

HOW TO MAKE A VOICE AUDIBLE?  
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OF KURDISH CULTURE AND OF SOCIAL REALITY  
IN POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

## FRITILLARIA KURDICA



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## About the Bulletin

Within the scope of our project we start to edit the e-magazine devoted to Kurdish studies and our research. At the moment it is in fact a modest bulletin but we hope to develop it in the future as it will be a valuable platform for East - West thought exchange on the ground of Kurdish studies. That is why we plan to publish it in other languages starting with English, Polish, Kurdish, Turkish and Russian. We strongly believe that in our multilingual postcolonial world English cannot be the decisive criteria for being recognized as a specialist on some topic, especially if you consider the world of Kurdish language in which knowledge is much more important than English in this case. We cannot imagine a specialist on America or Russia without fluent knowledge of its native languages, so there is not much difference with the Kurds and our wish to study them. However, in spite of the “good intention” we are of course restricted by our knowledge of only a few languages. Initially we can publish the e-magazine in the above mentioned languages.

The quarterly e-magazine entitled *Fritillaria Kurdica. Bulletin of Kurdish Studies* seems at first a rather puzzling idea. However it is motivated by the postcolonial perspective applied by our research team.

*Fritillaria kurdica* (the full name: *Fritillaria crassifolia* subsp. *kurdica*) is the name of the flower growing in the territory which to considerable extent corresponds with the territory of Kurdistan. The Latin name comes from the word *fritillus* which means dice, as the flower resembles one. The Kurdish names are multiple depending on the region: *Taca Mirê*, *şilêr*, *gulnixûn*, *gulsernixûn*. In European knowledge the flower was present in XIX century as described by Boissier from specimens collected by Wilhelm Noë near Lake Van in the late 1840's. Wilhelm Noë (1798-1829) was an Austrian traveller and botanist who settled in Istanbul in 1844 where he was given the position of the director of the Botanic Garden of the *École Impériale de Médecine de Galata Serai*. *Fritillaria kurdica* is found in south-eastern Turkey, Azerbaijan, north-western Iran and northern Iraq. It generally grows in open steppe and earthy, stony hills and rock ledges, usually on north-facing slopes, at 1500–3500m. Also other collections of the flower (1829) by the Hungarian botanist Johann Nepomuk Szowits have become known to us.

The flower can be considered one of the best symbols of the Western colonial conqueror. Its existence is connected with “the discovery” effected by Westerners although

the plant must have been very well known to Kurdish herbalists and shepherds under the much more graceful name than it was given. The flower has been called by a bombastic name suiting Western needs, interest and expectations. Moreover, *Fritillaria* recalls the names of multiple Western journals devoted to the oriental studies that tried to outdo one another in constructing new theories built on the ignorance those they were devoted to.

Nevertheless, the flower remains a subtle flower that can still delight us especially in many photographs found on the Internet. Now we know the Kurdish name, so, it has a chance to win human hearts again in quite a new context. Unexpectedly, the Latin name, although it was invented according to Western classification, it still reveals today a fragment of almost lost history. Due to the actions of a few Middle Eastern states' the history of the Kurds and their presence in the territory of Kurdistan has been deliberately forgotten. However, the Latin name *Fritillaria Kurdica* invented in the mid of XIX century by some Western botanists reveals the true identity of people living there. Yet we cannot consider Western botanists the sympathizers with the Kurdish national movement or identity as there was not a widespread idea of it at that time and they were botanist not humanists or politicians. They called it by this name being just aware of people who surrounded them. Today this small flower of red, yellow and green colours, which covers the territory of Kurdistan can be the stalwart symbol of Kurdish hopes and their struggle for rights and freedom.

Using this name for the name of our Journal we create a metaphor. In postcolonial reality we want to stress that there is still something to be found in the western heritage of research although it has been much discredited for the last years. We cannot and we do not want to forget the sad past relationship but we believe it can be built on new ground where even mistakes can be used in the name of good. The name of *Fritillaria Kurdica* is a good reason to be hopeful regarding that.

The word dice and the Polish name of the flower which is *szachownica kurdyjska* (the Kurdish chessboard) also seem very meaningful for the journal devoted to such a complicated topic as the Kurdish issue. Certainly, it demands not only high standards of thought but luck too.

However, the bombastic name of *Fritillaria Kurdica* has also a very ironic meaning to us. Looking at Kurdish studies from the postcolonial perspective it is still worth thinking what it really means to research the Kurdish topic in our western institutes and universities. Is our knowledge and research engaged only to find the 'Truth' which can be somehow helpful to people living in Kurdistan? Or maybe it is only engaged in building our own careers and keeping warm and safe positions at our universities? I really do not intend to answer those

questions. I have no right to do it. But I want to declare the lough and irony to be the guiding principle in the attitude toward ourselves. A good deal of the Kurdish writer Hesene Mete's irony would be the best method to apply in our strange world of still present deep precipices between knowledge and ignorance, indifference and engagement. Is it not a blunder or the lack of modesty to build the sophisticated tower of Babel of modern knowledge in the reality where we still fail to meet elementary education needs for so many children not only in Kurdistan?

That is why we declare *Fritilaria Kurdica* to be the journal where knowledge is not the self confident god to be praised, but rather the warm and open Kurdish *dîwanxane* where everybody is welcomed. The only demand is the respect for people and the quality and reliability of the work proposed.

Joanna Bocheńska

## Li ser kovara me

Di çarçoveya projeya me de em kovareke elektronîk çap dikin. Di destpêkê de em ê encamên lêkolînên xwe di vê kovarê de pêşkêşî xwendevanan bikin. Lê armanca me ew e ku di pêşerojê de ev kovar bibe platformeke xurt a danûstandina raman û zanistên li ser kurdan a di navbera rojhilat û rojavayê de. Loma jî em dixwazin ku ev kovar ne tenê bi înglîzî; her wiha bi zimanên din, bi taybetî jî bi kurdî, polonî, rûsî û tirkî jî weşanê bike. Bi riya vê kovarê em dixwazin zanyar û lêkolînerên belavbûyî biçekî komî ser hev bikin da ku hev û lêkolînên hev baştir nas bikin. Lê bi qasî ku em îro nikarin li ser pisporên li ser Polonya yan jî Fransayê bifikirin bêyî ku ew zimanên wan welatan nizanibin, em nikarin li ser rewş û çanda kurdî jî bêyî zanîna zimanê kurdî bi ciddî bifikirin. Ziman her car mifteyê e ji bo dil, bîr û sistema nirxan a mirovan û riyeke kûr ji bo zanistê vedike. Loma baweriya me heye ku di pêşerojê de kurdî jî bikaribe bibe zimanekî sereke yê di qada navneteweyî ya kurdolojiyê de.

Navê kovara me di destpêkê de biçekî seyr xuya dike. Lê maneyeke bikaranîna wê ya berfireh heye. *Fritillaria kurdica* (bi rastî *Fritillaria crassifolia* subsp. *kurdica*) navê kulîlkekê ye ku li Kurdistanê bi navên *Taca Mîr*, *şilêr*, *guldexwîn*, *gulnixûn* yan *gulsernixûn* tê naskirin. Nebatnasên ewropî ev kulîlk di sedsala 19an de nas kir. Cara yekem nebatnasê bi navê Boissier ew terfî kir, li gorî kulîlka ku ji aliyê nebatnasekî din ê navê wî Wilhelm Noë (1798-1829) ye hatibû komkirin. Wilhelm Noë nebatnas û rêwiyekî nemsayî (awîstiryayî) bû û sala 1844an bûye serokê baxçeyê botanîkê yê *École Impériale de Médecine de Galata Serai* ya li Stenbolê. Vî camêrî nimûneyên şilêrê li nêzikî Gola Wanê kom kiribûn. Lê *Fritillaria kurdica* li ser axa hemû Kurdistanê hêşîn dibe û bi rengên xwe yên kesk, sor û zer dikare bibe sembola wê jî. Paşê diyar bû ku nebatnasekî din ê macarî hê di berê de, sala 1829an ev kulîlk peyda kiribûye.

