader Abdullah Öcalan, locates the conditions for this initiative in the broader geopolitical context of the Middle East and on the imperial interests of the US to promote a moderate Islam in the region, highlighting that instead of enabling a comprehensive democratic solution, the AKP effectively "eliminated" pro-Kurdish politics from the arena. For Çiçek the reasons for this lie in the AKP's ideological constraints, including a lack of democratic values, as well as its administrative incapacity.

Motivated by the assumption that reconciliation and conflict resolution is dependent on the possibility of establishing a national consensus, Gunes' final chapter offers a comprehensive examination of the contemporary political conditions for such a consensus and their historical context. In doing so, he looks both at the contrasting approaches towards the Kurdish question of the mainstream political parties in Turkey on the one side, and the Kurdish movement on the other, as well as considering external factors. Thus, this substantive chapter adds to Çiçek's analysis by assessing the chances for an end to the conflict with respect to all major parties involved and endows the reader with a framework to understand the ongoing process.

While each contribution to this invaluable collection presents a unique approach towards the Kurdish question, the volume as a whole gives an idea of the complexities attached to it. At the same time the different and nuanced approaches inspire cross-reading of the articles. The volume, however, could have benefitted from including chapters regarding the crucial influence of the diaspora and the relations to other parts of Kurdistan. Nevertheless, its focus on the post-1980 period allows the volume to distinguish itself from the existing literature and provides a timely and original contribution to the field of Kurdish studies. In this sense, this book serves as a comprehensive overview of contemporary research for both those who are new to the field as well as for scholars more familiar with the topic.

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Ulrike Flader, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester, UK

Almas Heshmati and Nabaz T. Khayyat, **Socio-Economic Impacts of Landmines in Southern Kurdistan**, *Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, 341 pp.*, (ISBN: 978-1-4438-4198-6).

The Kurdistan region is heavily contaminated with millions of unrecorded and unmarked landmines and unexploded ordinance (UXO). Despite the fact that landmines and UXO have been identified as a major threat to economic development and resettlement efforts worldwide, governments in affected areas rarely focus on assuring the safety of formerly displaced communities that are exposed to extremely dangerous conditions once they return to traditional farming or husbandry practices. This reality also applies to Southern Kurdistan, where the Iraqi government established the National Mine Action Authority in 2003, which is today managed by the Ministry of Environment. In their book *Socio-Economic Impacts of Landmines in Southern Kurdistan*, Almas Heshmati and Nabaz T. Khayyat point out that a mere “one sixth of the mines lain have been cleared. According to regional government figures, landmines and explosive remnants of war have claimed 8,174 victims (including both injuries and casualties) in the Kurdistan region between the years 1991 and 2007” (p. 27).

MAG (Mines Advisory Group), an international NGO which emphasises land mine removal in regions that are disproportionately affected by unrecorded mines that kill and maim unsuspecting villagers and children, asserts that the Kurdistan region is one of the most densely filled mine zones in the entire world. According to MAG, at least one landmine has to be removed for every person in the entire Kurdistan region, which must be characterised as a devastating indictment of a number of states, militaries, and combatant organisations.

Heshmati and Khayyat emphasise four distinct historical periods in their book that produced the current landmine problems. In the mid-1970s, the Baathist regime sowed millions of unrecorded land mines throughout Southern Kurdistan to subdue Kurdish resistance. Throughout the entire Iran-Iraq war, from 1980 to 1988, landmines polluted the border regions to such an extent that certain rural zones are marked as “no-go areas.” Landmine maps have not been made available to international agencies by either Iran or Iraq, which could assist in setting up landmine removal protocols. During the Gulf war, so-called barrier mines made border zones between Turkey and the Kurdistan region inaccessible, which was followed by the enthusiastic use of landmines by various Kurdish factions without keeping records

during periods of internecine fighting. In sum, the lack of leadership from the central government in Iraq with regard to landmine removal in the Kurdistan region has been appalling.

While the horrific facts are well researched in Heshmati and Khayyat's work, the chapters are very short, frequently subdivided, and appear choppy. The book is extremely data-driven, full of charts, lists, and graphs that tend to serve a very esoteric audience. In addition, it seems that the authors could have benefited from a more rigorous editing process. In essence, Heshmati and Khayyat's work provides scientific audiences with a detailed resource guide, and specifically focuses on informing a readership with an interest in protocols and processes linked to parameters of landmine removal. The segments of the book that address health concerns, injuries, and educational outreach and programming are particularly informative. It must be pointed out that the available academic literature on landmines in Kurdistan is extremely thin, which enhances the significance of this contribution by Heshmati and Khayyat. Few scholarly articles have examined the devastating results of landmines in Southern Kurdistan, except for regular NGO reports that address the economic repercussions of landmine injuries or the social consequences for disabled persons.