Lê ev kulîlka xweşik û riyên naskirina wê maneya wê ya cuda jî heye. Ew dikare bibe semboleke siyaset û mantiqa kolonyal jî. Gava ku li rojavayê behsa peydakirina wê dikin tenê naskirina wê bi mirovên ewropî bi ber çavan digirin. Ji kesî re ne balkêş bû ku navê wê yê bi kurdî jî xwe hebûye û kurdan ew ji demeke dirêj ve nas dikir. Ev navê latinî yê seyr bes ji bo pêwistiyên kategorîzekirin û zanistên ewropî hate peydakirin. Ji bilî vê dema ku oryantîzîm bû aleteke giran ji bo terfîkirina mirovên rojhilatî bêyî ku deng bide dengê wan, gelek kovar bi navên latinî hatin çapkirin ku behsa wan mirovan dikirin. Kovara me neçar maye li ser vê tecrubeyê bê damezrandin; lêbelê em hêvîdar in ku daxwaz û derfetên din ên ji bo lêkolîn û

lêkolînêran bên dîtîn. Her wiha eger em ji aliyekî din ve li vî navî binêrin em ê bibînin ku di van her du peyvên de rastiyeke giring jî veşartî ye. *Fritillaria* rengdêreke „kurdî” wergirtiye û ji bona vê sifatek dikare bibe îsbateke herî baş ku kurd li ser axa xwe dijiyan. Nebatnasên ewropî ne neteweperwer ne jî rewşenbîrên kurd bûn; lê navê wê li gorî realîteya ku bi çavên xwe dît dane wê.

Ji bilî vê peyva latinî ya *fritillus* tê maneya qutiya zaran a ku pê dilîzin, ji ber ku şiklê kulîlkê dişibihe vê qutiye. Bi polonî navê wê *szachownica kurdyjska* yanî ji qutiya setrencê tê. Di her du navan de jî maneya lîstik û qumarê heye. Ev jî bi xwe mecazeke xweş e ji bo kovareke ku bi babeta kurdî re mijûl e. Ji ber ku bi vî şiklî hem giraniya babetê hem jî pêwistiya zanistê, ramanên qîmet û şansî jî tîne ber çavan. Îro şîlêr hê jî şîlêr e û meriv dikare fotoyên wê û navên wê yên kurdî jî li ser înternetê peyda bike. Lê em dixwazin girîngiyê bidin hemû babetên ku me li jorê behsa wan kirine. Îro jî em wek lêkolînerên rojavayî li ser babeta kurdî dixebitin û her çiqasî bixwazin jî em nikarin bi temamî dev ji kevneşopiya heyî berdin. Lê tiştê ku ji bo me girîng e ew e ku em dengên kurdan dibihîzin û bi riya lêkolînan pêwendîyan bi wan re datînin.

Ji bilî vê, em dixwazin bila bikaranîna vê têgiha seyr a *Fritillaria kurdica* bibe bişîrîneke îronîk a li ser rûyên me - lêkolînerên rojavayî? Em çî dizanin? Ma ev zanist dikare alîkariya kêşeyên giran bike yan jî tenê li kar û kariyera xwe dinêre? Ma ev ne baweriya xurt û bêşik a gelek oryantalistên berê bû ku encama wê konseptên şaş bûn? Belkû baştir bibe eger em îro biçekî bi zanistên xwe bikenin û bi şik, lê hê jî bi hêvî lê binêrin.

Joanna Bocheńska



## O czasopiśmie

W ramach prac badawczych naszego zespołu rozpoczynamy wydawanie kwartalnika online poświęconego studiom kurdyjskim i naszym badaniom w szczególności. Zależy nam aby czasopismo, które póki co będzie raczej skromnym biuletynem mogło z czasem rozwinąć się stanowiąc wartościową platformę wymiany myśli między Wschodem i Zachodem w odniesieniu do tematyki kurdyjskiej. Dlatego też w zamyśle otwieramy się na kilka języków publikowanych tekstów: angielski, polski, kurdyjski, rosyjski i turecki.

Kwartalnik o nazwie *Fritillaria kurdica. Bulletin of Kurdish Studies* może wydać się na pierwszy rzut oka dość zagadkową ideą. Wpisuje się ona jednak w postkolonialną perspektywę przyjętą przez nasz zespół badawczy.

*Fritillaria kurdica* (pełna nazwa *Fritillaria crassifolia* subsp. *kurdica*, polska nazwa szachownica kurdyjska) jest nazwą kwiatka rosnącego na terytorium odpowiadającym mniej więcej granicom Kurdystanu. Naukowa nazwa rodzaju pochodzi od łacińskiego słowa *fritillus* oznaczającego pudełko do gry w kości, które nieco przypominają kwiaty rośliny. Jej kurdyjska nazwa brzmi rozmaicie w zależności od regionu Kurdystanu (*Taca Mirê, şilêr, gulnixûn, gulsernixûn*). W europejskiej świadomości kwiatek zaistniał w połowie XIX wieku opisany przez Boissiera na podstawie okazów dostarczonych przez Wilhelma Noëgo (1798-1829), austriackiego podróżnika i botanika, który w 1844 osiadł w Stambule otrzymując posadę dyrektora ogrodu botanicznego *École Impériale de Médecine de Galata Serai*. Noë zebrał swoje okazy w okolicach jeziora Wan. *Fritillaria* występuje też jednak w północno zachodnim Iranie, Azerbejdżanie, południowo-wschodniej Turcji i północno zachodnim Iraku. Wiadomo również o wcześniejszych kolekcjach ze zbiorów węgierskiego badacza Johanna Nepomuka Szovitsa (1829).

Kwiatek można z powodzeniem uznać za jeden z symbolów kolonialnego podboju Wschodu przez Zachód. „Odkryciem” nazywa się poznanie go przez zachodnich badaczy, choć roślina była niewątpliwie znana kurdyjskim zielarzom i pasterzom znacznie wcześniej pod zdecydowanie wdzięczniejszymi nazwami. Imiona te jednak nikogo z przybyszów specjalnie nie interesowały. Kwiatek otrzymał długą, napuszoną łacińską nazwę z którą od tej pory funkcjonuje w międzynarodowej świadomości. Został sklasyfikowany i opisany zgodnie z zachodnią wiedzą, oczekiwaniami i zainteresowaniami. Swoim łacińskim brzmieniem przypomina też o całym szeregu zachodnich czasopism, które poruszały orientálną tematykę,

prześcigając się w konstruowaniu coraz to nowych teorii budowanych przy pełnej ignorancji dla tych, których dotyczyły.

Mimo to jednak kwiatek pozostał sobą. Dziś oglądany na wielu fotografiach żeglujących po Internecie ponownie zachwyca swoim subtelnym wdziękiem. Można również poznać jego oryginalne kurdyjskie nazwy, ma więc szansę podbić serca i ciekawość odbiorcy ponownie, pod innym imieniem i w zupełnie innym kontekście. Nieoczekiwanie jednak, łacińska nazwa, choć powstała na zapotrzebowanie zachodniej klasyfikacji odsłania dziś fragment historii, która intencją państw sprawujących w XX wieku władzę w tym regionie była konsekwentnie zapomniana. Kwiatek został określony jako *kurdica*, co w bezpośredni sposób nawiązywało do zamieszkującej te tereny ludności kurdyjskiej. Trudno przecież przypuścić by zachodnim botanikom i zbieraczom chodziło o ideologiczne wsparcie kurdyjskiej idei narodowej, która w połowie XIX wieku się jeszcze na dobre nie narodziła. Dość przypadkowo ta botaniczna nazwa przechowała więc pamięć o pewnej prawdzie historycznej. Występowanie kwiatka, pokrywające się częściowo z nakreśloną przez Kurdów mapą Kurdystanu, a nawet do pewnego stopnia jego kolorystyka (żółto-czerwono-zielona) subtelnie nawiązują do dzisiejszych kurdyjskich marzeń i dążeń do wolności.

Użycie przez nas tej nazwy dla tytułu czasopisma jest więc oczywiście pewną metaforą. Jako mieszkający na zachód od Kurdystanu zdani jesteśmy na zachodnią perspektywę patrzenia, świadomie jednak podejmując ciężar wcześniejszych doświadczeń. Czy niektórych błędów nie da się dziś jednak wykorzystać w imię dobra? *Fritillaria kurdica* daje nam powody sądzić, że tak.

Również sens słów *fritillus* (pudełko do gry w kości), czy polska nazwa „szachownica kurdyjska” odniesione do rzeczywistości Kurdystanu same stają się poetycko wieloznaczne. Nieco napuszone obce brzmienie naszego czasopisma ma jednak także ironiczny wymiar. Patrząc na Kurdystan w perspektywie postkolonialnej wciąż warto zastanawiać się na ile nasze badania rzeczywiście odkrywają jakąś prawdę, wartościową także dla jego mieszkańców, a na ile grzęzną w okowach współczesnej instytucjonalizacji nauki, konieczności robienia karier i powiększania ilościowego (niekoniecznie jakościowego) dorobku? Jedyłą na to radą wydaje się pochodzący z utworów Hesenê Metê śmiech nad sobą samym, kpina z tego czym pragniemy się tak szczyścić! Jakie bowiem znaczenie mają nasze wysiłki dla wielu kurdyjskich dzieciaków, które wciąż nie mają odpowiedniego dostępu do szkół i do dzieciństwa wolnego od trosk codzienności? Czy nie jest w tej sytuacji nietaktem i nieskromnością konstruowanie teoretycznych wieży Babel, zrozumiałych tylko dla wąskiej elity wtajemniczonych? Niech więc *Fritillaria kurdica. Bulletin of Kurdish Studies* będzie

programowo czasopismem nie całkiem na serio, pozbawionym aroganckiej pewności siebie i przekonania o swojej absolutnej niezbędności i wszechwiedzy.

Joanna Bocheńska

## **The First Number of Our Bulletin**

In the launch issue of our Bulletin we are adopting some elements of the rich postcolonial perspective to the field of Kurdish studies. During our seminars we have returned to Edward Said's 'Orientalism' and his passionate call for 'another knowledge' to be applied when studying the 'Other'. In the articles presented we explore the hidden system of values of the Enlightenment-Oriental project, the ways in which oriental knowledge was used to present the reality of the Kurds by Christian missionaries and the ambiguous marriage of power, knowledge and culture. It seems that Kurdish contemporary literature can shed new ethic and aesthetic light on the system of values which formed the background of conquer and domination.

However, Orientalism itself has never been the homogeneous perspective for analyzing the Other. We can find ambiguous statements even in the texts of Christian missionaries. Also the experience of oriental studies conducted for many years by different Polish researchers, travellers and diplomats seem to be and to some, extend into making certain comparisons of Poland's long history of being in captivity. It proves that in spite of the widespread call for objectivity the analysis is always very much formed by individual attitude and experience.

We would like to express our gratitude to Prof. Anna Krasnowolska, the director of The Department of Iranian Studies of Jagiellonian University for her detailed article devoted to Polish orientalist Aleksander Chodźko's reports on Kurds in Iran. It was presented during the International Seminar on Iranian Kurdistan that was held in Kraków in March 2009. The article allows us to see the Polish interest in Kurdish studies by the prism of much older tradition.

Joanna Bocheńska

## The Hidden Truth of a Colonial God

### Some Reflections on Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Hesenê Metê's *Sinful words*

Considering the relations between East and West (or better the subject and the object of colonizing policy) in postcolonial perspective, one realizes that the lack of trust between the representatives of both sides is often caused by the deep conviction that the wrong action committed by the adversary was done deliberately in order to bring harm. It is often seen as “premeditated murder” which aims were only to subordinate, rule and use. After so many decades of different kinds of relationship built on abuse, riot and many ambiguous forms of collaboration, it is really very difficult to find a neutral platform for mutual understanding. And is the word “neutral” really appropriate enough for a reliable space of - hopefully – creating a better future relationship? In my article I intend to put together two books – well known *Orientalism* (1978) of Edward Said and little known in the West (but at the same time acclaimed among Kurdish writers and intellectuals) *Sinful words* (2007) of the Kurdish writer Hesenê Metê. This comparison, although strange at first, can give us a much deeper understanding of sophisticated colonial evil allowing us to see it in a wider context of philosophy, metaphysics and ethics.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* was read for many decades after being first published in 1978, it still moves by its deep passion for revealing the sad backgrounds of the Western attitude toward the East. Said seems to have traced it everywhere, even in the far antiquity. However, it is the Enlightenment project of extoling the reason and knowledge to which his attention is riveted and makes full use of applying Michael Foucault's concepts. I remind you of Said's remarks on the Western discoverer's approach. We ask what it really was and what should be our modern background for the interest toward the East on one side and toward the West on the other? Should it be based only on “neutral”, or so called “objective” knowledge? Or should it go further, not being afraid of some affection both in its positive and negative sense?

To Said Orientalism needs to be examined as a discourse, which made possible for the emergence of a special discipline. Its aim was to manage and even develop the Orient in order to dominate, restructure and have authority over it<sup>1</sup>. Exploring the supposed “hidden tasks” of selected orientalists Said stressed that the inhabitant of the East were seen as the poor creatures unable to think reasonably and logically. So, the only problem that remained was “how to content the subject race” while understanding all its limitations (Cromer)<sup>2</sup>. Curiously getting to know the otherness meant for Balfour quoted by Said - to become distant and far to the subject of scrutiny, to rise above immediacy. Moreover, exploring the other civilization was governed by the wish to get to its origins with the strong conviction that a Western scholar is able to do so. Analyzing the Oriental was based on the belief that it has an unchangeable nature, which according to the analytical western thinking was the simple fact to be established<sup>3</sup>.

All aforementioned ideas show very well the foundations of the modern knowledge project. The man reason and its ability of obtaining something by logic was the only justifiable criteria for wisdom. Escaping feelings, emotions and subjectivity seemed the only chance for building a reliable platform for human knowledge. That is why rising above immediacy was so crucial for any kind of proper analysis and the call for objectivity has formed the core of nearly every educational project. In such a project it was the knowledge which became the main aim of research (of course, if we do not take into consideration the utilitarian sense and the fact that such knowledge soon became a very easy servant of power). It contradicts many other concepts of knowledge including classical Greek, Christian and Muslim tradition according to which it was the element of a more complicated structure connected with philosophy, theology and ethics. In such a context getting to know something was not free from some goals, it was the ethic which played the role in research too. Of course, ethic as well has never been the stable, invariable and infallible construction. When ethic became the element of modern knowledge or being just the field for analysis and classification it lost its crucial meaning which was to show the ways of “becoming morally brave”<sup>4</sup>.

Avoiding the wide and diverse discussion of considering cognition, knowledge and ethic I want to ask again if the Orientalism project can be treated as “premeditated murder”

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1. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London 2003, p. 3

2. Ibidem, p. 32

3. Ibidem, p. 32

4. Jacek Filek, *Filozofia jako etyka*, Znak, Kraków 2001, p. 15

inevitably connected only with power? And is the objectivity criteria really the only possible foundation for knowledge? Does it help to avoid or does it in fact help to conceal “the hidden goals” of research?

It seems that in spite of his passionate wish to reveal “the hidden truth” being the reason for crime and not for salvation Said was not absolutely convinced that Orientalism was “premeditated murder”. Otherwise, he would not repeat his persistent attachment to hope and the deep conviction that it is not “neutral” scrutiny of the subject that should govern the research and the process of discovering the Other.