What is missing in this scientific study is the inclusion of the human toll of landmines. What should be done to reduce the disturbingly high numbers of young Kurdish boys who are killed and maimed by landmines while they guard and herd their families' animals? What is the fate of landmine survivors in Southern Kurdistan? Victims typically are unable to find employment and often cannot access most buildings since even recent construction fails to consider the needs of disabled members of society. Heshmati and Khayyat's work represents an important starting point for detailed studies related to the long-term consequences of landmine usage in Kurdish communities following decades of war.

Vera Eccarius-Kelly, Siena College, USA

Estelle Amy de la Bretèque, **Paroles Mélodisées: Récits épiques et lamentations chez les Yézidis d'Arménie** (Melodised speech. Heroic songs and laments among the Yezidis of Armenia), Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013, 230pp., (ISBN: 978-2-8124-0787-1).

At the core of this impressive work is the following observation: the kilamê ser (words about) are neither song or music (stran) nor daily speech (axaftin). Kilamê ser is a form of speech with specific sound forms and uses. Estelle Amy de la Bretèque in *Paroles Mélodisées: Récits épiques et lamentations chez les Yézidis d'Arménie* analyses this specific form of speech: What is this specificity and what does it tell us? Why do the Yezidis in Armenia use this form of speech that the author calls the "melodised speech"?

The reason is to be found in the expression of emotions, shows the author, throughout a thorough, finely articulated, and extremely richly illustrated argumentation. The stran expresses joy (şabûn), together with the sound of these two instruments, the zurna (a kind of oboe) and the dohol (a kind of drum). The stran is generally danced upon, in weddings, and associated to swift vertical movements of the shoulders. The melodised speech expresses sorrow, sadness, and grief (xem). It is associated to the sound of the duduk, which the voice seems to imitate (or the other

way round), and to horizontal movements of the upper bodies. The melodised speech expresses grief and sorrow at funerals, during graveyard feasts in cemeteries, but also in private settings when people talk about painful matters, and in particular the pain and suffering caused by death or exile, elicited by absence. The words are also melodised to talk about the heroes (kilamê ser mêraniê) as told by the bards and sometimes studio-recorded. These laments are melodised speech because they were originally laments on the death of the hero (or the heroic death), argues the author, who illustrates this through colourful examples, such as that of the young soldier, Gago Şerif, killed in 1993 in the Karabakh war, or of Çeko Xidir, a famous Yezidi outlaw from the Muscovite “Kurdish mafia” killed in 1996. The author shows that the laments and the clip shot on Xidir’s tomb do not differ much from the laments said during funerals and video-recorded by relatives to be sent to family members abroad: they just have gained a wider, non-localised, audience.

If the book provides a lively soundscape of contemporary Armenia (chapter 3), and describes the characteristics of both the stran and the kilamê ser (chapter 5), as the title indicates – it focuses mainly on the melodised speech. Concentrating on this melodised form of speech, it presents an interesting reflexion on the emotional and social uses of sounds. It also questions what one could call the “borders of music”. Indeed the author notes that, “sounding like music to Western ears”, and studied by the (ethno)musicologist, the laments or the melodised speech are not considered as such by Armenian Yezidis. Presenting a thorough reflexion on the use of sound and on the category “music”, this book certainly makes an important contribution to ethnomusicology. It will definitively play an important role in enriching and deepening studies of “oral traditions” or studies of the so-called Kurdish “bards” (dengbêj) that currently develop in Kurdish studies, anthropology, and ethnomusicology.

Written by an ethnomusicologist who is also a fine anthropologist, the book is about more than the words and the sound realm alone. Dealing with the specific use of this vocal intonation and its role in people’s lives, it is more broadly a book about the ways people deal with emotions, suffering, and sorrow, how we manage the human condition. Accompanied by the words of the laments, the author underlines throughout the book (and more particularly in the last two chapters) that exile and foreignness (xeribi) are central to the expression of suffering among Armenians Yezidis, who share this vocabulary of suffering with people from the region stretching from the Balkans to the Caucasus and Persia. Death, exile, foreignness: one could speak of the suffering of separation. The laments both express and feed the separation of the multiple exiles lived by the Yezidis of Armenia: the exile from the Ottoman lands during WW1, the more recent migration to the Soviet and Russian cities, the exile of the young woman who gets married and leaves the family home, and finally, the exile of the one who dies. In this sense, the book makes a beautiful contribution to the anthropology of emotions. It is also of great interest for those studying migration and exile, an important element of both Kurdish societies and Kurdish studies.