It would be interesting to look at some points of the Balfour’s speech quoted by Said. If we think about the intention that govern his speech we find them “good” in fact. It is to bring enlightenment, self-government and a better life even “without any gratitude” from the Oriental<sup>5</sup>. So, it is not just bad intention that governs the colonial mind here. What Said is pointing at is rather the lack of the Oriental’s point of view and the Oriental himself in this project. The knowledge that governs Balfour’s mind is extremely self-confident and not interested in any adversary to be heard or at least allowed to speak. But it is not the lack in knowledge which is causing this kind of consequences. His speech is reasonable, logical, based on some convictions that were accessible and widespread in his times. Said can criticize him but even his *Orientalism* is nothing more but just another more sophisticated compilation of theories and ideas accessible to the American-Palestinian thinker in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century due to his origin and studies. What would have happened if he had considered some Polish discoverers’ approach toward the Other being based not only on accessible oriental knowledge but also on their own experiences of being conquered and humiliated for years in captivity. We can give the example of August Żaba (Jaba) and Aleksander Chodźko’s research on the Kurds but also the moving example of the first Polish bicycle traveller through Africa, Kazimierz Nowak and his reportages written in 1930’s and published as a book in 2008<sup>6</sup>. They are good examples that the so called western perception of the East and the Other was, very diverse in fact. Of course, this knowledge was not easily accessible for Said but nevertheless it gives me some right to call him “a deliberate ignoramus” too. It is not a secret that his wish to reveal the “hidden truth” standing behind Orientalism and “colonial power” is based on the same method as Orientalism itself. It is selective, tries to build distance to the

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5.Said, pp. 32-33

6.Kazimierz Nowak, *Rowerem i pieszo przez czarny ląd. Listy z podróży afrykańskiej z lat 1931-1936*, Sorus, Poznań 2008

subject that is being analyzed and to understand all limitations of “poor Westerners” unable to see the East in a proper light. Moreover, he is tracing the origin of the East-West relationship believing that he is able to. Is such a belief not the healthy psychological background for any discoverer? In fact, all our research will always be selective and trapped by our own experiences even if we can be critical of them. It is not the knowledge that should be changed but the foundation of it, the aim of human interest that always shapes the final effect of research leading it towards new questions or to some stereotype statements. The inevitable lack of “being selective” is in fact the best guarantee for future discoverers who can explore the disregarded spaces and fields. However, if we read *Orientalism* carefully we can understand that in spite of what Said declares it is not the knowledge that has to be changed but the ethical attitude to the subject of research. And this is the very important idea that is shining through rather than directly declared in his book. It is not objective and cold scrutiny but rather an affective glance that is needed. As a result the significant question is rising: what should be the approach to the Other who “does not know all the very important things we know”, nevertheless, the Other being of Oriental or of Occidental origin? However, it is not the so called “tolerance” that is most interesting here but rather our own attitude to the knowledge.

In modern times, after the death of God announced by Friedrich Nietzsche, the knowledge as well as its false but charming appearance (which only very rarely are we able to distinguish from each other), became the new divine to be praised. Everything is explained and justified by “the proper knowledge”. One will connect it with the death or better the killing of God<sup>7</sup>, but I rather wish to point out the immortal human ability for “producing new gods” to be praised again and again under different names or titles. It seems the main reason standing behind accusations of the oriental-colonial “premeditated murder” and can be understood in light of the false appearance of good as stressed by Polish philosopher Jacek Filek. However, in the context of Kurdish studies it will be very useful to present it also by the prism of Hesenê Metê’s book and its slightly perverse plot and idea. Applying old Kurdish literary (Ehmede Khani) and religious (Yezidi) traditions Metê is trying to understand the very first source of evil and of human misery. His idea can be the great literary illustration for Said’s concerns.

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7. J. Filek, p. 292



*Gotinên gunehkar* (*Sinful words /or tale*) was published first in 2007 by Avesta Publishing House in Istanbul then in Stockholm (2008) by Apec Publishing House. It has been usually presented as a novel but Metê himself prefers to call his works stories due to its' short and simple character. The plot is preceded by a meaningful motto taken from Muhiyeddin ibn Arabi "Li gel ku ez Wî înkâr dikim, ew bi min dizane û ez bi wî dizanim"<sup>8</sup> ("When I deny Him, He learns about me and I learn about Him").

The story is a retrospective. Behram – the main figure and narrator lives in the town of "E" somewhere in Kurdistan as we can guess although it is not precise. We guess it from the spoken language and due to some historical events mentioned in the plot connected with Kurdistan history. There are also two other villages mentioned. The first is Kawaş Wanê – where Bahram comes from (near the lake Wan in the northern part of Kurdistan, today's Turkey) and the village Argon, where the book's events take place. However, Behram declares at the very beginning that for him it is not important to give detailed information about his own origin as it is useless for the "true existence".

He is a student of a religious school and devoted Muslim. He says he felt "God has created man for Himself" and in order "to love God". He also considers God "a child, who can easily be offended". His life is changed when he meets unknown men in the mosque. Behram perceives him as a good man whom he meets only thanks to God's will. Lûlû, that is the name of the stranger, offers him a flat to rent and invites him to his village (Argon) where he lives with his wife and two children. Behram decides to go there one autumn day. He is delighted with Argon's beauty and Lûlû and his wife Geştîna's kindness. Unexpectedly, he was extremely astonished seeing a snake sleeping in the house. When he tried to kill it, both Lûlû and Geştîna prevent him and told him that the snake was their "home snake". According to Islam snakes are the symbol of evil. But Geştîna and her husband seem to be untouched by Behram's words. That is the first time Metê suggests their strong connections with Yezidi tradition, where the snake is worshiped and respected. Geştîna tells Behram the story of her father Mekrûs who when digging a well found the pitcher filled with gold and afterwards saved and fed the snake. According to Geştîna's father's words it happened due to the animal's familiar glance which "made him feel as if he had known the snake from somewhere".

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8. Hesenê Metê, *Gotinên gunehkar*, Apec Förlag, Stockholm 2008, p. 6

Behram goes with Geştîna and Lûlû to their vineyard located higher in the mountains. On the way he sees some extraordinary monuments which deepens the mysterious atmosphere of the plot. Afterwards Lûlû and Geştîna show him a rocky pond surrounded by a stone row forming a kind of amphitheater. According to a legend this is a place where nymphs had used to come to bathe and swim sometimes being spied on by men from a special hiding place. Berham gets to know Geştîna and Lûlû's children who are twins. They are called Nagina and Aryan. Gradually Berham falls in love with Nagina but as a Muslim *medresa* student he is very ashamed of his feelings and tries to rid himself of them. He leaves his new friends and goes on a walk. He returns to the rocky pond, takes a place in the hideout and becomes lost in thoughts. Suddenly, he notices Nagina's presence. She is taking a bath in the pond. He begins to spy on her. It is not clear whether it is a dream or reality. She recognizes him and demonstrates all her naked beauty to him. Berham follows her to the mountains, where their love is fulfilled. Afterwards they both go to the big tree where Nagina suddenly disappears. Behram meets Mekrûs and declares that he "loves Nagina more than God". Mekrûs tells him that her true name is Demora and in order to find her he needs to follow him to the so called *ehl-i male*. There he finds Nagina-Demora sleeping (or dead) and needs to continue his journey on the back of a black horse. Mekrûs tells him that it is the horse of Mirê Mezin (the Great Lord) who used to be called Satan in Christian or Islamic tradition. However, in Yezidism he is the main figure called Tawûsê Melek (Peacock-Angel). Behram travels to Mirê Mezin in order to learn "all the truth". His journey is meaningful and quite a perverse parallel with Muhammad's One Night journey to meet with God in heaven. But in Metê's story it is the journey to the Fallen Angel and not to the officially worshiped God that is believed to be the source of knowledge and truth. It can be also understood as the writer's intention to explore the dark sides of human soul which is revealed in most of his novels and short stories.

Mirê Mezin (also called Ahriman in Metê's story which is an obvious allusion to Zoroastrian tradition too) tells him his own version of events that led to his quarrel with God. He opposed God for creating man because he did not believe God's idea of making a man from earth was right and good. The main reason was that God's intention which seemed to Ahriman a mere whim. God wanted to make a creature which would be much weaker so that he could have an advantage over him. The man would be able to come to know all God's names except for one, which was the Truth and the biggest mystery at the same time. To Ahriman creating people who would not be acknowledge of the reason why they were created

was very dangerous and unfair. It could also lead people to take advantage of one another. That is why Mirê Mezin wanted to disclose this reason to man. Ahriman wanted people to learn from the tree of knowledge the meaning of the Truth. As a result they felt ashamed, as they perceived their nudity and sexual difference. God understood that Ahriman was right so He decided to accuse him of everything. However, God has also regretted creating a man and abandoned the earth leaving people alby themselves. Ahriman's only witness was the North Wind, he decided not to have books and prophets. One day he asked God to come down to the earth to feel and live through human suffering. God had agreed and he was born as Isa (Jesus), the son of Meyrem. But as he was crucified he accused Ahriman of cheating him. Kurdish writer's literary idea is that Isa's words "lema sabachtani"<sup>9</sup> (why did You leave me?) were addressed not to God (as He was God himself) but to Ahriman.

In the end of the story Behram comes back to reality. His adventures could have been understood as a dream as he is told he was knocked down by a stone until the fact that everything starts to change. The daughter of Lûlû and Geştîna is bitten by the snake and dies. Her brother Aryan committed suicide by burning himself. Earlier he declares that he himself had never chosen to be born and the only way to object to that is to burn oneself in order "not to come back to earth" again. Behram becomes to be "a man without religion", or in other words one who "loves and hates God and Satan equally". However, it is his love for Nagina-Demora which he considers bigger than his love for God, which brings sense into his sorrowful life.

Hesenê Metê's story is significant for many reasons. The religious motifs, their origin and the way of application in the book can be of course disputed. But it is not the main issue to talk about when considering literature which is always the matter of imagination. There are many different motifs of the plot that can be explored by the reader, critic or researcher. The core point I want to stress is the figure of God and his idea of creating man for himself only. This egoistic whim is attached to the feeling of superiority over man, the dream of being admired and praised by someone. It is best revealed in Berham's reflections on the Ahriman story:

Cenabê Ahriman serpêhatîya xwe û Xwedê welê ji min re vedibêje û disekine. Serwest dibim ku di destpêkê de çewtîyek çêbûye. Ew çewtî bûye nakokî û heta îro jî di nava wan de bûye

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9. In the Bible there are two versions of these words uttered by Jesus in Aramenian language: *Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani* (Mt 27,46) and *Eloi eloi lema sabachthani* (Mk 15,34)

qayîşeke şer. Lê ne bî çêyî, ne jî bi xirabî li ser vê yekê ez gotinekê jî nabêjim. Ez xwe wek hêz û hêjayî alîgirîya yekî ji wan nabînim. Loma tiştekî nabêjim. Lê ez baştir têdigêhîjim ku nefsa mezinîyê nexweşîyeke ji demên pêşîn e.<sup>10</sup>

Respectable Ahriman has told what had happened between him and God and stopped. I understood that there was the evil done from the very beginning. It was the reason for hostility among them which until now has formed the space for war. But I have no reason to judge them, to comment on that. I do not see myself respectable enough to be the follower of one or the other. That is why I do not tell a word. But I understand better that the breath of superiority is a very old illness.<sup>11</sup>

To Metê's idea it is the *nefsa meziniyê* the “breath of superiority” of God that is the main source and reason for evil. It seems even the reason for creating man just in order to have a weaker creature to compare with. God presented by Metê is by far, scaring man and not giving relief. He abandons the earth staying indifferent towards man's misery and pain. Curiously, this literary idea becomes most fitting for the understanding of a “colonial god” praised by Western conquerors as also seen by Said. We can ask again if praising such a God can be the good explanation for accusations of “premeditated murder”? Its hidden truth is the lust of being admired and loved. His knowledge, technology and skills are no more but a sophisticated aphrodisiac for people whom he both needs and wishes to humiliate in order to confirm his own superiority. It seems to such a God much “wise” to remain distant and indifferent. What is most denied and hidden from the sight of consciousness are the feelings and the deep need for the Other. This idea is greatly emphasized by Behram's declaration of love to Nagina as the only true reason for existence. To love becomes the only cure for the longing of love. The god-superiority is exchanged for the God-Love idea, coming from the depth of Kurdish culture including Yezidi sacred texts and Ehmede Khani's poem of *Mem û Zîn*. As stressed by the motto denying God, that had been previously accepted without any question remarks can be understood as rising doubts in reality based on undisputed norms and beliefs. Paradoxically – to Metê - it opens not closes the way to find the “proper God”, or better – “proper value” to praise. I strongly believe it was also Said's hidden idea in his *Orientalism* filled by sorrow and anger but not deprived of hope and faith.

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10.H. Metê, p.147

11.All translation from Kurdish to English has been done by JB.

Reading both books in our multidimensional postcolonial reality of different countries and their different history we need to think about building not a new knowledge but stronger appropriate foundations for knowledge in which love for the Other will not be treated as some naive and subjective feeling that suits weak creatures only but will be recognized as the main value of a deep, wide and diverse meaning. Unexpectedly, the small but rich Kurdish literary tradition turns out to be one of the greatest sources of the God-Love ideas deepest understanding. As shown by Metê it overcomes the border of indifference, far and neutral scrutiny but definitely it does not mean being the blind and sentimental follower of one idea or theory. It focuses on the human following him with dynamic, changeable and open method of affective glance rather than of cold scrutiny.

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**Marcin Rzepka**

## **Some Remarks on the Bible Translation into Kurdish and the Kurds. The Christian Missionary Narratives from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

It is rather obvious that the protestant missionary movement spreading in the nineteenth century among the nations of the Middle East gave strong importance to the study of local cultures and languages. However, the Protestants representing the dominant powers were involved in politics and rivalry not only between the states but also small, regional communities. Such activity created the negative stereotypes and animosity between Kurds and different Christian groups living in Kurdistan. When the Protestant millet was established in 1850 in Ottoman Empire the relations between Christians - mainly Armenians who joined the newly-created political entity - and Muslims, Sunni Kurds suffered worse than ever.

The role of the Protestant Armenians was explained in the narratives of a missionary:

For many years the Armenian Protestant churches have felt in their special home missionary work to evangelize the Kurdish-speaking Armenians, of whom there are many. Some of these Armenians have so completely lost touch with their race that they have even ceased to be known as Christians. This has given rise to the theory held by some that all the Kurds were originally Armenian.<sup>1</sup>

Such opinion was expressed by the son of Elias Riggs (1810-1901), the American missionary working in Turkey and the Balkans – Ernst. The statement is incredible but shows the way in which the nineteenth century missionaries were categorizing the Kurds, how they were compared with Christians – Armenians and Assyrians, and what was the role of the Bible itself in creating stereotypes on Kurds. In the American periodical publication *The North American review*<sup>2</sup> in the article on *The Nestorian Christians* the author compared the Kurds with an old tribe from antiquity called **Kurdachoi** which used to attack the Greek. Such an opinion was supported by the biblical quotation from the Book of Habakuk 1:6 where we read about the Chaldeans – “that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling-places that are not theirs”. The author of the article

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<sup>1</sup> E.Riggs, *Spiritual reconstruction in the Near East*, “The Moslem World”, 10/2 (1920), pp. 131-132.

<sup>2</sup> Volume 57, Issue 120, July 1843

made it clear that the Bible portrayed the Kurds in this way. In other missionary works – as Henry Martyn’s diary and letters - we meet just the “bloody Kurds”.

The analysis of the Christian missionary literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> century concerning the Kurds, in the context of the Bible translation, allows to propose a thesis that the unfamiliarity with the Kurdish language and its dialectical differentiation resulted in the variety of negative stereotypes of the Kurds, as a nation.

In nineteenth century literature we can find at least three main groups of negative statements on the Kurdish issue:

1. Corresponding with religious matters;
2. Depreciation of the Kurds as a nation.
3. Concerning the Kurdish language.

Let’s start with some descriptions of the religion practiced by the Kurds.