Why then do people melodise the speech? Kilamê ser has a non “iso-chronic rhythm”; their “melodic lines are quite free, but generally follow a descending path”. The pitch is quite low (p. 78-81; p. 198-99). The melodised speech gives prevalence to the meanings of the words which, together with its resemblance to the sound of cries and laments, expresses and engenders sorrow, adds the author. The melodised speech is “fragmented”; it presents a “series of images”, somehow disconnected, and offers multiple points of view: through the use of reported speech, the orator makes the others speak (p. 91). The melodised speech encompasses the living and the dead,

those present and those absent: the dead and their relatives during the funeral, those present in the room and those relatives long-dead or in exile. Like a “net”, through which emotions move and circulate, it creates an “affective geography” (p. 97). This weaving seems to also create a community of emotions in which all with his/her private pain relates to the others’ pain. This emotional universe is sonic but also visual: the sound connects the dead and the living, the author recalls that it is said that the dead continue to hear up to three days after death. The sight also plays a role of connector: the funerals are recorded and sent to those leaving far away, pictures of those passed away are hung on living room walls, and images of the dead are engraved on the gravestones. These make the dead and the absent omnipresent.

The omnipresence of death and sorrow enables the author to speak of the “desire for pain” and “the pleasure of suffering” among the Yezidis of Armenia: this pleasure would be illustrated when some affirm for instance that they want to keep the suffering alive forever. However, although the author stresses that the melodised speech is not necessarily cathartic, the fact that it makes possible the detachment from one’s painful emotions - through the use of the reported speech, and the suppression of intonation for example - is striking. The melodised speech enables one to express the unutterable. This would be my only query regarding the author’s argument about the community’s “desire for pain”: are we facing a “desire for pain”, a “pleasure of suffering” or rather a specific way of dealing with painful emotion?

This sonic and visual emotional universe described and analysed by the author is very-well rendered by the actual form of this book. Some pictures and many transcriptions of the kilamê ser, often beautifully translated, are interspersed in the writing. The reading is also punctuated with references to 62 audio and video recordings (hosted on <http://www.ethnomusicologie.fr/parolesmelodisees/>) which reproduce and make the reading a real multisensory experience. Though extremely rich and dialoguing subtly with the ethnomusicology and anthropology literature, the book is, if one might say, embodied through five years ethnography (2006-2010) in the Yezidi villages of Armenia, by the videos of the dead and living, as well as by the portraits of the enunciators of the laments (professionals or old women with “burning hearts”). This work is therefore very stimulating reading for anyone interested in the culture and society of the Kurds of the Caucasus, in Yezidi traditions and rituals, but also in ethnomusicology, or the anthropology of emotions.

Clemence Scalbert-Yücel, University of Exeter, UK

Diane E. King, **Kurdistan on the Global Stage: Kinship, Land, and Community in Iraq**, *New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2014. 286 pp., (ISBN: 9780813563534).*

This is a very readable, insightful anthropological study that will be welcomed by all those interested in the Kurds and how Kurdish political actors affect regional and even international politics. The author tells her readers that she started her research in Kurdistan in 1995 (p. 223) “as an anthropologist traveling in the widest possible social circles in the region” (p. 217). She further explains that what she presents in her book mainly comes from “being there” (p. 43). She terms her methodology “embodied research. Such research involves the greatest immersion that is practical in local daily

life and the deliberate avoidance of creature comforts that might put social distance between me and the people around me” (*ibid.*). Indigenous Kurds, however, might still argue that as an outsider who has not lived there long enough, King could not fully understand the society.

The author also explains that connecting is the main rubric for her book (p. 7), and then elaborates how “marriage arranging, relating to kin and neighbours, highly specific gender roles, and the limiting of female autonomy are the stuff of these relations” (*ibid.*). Patron-client relationships and belonging to gendered categories are additional ways people connect socially. “Kurdistan is a very socially rich place, a place in which people invest very deeply in social relations” (*ibid.*). Throughout her study, King also emphasises how patriliney (agnation), “a set of ideas about ancestry, kinship, and gender roles that centre on lines of fathers and sons traced through time” (p. 38), is “one of the most important social and symbolic forces in Kurdish life, the glue that fosters many of the social connections in Kurdistan” (p. 67).

In her lengthy introductory chapter, King tells her readers that “much of what this book is concerned with could be called ‘primordial’ symbols and social relations, which are now maintained, reformulated, and questioned in globalising Kurdistan, forming something not local, not global, but glocal,” (p. 15) a synthesis of both. The current era began in 1991, when due to the U.S. defeat of Saddam Hussein, Kurdistan went from being a mere victim isolated from the rest of the world to one where “new technologically mediated connections to the rest of the world are everywhere” (p. 9), and “life . . . is changing at a tremendously fast pace” (pp. 10-11).

Although oil has been key to this prosperity, Kurdistan has so far been spared many problems of other rentier states. As one businessperson told King in 2008, “the credit crisis that is going on in most of the world is not affecting us because everything runs on cash here” (p. 27). However, one should also note that there are a number of other factors contributing to the region’s prosperity including the security and relative political stability of the region which attracts external investment from other parts of Iraq, Turkey, and expatriates. Nevertheless, many problems remain such as the inability to settle internal border lines or draw up a comprehensive hydrocarbon law with Baghdad. In addition, “poverty persists. Perceptions of corruption are high” (p. 28).