Walter Keating Kelly in his book published in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century describes in the following:

The Koords in general profess a very corrupted form of Mohammedanism: they reject many of the precepts of the Koran, and of the religious practices it prescribes. They have no mosques: for God, they say, is more appropriately worshipped in his own great temple beneath the sun (...) Many of them admit the sacred books of other religions, and profess an indiscriminate reverence for Moses, Christ, Mohammed, and the prophets of almost all the races that surround them.<sup>3</sup>

The same negative opinions of a corrupted form of Islam characteristic for the Kurds one may easily find in the writings of Justin Perkins, the American Presbyterian missionary working in the Urmia region among the Assyrians. Generally we noticed that the opinions on Kurds were based mainly on the negative statements and opinions being expressed by Persians, Arabs, Turks – the Muslim nations surrounding the Kurdish population or by Christians – Assyrians and Armenians. Such opinions were fully accepted by the missionaries.

We may ask why the Kurdish community was so negatively presented in missionary writings? The Kurds living in the areas very difficult to reach, surrounded by mountains, as

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<sup>3</sup> W.K.Kelly, *Syria and the Holy Land. Their scenery and their people*, London 1844, pp.43-44.

the Kurdish proverb says that ‘they have no friends except the mountains’ (it is a kind of a self-stereotype) were treated as a dangerous nation. The animosity between them and other dwellers in the region also brought the negative opinions on them.

What is the role of language in the process of creating such stereotypes on Kurds? Let’s return to the question of the Bible translation.

The Bible translation was seen as a missionary tool and the possibilities to make a certain translation was predominately treated as a possibility to communicate, to understand and, finally to accept the Christian doctrine by the group to which the translation was addressed. In practice the missionaries being ignorant of the Kurdish language, dialects or literature, faced many problems in communications with Kurds and the only Christian missionary undertaking addressed to the Kurds – Muslims, conducted by the Basel Missionary Organization and its representative Christian Gottlieb Hoernle (1801-1882) had failed. Hoernel, after some trips and expeditions to the Persian and Turkish Kurdistan and attempts to translate the Bible into the Kurdish language, was convinced that, taking into consideration dialectical differentiations and nomadic life of Kurds, any effort for the Kurdish Bible translation was simply useless.<sup>4</sup> The *Kurdenmission* was abandoned in 1837. After that time the Kurds were excluded from any missionary attempts until the Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, when the missionary work was given to the Lutherans.

Summing up all opinions about the Kurds, it is easy to understand why the missionaries made no efforts to translate Christian texts for them, but rather to the Kurdish-speaking Christian communities..

It seems that ultimately the translation of the Bible changed the view on Kurds and its language. It is not necessary, I suppose, at the moment, to present the whole history of the Bible translation into the Kurdish language, but we should notice that the first attempt to translate the Bible as a missionary task of *Kurdenmission* failed. In 1857 the translation of the gospels was prepared and published. It was done by Armenians and written in an Armenian script, and clearly it was not addressed to the Kurds but to the Kurdish-speaking Armenians. It should be mentioned that protestant missionaries arriving to the Middle East region treated Armenians – or in a broader sense Christians as a natural tool for evangelization of the Muslim communities.

The existence of the translation of the Bible into Kurdish (Kurmanji that time), raised the prestige of the language and their users, it created a new, this time positive, characteristic on them. The Kurdish language was seen as an inter-ethnic communication tool, used not only

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<sup>4</sup> R. Blincoe *Ethnic realities and the church. Lessons from Kurdistan*, Pasadena 1998, p. 37



by Kurds. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we can find in the missionary books quite different opinions on the Kurds, for instance in the article by Roger Cumberland untitled *The Kurds* which was published in a periodical "The Moslem World". In a short passage the author compared the Kurds with Scots:

It is not many centuries since the canny Scots were a rough and ready freebooter, much like the Kurd of today. Both countries are rugged and breed rugged men. And Scotsmen today are occupying many of the most important positions in the English-speaking world. A like leadership in the Orient is open to the Kurdish, if they have a similar determination working within them.<sup>5</sup>

Stereotypes are also placed in the language as Cumberland wrote:

The Kurds are reputed to be violent haters; yet it is interesting to note that they themselves have no word for *hate*.<sup>6</sup>

But we should notice that it was written in 1926 when the Bible or its part was translated into Kurmanji, Mukri, and Kermanshahi, when the goal of the missionary activity from the 19<sup>th</sup> century had been achieved.

Some above-mentioned attempts to translate the Bible into Kurdish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the stereotypical categorization of the Kurds, as a nation, indicate the general role of translation in the process of constructing "otherness" and show the correspondence between translation and power, translation and representation, translation and domination, and finally open the field for studying such activity from the postcolonial perspectives.

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<sup>5</sup>The Moslem World" 1926, vol.16/2, pp. 150–157, p. 151

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 151

**Krzysztof Lalik**

## **Orientalizing Motifs According to Justin Perkins' Accounts on the Urmia Plain's Reality**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the opinions of Justin Perkins about a part of the East – called Kurdistan – and its various inhabitants, he lived there during his work in nineteenth century and compared ideas with the conception of ‘orientalizing’, a phenomenon coined and explained by Edward Said in his work *Orientalism*, one of the most meaningful books for a postcolonial theory at its very beginning.

Edward Said doesn't provide a clear-cut and short definition of *orientalizing* but gives an in-depth description of it as a process of creating and developing of a notion of ‘Orientalism’, which he explains as the generic term and a system of theory and practice employed ‘to describe the Western approach to the Orient’ and as ‘the discipline, by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice’.<sup>1</sup> Orientalism can be considered in various dimensions and Said distinguished three categories of it: academic, imaginative (literary and artistic) and institutional one. The academic Orientalism is an outcome of the centuries-old western scientists’ works – books and conferences, theses and disputes – related to oriental countries, but predominantly deprived of the real picture of the East, which have been taught, confirmed and repeated in a large number of European universities for many student generations. Even though the scientists’ distorted views of the East reveal differences and similarities, they generally spring from influence of the scientists’ cultural background, ideological, political or religious doctrines of the West as well as hypothesis-based knowledge. The imaginative Orientalism is grounded upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and “the Occident”, which was a starting point for a very large number of writers, poets, philosophers, economists, political theorists to develop their views about Orient, its inhabitants and their customs, mentality, destiny and so on. The third meaning of Orientalism

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<sup>1</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978, p. 74.

is dated back to the eighteenth century and, in short, can be discussed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient not only for describing it, but primarily for ruling and reconstructing it.<sup>2</sup> Said asserts that these three kinds of Orientalisms produced either unrealistic, servile pictures or appropriate but intangible models of the Orient in order to take advantage of it in favour of egoistic interests of western powers.

### **Features of orientalizing process**

He enumerates many features and stages of orientalizing of the East and they fall into several categories as historical, geographical, academic, semantic, literary and religious one. I will circumscribe myself to mention only a few of them that may be considered to be of major importance, particularly in the context of Perkins output. First of all, by analyzing fascination of the Orient by Europeans, which is traced back to antiquity, Said proposes an argument that the power and range of Orientalism have largely determined not only creation of substantial positive knowledge about the Orient but also “imaginative geography and history” and a genre of “second-order knowledge”, revealing in legends and the mythology of the mysterious East.<sup>3</sup> As a result, “Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant”.<sup>4</sup> Next, he argues that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Mohammed was commonly considered by Europeans as a crafty apostate and by the same token Arabia was perceived as a natural asylum for heretics and in some cases Islam as a new version of Arian heresy.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, by the middle of the nineteenth century Orientalism had had a very broad sense and meant a vast collection of both amateur and professional works and assortment of everything that could be thought as Asiatic, which was predominantly associated with mysterious, exotic and danger. Hence, Western rationality was destabilized by Eastern immoderation. It is noteworthy that the combination of a few elements: imperial vagueness, precise detail and increasing compass of Orientalism, but not side by side with its greater selectiveness and, lastly, association of “Oriental” with both an amateur and professional rapture for everything Asiatic are contended by Said as inherent factors of Orientalism as academic discipline.<sup>6</sup> Apart from this the way of perception of things is utterly arbitrary and,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, pp. 50-51.