In quick succession, six more chapters follow. Chapter 2 tells how fieldwork in Iraqi Kurdistan during the 1990s was still done “in a danger zone” (pp. 41-65). “However, Kurdistan has become steadily more peaceful and secure during the past decade” (p. 55). In her final chapter, for example, the author notes that “during the past few years, I have noticed a dramatic decline in the number of firearms that are visible on the streets” (p. 219), and concludes that this “is a strong sign of the increasing power of the state Kurdistan” (p. 220). Although in the past “there was a definite stigma associated with Kurdishness” (p. 61), it has now become a land where “Kurdishness was openly celebrated” (p. 56).

Chapter 3 elaborates on patriliney or tracing descent through the male line only. Here King shows how patriliney link to claims of origin and lend identity to their members. “They knit people together within the given space of Kurdistan in a way that is, in my view, every bit as powerful as the forces of economics, nationalism, language, and shared experience” (p. 98). They also serve as a “powerful contributor to the seclusion of girls and women in Kurdistan” (p. 68). Moreover, contrary to seeming logic, King finds that despite globally connecting Kurdistan, patriliney remains strong.

In addition, “perhaps no greater symbol of the Kurdish nation exists than the Kurdish village” (p. 88). However, now “Iraqi Kurdistan are choosing modernity, living in cities on or near the plains, over their mountains and their villages” (p. 90). This recent trend was summed up by the saying: “In Kurdistan you don’t *live* in a village, you *have* a village” (pp. 91-92). King further explains that “the aghas’ ability to extract a generous income from their land has declined precipitously. In addition to land reform, high fertility and polygyny were a large contributor” (p. 99). However, some aghas have become millionaires due to the on-going urbanisation and the inflated real estate prices they can command for their properties.

Chapter 4 focuses on “gender challenges” (pp. 102-137). Patriliney implicitly forces women to be cloistered so as to insure the validity of patrilineal descent. “A lineage or tribe . . . wants to be sure who its members are, and it wants to keep its child-bearing women . . . from producing offspring for possible rivals” (p. 118). Thus, “a woman who drives a car can drive somewhere to have an illicit sexual relationship . . . [and] would surely feel *sherm* [shame], an emotion prompted by the scornful gaze of others in the community” (p. 104). Indeed, again contrary to what might seem logical in globalising Kurdistan, honour killings seem to be on the increase: “On countless occasions I have heard people affirm their support for virginity and chastity linked to lineages. . . . Many of them female, affirm support for honour killings and indicate their disrespect for a lineage that would allow one of its female members to have sex outside of marriage and not kill her” (p. 133). And as for female genital circumcision (clitoridectomy), one older woman told the author that “a girl who has this done becomes *miskin* (well behaved; gentle)” (p. 135), an Arabic word which many, however, would translate as meaning poor. Interestingly, “some women who wear the head scarf have told me that they feel it gives them an extra measure of freedom to come and go, because their families trust that the piety they display in their dress will be matched by sexual restraint. A woman who works in an office . . . can easily cut down on the chances that she will be sexually harassed by covering her head” (p. 122). Others, however, argue that Kurdish women have always enjoyed more freedom compared to their Arab counterparts and that they actually have retained their maiden and family lineage. Indeed, female education has skyrocketed, so “both non-literate older women and highly educated younger women are now found within many families” (p. 102).

Chapter 5 explores politicking, “the political stuff of state, local, tribal, and lineage governance, aspirations to such governance, as well as economic jockeying both licit and illicit” (p. 138). “The skills that allowed people to survive and thrive on the mountains of Kurdistan during centuries of imperial contests now come in handy on a whole different scale” (p. 151). “Frenemies” are neither enemies nor friends, but neighbours one deals with “in abundance in Kurdistan” (p. 150).

Chapter 6 looks at the issue of refugees and internally displaced person (IDPs) from Iraqi Kurdistan and within it. Here King argues that refugees complicate both primordial/local and modern/global regimes. Do they result from merely economic factors or also from the fear of violence? King suggests that both are explanations. The author also relates how a group of Yezidi Kurds fled a blood feud and then how a man long held as a prisoner of war in Iran finally returned home only to find it “unsatisfactory” (p. 193), and so left for Europe.

Finally, Chapter 7 shows how “the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is now a participant in the world’s system of states, even though it is technically, only a ‘region’ within a federated state” (p. 204). The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) conducts its own foreign policy and has de facto embassies in other countries. It also “has become

a center for Kurdish nationalism . . . where dissidents taking refuge from neighbouring governments meet, and where linguists are refining the Kurdish language and authors are producing copious amounts of literature in it” (p. 211), a language that little more than a decade ago seemed on the verge of extinction. King rightly concludes that “a whole generation has now grown up with the Kurdistan Regional Government in control and vigorously pursuing visions of modernity and prosperity . . . in an environment of relative political calm and low levels of violence” (p. 223).

By way of constructive criticism, this reviewer found only a few more minor issues. The author cites John Cooper as her source that the Simel massacre of Assyrians in August 1933 inspired Raphael Lemkin to coin the term genocide (p. 21). Most scholars, however, argue that the Armenian massacres during World War I were the catalyst for Lemkin’s term. King chooses to use the term principalities rather than the more common emirates to refer to the semi-autonomous Kurdish entities that existed up to the middle of the nineteenth century. She also states that “Bedir Khan Beg’s sons went on to provide leadership to the Kurdish nationalist movement . . . by codifying the Kurdish language and promoting an awareness of Kurdish nationalist claims in Europe” (p. 187). While the sons (Kamil, Abdurrazzaq, and Emin Ali) did play a role in promoting Kurdish nationalism, it was the much more famous grandsons, Thurayya, Jaladet, and Kamuran, whom King surely means.

On several occasions the author uses the term *chete*, instead of the better known one *jasb* (donkey or traitor) to refer to the Kurdish militias that supported Baghdad. Actually, however, the term *chete* means bandit. She also mentions how Nashville, Tennessee has the most Kurds in the United States but only explains this by saying the U.S. government arbitrarily began sending them there in the 1970s. Surely there were other more cogent reasons such as the role Christian missionaries played. Finally, I found King missing the major importance of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) - affiliated Democratic Union Party (PYD) in the currently raging Syrian civil war in her brief description of it on page 215.

In closing, King’s book also contains 19 original photos, 4 maps, and 2 figures illustrating patrilineal descent. The number of her endnotes falls off as her chapters proceed, probably because most of her work is based on her own primary observations, not secondary sources. Her book also ends with a glossary and acronyms, bibliography, and well-constructed index. As a long-time student of Kurdish studies, I highly recommend King’s worthy contribution to the literature and encourage her to continue her valuable work.

Michael M. Gunter, Tennessee Technological University, USA

Michael M. Gunter and Mohammed M.A. Ahmed (eds.), **The Kurdish Spring: Geopolitical Changes and the Kurds**, Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2013, 344 pp., (ISBN: 978-1568592725).

Is there a “Kurdish spring” comparable to the “Arab spring”? The Arab spring is a term that has been used to describe the popular demonstrations that swept across the Arab world in 2011, resulting in the overthrow of several long-serving authoritarian rulers, most prominently in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. In addition to the cover, “Kurdish Spring” appears in several of the chapter titles in this volume. However,

several of the authors refrain from arguing that there is close similarity between the Arab uprisings and the political changes that are currently taking place in various Kurdish areas. Even in Syria, where the weakened Assad regime has enabled a “Kurdish spring” of a kind to emerge, a number of authors have reminded the readers that the quest for national rights among Syrian Kurds started earlier than the Arab Spring, as evidenced by the Qamishli uprising of 2004, if not earlier.

True to the subtitle of the book, the majority of the chapters are devoted to the geopolitical changes since the turn of our century that have provided dramatic opportunities for Kurds to advance their political fortunes, most prominently in Iraqi Kurdistan. The first four chapters are broadly similar in tracing Kurdish fortunes in all the four countries where Kurds represent significant minorities and have faced serious obstacles to achieving acceptance as a distinct national people, viz. in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. They are understandably cautious about the fortunes of the Syrian Kurds whose unprecedented moves to establish self-rule may be threatened or undone by the outcome of the unfolding civil war in their country. In Turkey, the authors are agreed that prospects for a settlement of the Kurdish issue and an end to the insurgency led by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK) are mixed. Many of the legal obstacles to Kurdish cultural and political expression have been removed since the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) in 2002. More recently, the Turkish government’s negotiations with Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, has raised hopes that its faltering Kurdish initiative, first launched in 2009, may yet achieve progress. Nevertheless, as Michael Gunter recognises, there are limits to how far the Turkish government can go in granting the kind of autonomy that PKK leader Öcalan strives for, which could lead to Kurdish secession (p. 18). Iraqi Kurdistan is obviously a great success story for Kurds. Although not all is rosy in its budding democracy, it has consolidated its authority in the Kurdish region and, for the most part, fended off the Baghdad government’s efforts to limit its authority. All of the authors are agreed that there has been no improvement in the status of the Kurds of Iran, and that their prospects in the Islamic Republic continue to be discouraging.