consequently, it determines estimation of different values in so called modern and primitive societies.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Said provides positive example of discovering the Orient. Firstly, in the mid-fifteenth century an attempt was made by John of the Segovia's to organize a conference with representatives of Christians and Muslims to discuss religious and political issues. Secondly, the end of seventeenth century brought publishing of Barthelemy d'Herbelot's 'Bibliothèque orientale'— a monumental and comprehensive encyclopedia on theology, geography, science and art of the East, which remained the prime reference work in Europe for the next century.<sup>8</sup> However, Said repetitively emphasizes that a Christian picture of Islam has been for many ages a leading motif in Oriental discourse and the Orient has been fabricated by Orientalism owing to the fact that it produced a wide range of judgments that have brought the Western consumer closer to other Orientalists' works than to Oriental sources for analytical verification.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Orientalism has built a continuously recurring motif of Islam as a symbol of "terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians". But to make it less fearsome to the Western public Orientalists attempted to tame and take control over the severe and the horrific East.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Said highlights that Orientalism, as a discipline strictly integrated with institutionalized knowledge of the East, has wielded a considerable influence on three objects: the Orient, the Orientalist and the Western audience, who interpret "Orientalist codifications as the true Orient".<sup>11</sup> Therefore Orientalism has been transformed into a certain kind of closed system, "in which objects are what they are because they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter".<sup>12</sup>

### **Perkins as a missionary and linguist**

Justin Perkins, born in the Ireland Parish of West Springfield, Massachusetts (d.1869) was an American Presbyterian missionary and linguist who, as probably the first US resident in Iran, became famous as an "apostle to Persia" for his work among indigenous inhabitants of the Urmia plain in northwestern Persia. The year 1833 was a landmark in his life. In the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 61, p. 63-64.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, pp. 61, 67, 179.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, pp. 59-60.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 70.

summer of 1833 he was ordained a Presbyterian minister, in July he married Charlotte Bass, with whom he would have seven children, and in September of that year he was sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the community of the Assyrian Church of the East in Urmia plain. Two years later he established a missionary centre in Urmia, that would continue for 35 years. After having acquired an education in the Assyrian language and their society he commenced his preaching work, often in their churches. Shortly thereafter, he established separate schools for Assyrian boys and girls in the center and surrounding villages and in due course, at the request of the Iranian authority, he established similar schools for Muslims. He considerably prioritised a revival of modern Syriac language by press initiatives such as publishing a magazine “Rays of Light” and a translation of the Bible: the New Testament in 1846 and excerpts of the Old Testament in 1852. His experience and reflections on inhabitants of the Urmia plain he compiled in some articles and books: *A residence of eight years in Persia among the Nestorian Christians; with notices of the Muhammedans* (1843) and *Missionary Life in Persia* (1861).<sup>13</sup> The former work is composed as a diary and not only provides accounts of his journeys through the Middle East countries (Malta, Turkey, Persia) and his work in the missionary center but, for the most part, a wide spectrum of meticulous descriptions of daily life of Christians of the Urmia plain, their customs, feasts, society structure, faith, religious practices and their relations with the Muslim community and authority.

In order to compare Said’s conception of Orientalizing with Perkins’ views on various aspects of the Orient it is necessary to have an insight into Perkins’ observations and outlooks about daily life of the inhabitants of the Urmia plain expressed in his own words in a book published as the fruit of his initial experience in the region. I will make an attempt to investigate it through several dimensions of reality at that time such as landscape, society, other ethnic and religious groups, beliefs, military and civilization.

### **Selection of excerpts from *A residence of eight years in Persia...***

At the very beginning of the book Perkins shares with us his observation on the country:

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<sup>13</sup> F. T. Persons, *Justin Perkins article*, in: Dictionary of American Biography Vol. VII, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934, pp. 475–476.

The climate of Oroomiah is *naturally* one of the finest in the world. It resembles, in its temperature, the climate of our Middle States. Unhappily, however, *artificial* causes are at work which render it decidedly unhealthy, - particularly to foreigners. A country so charming, - so bright under the effulgence of its clear heavens and grateful with the thrifty growth of its abundant crops, represents to the *eye* so much of the aspect of an *Eden*, as almost to forbid the idea of the approach of sickness and pain. But the foreigner who resides there, is soon forced to feel that its brilliant skies and balmy breezes, beautiful and grateful as they are, are still surcharged with elements of disease and death.<sup>14</sup>

As we can see this excerpt explicitly exemplifies Said's contention that nineteenth century writers often described the Orient as mysterious and dangerous.<sup>15</sup> Although, the following sentences trace the same idea of *wild East*, they make distinction between urban and mountain Nestorians:

The Nestorians of the mountains resemble their Koordish masters and neighbors, not only in their modes of living, but also in the exceeding rudeness, wildness and boldness of their character. The inhabitants of different districts often fall into futile quarrels and plunder each other; and if remonstrance is offered, the pillagers sometime justify themselves by replying, that they plunder their Christian brethren, to save the spoil from the Koords!<sup>16</sup>

The Nestorians of Oroomiah partake much, in their manners, of the suavity and urbanity of the Persian character. By the side of their rude countrymen from mountains, though originally from the same stock, they appear like antipodes. They themselves denominate Nestorian mountaineers, *wild men*.<sup>17</sup>

By way of contrast Perkins, quite surprisingly, enumerates similarities between Nestorians and Americans, both in physical appearance and certain common positive qualities:

The Nestorians, like their Muhammedan masters and neighbors, are very fine looking people. Their stature is nearly the same as our own. Their features are regular, manly, intelligent and

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<sup>14</sup> Justin Perkins, *A residence of eight years in Persia among the Nestorian Christians; with notices of the Muhammedans*, New York: Allen, Morrill & Wardwell, 1843, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> E. Said, p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> J. Perkins, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

often handsome. And their complexion, were their habits clean – particularly that of the Nestorians on the high mountains – would be nearly as light and fair as that common among Americans. In their character, they are bold, generous, kind, very artless for Asiatics, and extremely hospitable. Oppression, from their Persian masters, has never been able to reduce the Nestorians of Oroomiah, to the spiritless servility of Armenian Christians.<sup>18</sup>

However, Perkins does not restrict himself to his own view about the local people but also mentions indigenous inhabitants' opinions on the former, and it can be conceded that to a certain extent he remains critical by attempting to account for reasons of these judgments:

An old Turk and his son, belonging to Erzroom, fell in with our party, begging permission, for their better safety, to travel in company with us, through the Koordish region. 'The Kurds', said the Turk, 'are neither Muhammedans nor *infidels*, (Christians); they are *brutes*; they rob all whom they dare to rob, without discrimination.' All classes of the natives in those wild countries, account it a great privilege to perform their journeys in company with European travelers, as they are thus shielded, in some measure, against Koordish depredation, and oppression from the higher classes of their own countrymen.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless his religious education and position as a priest is undoubtedly a principal underlying his standpoint on faith affairs, as are in the cases with description on Dervishes and contrasting Nestorians with other eastern Christians:

The Dervishes are a set of religious vagrants, resembling in character and pretensions the miserable mendicants of another faith on the continent of Europe; and, like them, they are the most worthless dregs of society. They are, however, dreaded as well as detested.<sup>20</sup>

The *religious belief* and *practices* of the Nestorians are much more simple and scriptural than those of other oriental Christians. They have the deepest abhorrence of all image worship, auricular confession, the doctrine of purgatory, and many other corrupt dogmas and practices of the Papal, Greek and Armenian churches; while they cherish the highest reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and, in theory at least, exalt them far above all human traditions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 308.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 152.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 20.

Perkins also dispels all readers' doubts to what is his attitude and appraisal of the person of Muhammad when he calls him a *False Prophet*:

As Christian missionaries, too, we rejoiced that the Lord gives us such favor in the eyes of these Muhammedans, as to be admitted to their highest circles and to sit socially with their most venerated Mullahs – pointing us, as the sign of the time does, to the decay of Muhammedan prejudice, and the approaching period, when the followers of the False Prophet will rejoice to receive from the missionary's lips the glad tidings of salvation.<sup>22</sup>

But on the other hand we cannot reckon Perkins to be a person whose attitude towards Muslims is somehow driven by deliberate and blind hatred as he notices at times some virtues in them, as in this instance:

One of the Turks on board, sat on the deck today, engaged most of the time in reading the Koran. It is very common for Muhammedan merchants and mechanics who can read, to keep their sacred book lying by them, and whenever a leisure moment occurs, to spend it in perusing its contents. How ought the reverential regard which these followers of the False Prophet thus pay to the productions of an impostor, to rebuke nominal Christians for their neglect of the word of God!<sup>23</sup>

However he preserves his critical attitude not only to Islam, but to Roman Catholics too, what can be evidently seen in the following fragments written down in Gibraltar:

The new scenes, presented to us that day, greatly enlivened the tedium of our voyage. But we were deeply impressed with the feeling, that the lands which we saw are lands of darkness, where the Pope on the one hand, and the False Prophet on the other, sway their bloody and corrupting scepters.<sup>24</sup>

Perkins' book contains many entries comparing and placing in juxtaposition eastern and western customs, as in following sentences:

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 270.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, pp. 45-46.