Although the first four chapters have significant commonality in their respective surveys of Kurdish fortunes in the Middle East, they offer much that differentiates their contribution from each other. Ofra Bengio and David Romano (chapters 2 and 3 respectively) offer helpful comparisons between the Arab spring and the Kurdish challenges in various parts of Kurdistan that are referred to as the “Kurdish spring”. In chapter 4 Michael Bishku asks the question “Are the Kurds a special case?” and provides much useful historical background to the role of the Kurdish issue during the Cold War, and in relations between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

In one of the longest contributions (chapter 5), Mohammed Ahmed offers a detailed account of the domestic politics in Iraqi Kurdistan as well as the problematic relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Iraq’s Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. The chapter contains much useful material on the politics of the primary Kurdish political parties and their leaders. The author also provides a lengthy account of the events surrounding Baghdad’s deployment of the Dijla Operation Command, the threat it posed to the KRG, and the KRG leadership’s defiance of al-Maliki’s designs to limit Kurdish rights. Whether or not Maliki was justified in his critical stance toward the Kurdish leadership on the Dijla Command or other issues is a matter of opinion. However, one could argue that the alliance between the Kurds and the Shia in post-Saddam Iraq conferred mutual benefits to the Kurds and the Shia. Ahmed overlooks this case.

In the title of their contribution on the “Kurdish opening” of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (chapter 6), Marlies Casier, Joost Jongerden and Nic Walker raise an apt question: Will it lead to a Kurdish spring or fall? The AKP government has had a remarkably strong political position commanding large majorities in parliament that attract much electoral support in the Kurdish region. And, yet, the authors contend that in its approach to the Kurdish issue, the AKP is treading the same path as its Kemalist predecessors. The AKP government has been unwilling to address “the real issues of cultural identity and political control” (p. 139), has sought to undermine the elected Kurdish political parties and, through both military and legal means, the PKK. It is no wonder that the authors are pessimistic about the outcome of the “Kurdish opening” that was launched in 2009. The authors’ critique of the AKP government’s Kurdish policy is amply justified. However, they have not acknowledged the political constraints that check the limits of how far the AKP, or indeed any Turkish party in government, can go to resolve the Kurdish issue. The PKK’s demands for regional autonomy and self-government are bound to raise fears of the country’s break-up. The authors are right in stating that the AKP has been using the same security discourses of its predecessors, and cited the arrest and detention of large numbers of members of the-PKK-affiliated Union of Kurdistan Communities (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan, KCK*) as an example. However, it is difficult to see how any government in Turkey could tolerate an organisation that challenges the government’s authority to run its affairs, local or otherwise.

Just what does “democratic confederalism” and “democratic autonomy” mean? Stating that few people are familiar with these concepts beyond Kurdish circles, Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, set out to explain them. The authors explain that “democratic confederalism” is a form of radical democracy that has been formulated by Öcalan, the PKK leader, who was influenced by Murray Bookchin. Put simply, “democratic confederalism can be characterized as a bottom-up system of government” (p. 172). For readers who wonder how this system will work, the authors conveniently cite its application in Syria where the PKK-affiliated Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, PYD*) has applied the concept in areas where it has established control since 2011. This reviewer found it difficult to fully grasp at least some of the ideas associated with democratic confederalism, as promoted by Öcalan and others. What is one to make of the statement made by one of the advocates that “democratic confederalism as a form of political and social system beyond the state is a project for a free life” (p. 179)? The authors wisely acknowledge the utopian nature of the “democratic confederalism idea” and it is telling that the last paragraph of their chapter contains a quotation from Eduardo Galeano: “Utopia lies at the horizon. When I draw nearer by two steps, it retreats two steps...No matter how far I go, I can never reach it” (p. 185).

Much of the burgeoning literature on the Kurds has featured studies of the Turkish Kurds and those in Iraq but comparatively little on Iranian and Syrian Kurds. This is understandable given the problematic access to Iran and Syria where the authorities consider Kurds to be a taboo research subject. The inclusion of two chapters in the volume on Syrian Kurds is therefore welcome as well as timely. Clearly, the unprecedented success of the Kurds to establish an autonomous entity and exercise self-government in parts of northern Syria is truly revolutionary. In chapter 8, Eva Savelsberg and Jordi Tejel describe the context in which Syrian Kurds emerged as important actors during the course of the revolt against Bashar Assad’s regime that began in 2011. A new generation of Kurdish youth are at the forefront of the Kurdish national mobilisation that began most apparently since the Qamishi revolt in 2004.

The authors describe at length the emergence of the PYD as the leading Kurdish party in Syria and its success in exercising “state-like power in the Kurdish regions of Syria” (p. 209). But given the uncertain outcome of the rebellion against the Assad regime and serious intra-Kurd political divisions, they are cautious about future prospects. It is no wonder that they titled their chapter “The Syrian Kurds in ‘transition to somewhere’”.

In chapter 9 Harriet Allsopp covers some of the same ground as the previous chapter. She reports the numerous splits within parties while the Kurdish uprising saw a concerted initiative “to unite the Kurdish party movement” (p. 220). In one of the strongest chapters in the volume, Allsopp explains how Kurdish political parties survived the draconian controls exercised by the Ba’th regime and how, until very recently, they were preoccupied with “... cultural issues, peaceful democratic reform and by survival” (p. 226). Like the authors of the other chapter on Syria, Allsopp strikes a similarly cautious tone about future prospects by noting the factionalism in the Syrian Kurdish political movement and the hostility of Syrian Arabs to the idea of Kurdish self-rule in a decentralised Syria.

While there is promising movement for Kurdish rights elsewhere, the Kurds of Iran appear to have little hope of improving their status as they continue to endure strict limits placed on their political activities. In chapter 10, Nader Entessar describes the political restraints exercised by the Iranian government on the Kurds since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979. He pays special attention to the Kurdish role during the course of the Khatami governments and the “Green Movement” that emerged in Iran in the aftermath of the contested presidential elections in 2009. Entessar describes the disappointment of the Kurds when their hopes for real reforms were dashed by Khatami whose authority was routinely checked by Iran’s conservative establishment. The author states that the problem for the Kurds, and other ethnic minorities, is that Iranian governments do not have clear nationalities policies and those running for political office at the highest level who promise to introduce democratic reforms that would advance the rights of nationalities fare poorly. Entessar points to other obstacles as well for, as in Syria and elsewhere, intra-Kurdish divisions have hampered unity among Kurds in Iran. While informative, Entessar’s chapter is unduly sparse. It does not sufficiently elaborate on the diversity of views among Iranian Kurds or the forms of regime controls and repression against groups that seek to expand Kurdish rights.

The final two chapters address the role of Kurdish diasporas. Vera Eccarius-Kelly discusses the role of the European Kurds in chapter 11, while Thomas Schmidinger focuses on the Kurds of Austria in chapter 12. There is a good deal of useful information in both chapters. Among other matters, Eccarius-Kelly describes the principal demands of European Kurds (p. 284), the goals of second and third generation Kurds as compared with their parents’ generation in the host states, and the political goals which they support in their respective homelands. Schmidinger does the same in reference to Austrian Kurds. Clearly, European Kurds are not monolithic and both authors comment on the various divisions which arise from ideological, religious or class, and other differences.

This volume of twelve chapters offers a rich variety of information and perspectives about Kurds in all of the four countries where they represent important minorities, as well in European diasporas. Though not without shortcomings, the chapters constitute readable and up-to-date accounts of important Kurdish developments in the Middle East. Kurdish spring or not, Kurds are poised to play an ever larger role in the politics of their region. Although Kurdish gains in Syria may experience setbacks,

and the promise of further progress for Turkish Kurds may become frustrated, no one could have imagined just how far Kurdish fortunes have improved since a mere decade ago.

Tozun Bahçeli, King's University College, Canada

Derya Bayır, **Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law**, *Surrey: Ashgate Publishing House, 2013, 314 pp., (ISBN: 9781409420071).*

Since her foundation, the Republic of Turkey has had a notorious record of diversity management. Non-exhaustive case law rendered by the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) on the basis of failed prevention of discrimination and minority protection serves as an indicative. Against this background, Derya Bayır's *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law* is quintessential literature in comprehending the driving force behind this phenomenon. This book, consisting of six chapters, examines the root cause of this record: constitutionally protected nationalism and its legal consequences on minorities subject to a state doctrine, whose branches of power have continuously fostered rhetoric of oneness rather than togetherness. The lecture is very welcoming as although there now exists extensive literature on Turkey's minorities, the majority of them are analysed from a political or historical standpoint. Legal analyses, however, fall short. Thus, Bayır's study must be celebrated as unprecedented and an enrichment of this literature.

The book is very readable and well-structured, as the author takes the reader by the hand and introduces the historical climax that led to radical changes within the legal landscape. Chapters one and two prove to be beneficial in comprehending the legal transformation witnessed by both Turkey, as well as her predecessor, the Ottoman Empire. A merit of chapter one is how the author points to reforms of "secularisation and westernisation", which commenced prior to the declaration of the Republic of Turkey (1923), and not, contrary to popular belief in Turkey, afterwards. Prominent examples are, as Bayır argues, the Penal Code (1843), Codes of Procedure for Criminal Courts (1880), and the Commercial Law (1860) (p. 39). More importantly, this chapter takes into consideration the *millet* system. The harmonising Ottoman society is attributed to this legal institution; however Bayır unmistakably points out its weaknesses. Though non-Muslims were subject to the administration of their own clergy to the extent of inter alia educational and judicial matters (pp. 23 et seq), "the *millet* order was not a minority protection system in the modern sense, but an organisational structure for dealing with non-Muslim diversity within a plural society" (p. 27). Once the attempt of creating an Ottoman citizen was abandoned at a time when the empire was falling apart, Bayır then eloquently explains how the creation of a Turkish citizenship came to the rescue, which she rightfully refers to as a "campaign of nationalization".

In chapter two Bayır reviews the legal point of no return, the Lausanne Treaty, which ultimately led to a non-inclusion, particularly non-recognition, of many minorities living in Turkey. She raises the question, who the Turkish plenipotentiaries regarded as a minority, and comes to the conclusion that the "Turkish state's perspective held that minority protection is only given to non-Muslims with reference to their religion" (p. 89). It is due this legal interpretation that only non-Muslim minorities are officially regarded as such, particularly Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. According to

this intentional legal misinterpretation non-Muslim is *condicio sine qua non* to fulfill the requirement of being defined as minority. This paved the way for the following not to be recognised *strictu sensu* as a minority: inter alia Alevi, Arabs, Assyrians, Bahais, Chaldeans, Georgians, Kurds, Laz, and Zaza, to name but a few (p. 3).

The author articulates Turkey's "civilising mission" *vis a vis* minorities in chapter three. In her view "unification" in the form of 'homogenisation' and 'Turkification' under a 'Turkish' identity, culture, and language, as well as Turkish nationalist ideology, has marked the minority-state relationship" (p. 95). Taking into consideration the meticulous inspection of private sphere penetrating policies, her argument finds validation. Throughout this chapter, she demonstrates a wide range of aggressive policies of assimilation: top-down language policies, restrictions on certain surnames, renaming of places/cities, reinvention of history, elimination of religious, social, and traditional structures, as well as forced resettlement of minorities. At this point one might question why seemingly the focal point of this study, although the title reads "minorities", is the Kurds. However, raising such critique is unsubstantiated, as the Kurds constitute the largest minority in Turkey, if not a parallel unrecognised nation.

Derya Bayır's vast legal experience becomes most visible in the second part of the book (chapters four, five, and six). In chapter four for instance, Bayır applies the *Savigny method* (grammatical, systematical, historical, and teleological interpretation) of identifying who the judiciary and legislation regards as a Turk. In doing so one comprehends why "Turkey does not give official recognition to ethnic, or to some religious minorities. It claims that ethno-cultural or religious identities and their expressions are regarded as an individual's choice and are private, but not relevant at state level" (p. 144).

The *status quo* maintenance of the Constitutional Court of a non-inclusive socio-political environment of the "other" is critically portrayed in chapter five. Bayır reviews a wide array of case law with a special focus on the "political party closure cases" pursuant to article 69 of the Turkish Constitution. In doing so, her attentive selection of case law rendered by the Constitutional Court is in absolute favour of her critical line of argument. Probably, this chapter guarantees the most involuntary headshakes to the reader. Particularly, she addresses case law of the Constitutional Court according to which: "demands for minority status and recognition of differences to be associating with impairing social peace" (p. 206); "seeking minority status and recognition [...] creates hate and animosity among the people" (p. 206); "promoting the existence of minorities and feelings of differentiation among some citizens as provocative and destructive" (p. 207); and lastly the ruling that "a minority is an artificial formation [emphasis added] and something that might be formed by politics in line with the view of Turkish legislators" (p. 207). Bayır's critique on the unwillingness of the Constitutional Court to foster an embracing judicial interpretation of the other, the different, is underlined by her terminology. Though the author regards the Constitutional Court to promote activism – which the reviewer deems as a decisive instrument to promote checks and balances in a functioning rule of law state – she further rightfully accuses the Constitutional Court of "selective activism" (p. 188). Thus, the Constitutional Court can be criticised to have "ruled in favour of the *status quo* as opposed to human rights and freedoms" (p. 188).

Lastly, chapter six reviews case law of the Court of Cassation (the last instance), as well as concepts of equality before the law, non-discrimination, and hate speech. This last chapter portrays how legislation and the judiciary were endeavoured to protect the majority from the minority instead of vice versa. Particularly in this regard, Bayır provides insight into how insulting the Turkish nation is an integral criminal act ac-

ording to the Turkish Criminal Code (p. 246). Yet, on the other hand, the legislative and judiciary proactively neglects to protect the identities of non-Turkish and non-Muslim people (p. 244). In this chapter Bayır exemplifies a wide range of grotesque and human dignity violating samples of daily life mistreatment. For instance, the refusal of a dead body into a hospital morgue because of the political views of the deceased (p. 231) as opposed to a human rights professor who publicly calls for birth rate controls of Kurds and remains without indictment (p. 233).

Derya Bayır's experience as an attorney who litigated landmark cases before the ECHR is transmitted in many aspects throughout the whole book. Her attention to detail is most apparent in the vast quantity of sources used in this important study. At times her arguments are not merely supported by codes and case law, but also by parliamentary discussions and explanatory notes. This attribute makes the reading at times breath-taking and astonishing, at times shocking and provocative. The extent of legal scrutiny of this subject remains unprecedented. Hopefully, future policymakers will analyse with due diligence *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law*. In doing so, they will understand that changing the binomial nomenclature of the red fox *Vulpes vulpes kurdistanica* into *Vulpes vulpes* on the grounds that it threatens Turkey's unity (p. 108) amounts to *ad absurdum*.

Ethem Çoban, Goethe University, Germany