The regulation of the Turkish relations with Persia rests principally with the Pasha of Erzroom. He took with him on this expedition about seven thousand men. They displayed better order than I had expected to see, in Turkish troops at Erzroom, though in Europe their evolutions would have appeared like a burlesque on military tactics.<sup>25</sup>

We also rose to retire with the Muhammedan ecclesiastics, but the ruler of the feast importuned us to stay a little longer, and to gratify his wishes and amuse our own curiosity, we remained. “Music and dancing” were soon introduced. The musicians were three in number, two using tambourines, and one, a rude violin. They played plaintive, oriental airs and accompanied their instruments with their voices, in shrill, screeching tones, that to an American or European ear sound most like the cries of distress.”<sup>26</sup>

As it might be expected Perkins, as well-educated ministry, not only gives detailed descriptions of some routine and casual meetings or situations he encountered, but also sometimes reaches conclusions or reflections on general affairs concerning, for instance, history of humankind, developing of civilization or technological progress:

“Indeed, rail-roads, may be constructed without much difficulty on the routes between Erzroom and Tabreez, whenever civilization and Christianity shall have so improved the moral condition of those regions as to render such enterprises secure.”<sup>27</sup>

And New England Rum, is still almost the only commercial representative with which our Christian, Protestant country, has ever yet honored the markets of distant, benighted, Muhammedan Persia! But the overruling hand of the Lord can, and does, cause the good greatly to preponderate over the evil. The swelling tide of trade and adventure, on which this liquid poison and demoralizing practices *steal* their passage, pours into the East far more light than darkness; far more blessings than curses; and with all its attendant evils, commerce is rapidly hastening the day, when holiness to the Lord shall be written on all the bells of its caravan horses. And is it by a mere figure, that the extending rail roads of Europe and America – a mode of communication which is destined to pervade the world – point us to the predicted period, when “every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made strait, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh

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<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 117.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 269.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 117.

shall see the salvation of God,” – a moral consummation which, as matter of fact, who can doubt that these rail-roads are rapidly hastening!”<sup>28</sup>

The savage Koords and the wild independent Nestorians are in little danger of injury, by being made to yield to influence of a regular Muhammedan government; especially, a Muhammedan government, which is now rapidly passing through a serious of mutations, that, in their progress, will shake to pieces the whole existing fabrics, and distribute the fragments among *civilized Christians nations*.<sup>29</sup>

Here and there he makes unexpected and surprising remarks on Nestorians that apparently would have been reckoned by them unacceptable or at least very controversial: "We have, at Oroomiah, felt the advantage, arising to our work, from the fact that docile Nestorians there, are under dominion to the Muhammedan powers that be. Our mission among them is doubtless far more prosperous, while they are in that dependent state, than it would be, if were subject to the unchecked caprices of a people, the mass of whom are so imperfectly influenced by the spirit of the gospel."<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusions**

In Said's work we can find many threads questioning the notion of Orientalism as a western imperfect and contorted view on Oriental society, policy, economy, history, literature and even geography. Although, there is no question of the many examples confirming that Perkins beheld the Eastern reality from a standpoint characteristic of Orientalists at that time, we can find other passages from his book proving that, concurrently, he was an attentive observer and participant of daily life of the Urmia plain's people. In order to weigh up both sides of the issue we need to compare features of the orientalising, as defined by Said, with the abovementioned excerpts from Perkins.

As far as the East is concerned as wild and distant it can be noticed that Perkins describes the Urmia plain as beautiful as Eden while its inhabitants are distinguished by him into two main types: the mountaineers and the urban Nestorians. Whereas, the latter are described as people of more refinement, the former are rude, wild and bold in their character.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 505.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 502.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, pp. 501-502.

So he does not treat the people of the region as identical, but attempts to search for differences between them.

Perkins, in general, holds a forthright and aboveboard view on Muhammad, in line with Christian Churches' teaching, calling him a "False Prophet". He never pretends to be impartial or at least attempts not to by expressing openly his personal belief in this regard as might be expected of a scientist. However, it is essential to bear in mind that his mission in the Urmia plain was, first and foremost, of a religious nature more than a scientific one.

By way of contrast we can discern Perkins' ambiguous attitude concerning Said's statement on Oriental discourse dominated by a Christian picture of Islam, which has become a symbol of terror and devastation. On the one hand, Perkins confirms it by expressing his own opinion on the Dervishes as vagrants and "the most worthless dregs of society", and quoting the Turk's judgment on Kurds as brutes. On the other hand, he attempts to account for reasons of such opinions of indigenous people and seems to deny Said's view when he apparently appreciates Muslims' ability to devote much of their free time to ponder the Koran as against Christians who often neglect to read the Bible. Another point in favour of Perkins' diverse view on Muslims is that he mentions and even praises an Islamic government of Persia for adopting resolutions aiming to improve living conditions of Christian nations. It is obvious that Perkins doesn't agree with Islamic doctrine, however, in the light of the analyzed excerpts the critical stance on Islamic religion should not be perceived as inevitably tantamount to hostility towards Muslims. Perkins is determined and convincing in his missionary work, but, he is unlikely to support preaching the Gospel by force or by expelling Muslims from their land and bringing in Christians instead, as European empires often did with pagan countries. In addition, he expresses a deep conviction that one day Muslims will rejoice to hear about "the glad tidings of salvation". In the absence of evidence to the contrary we can assume that it was his sincere wish for Muslims to take advantage of what is deemed by Christians as the best prize given by God to humankind through the Gospel – salvation, as was the case with western Christian nations.

However, Perkins reveals a tendency quite typical of numerous Orientalists at that time: considering success of western technology in the Middle East equivalent with the victory of Christianity, as in the case of railways, when he is very enthusiastic about new means of communication admiring the development of rail roads as a herald that the Gospel can reach people all over the world, as it was betokened in John Baptist's prophecy. Actually,

this confidence sounds really naïve taking into account that, in fact, the railways were built by companies with intention to make profit from it and served as a means of transport mainly for businessmen, workers and goods rather than Christian missionaries.

Although Perkins undoubtedly acknowledges western culture and technological superiority over Middle East countries, he remains critical of many features of western ways of life and even in some decisions issued by his missionary superiors. One of the most surprising and controversial of his statements is that the Gospel mission was far more prosperous due to the fact that Nestorians were submitted to Islamic authority rather than to power of Christians of other denominations, as we might conclude, that of Perkins', namely Presbyterian. His objections to other Christians probably stem from assumption that for instance, the Catholic Church, in particular, would be inclined to bring the mission to an end as heretic one.

To conclude, the objective of my study was far from to generalize whether Perkins is a typical Orientalist as defined by Edward Said or not. Its purpose was to investigate a presence of the Orientalizing motif as, to some extent, feature and tendency of the nineteenth century western literature, represented in this case by Justine Perkins' diary. His book can be accounted as quite a grateful example of both confirming and questioning this hypothesis. As we could see through analysis of selected excerpts concerning topics such as landscape, society, ethnic and religious groups, beliefs, the military and civilization, Perkins is liable to perceive and judge repeatedly the reality of the Urmia plain based on his western notion on customs of dressing, travelling, playing music, praying, eating, etc. which are more or less stereotypical. By way of contrast we can find other passages of more accurate notices, weighing in favour of considering him a mindful observer of many different aspects of demeanor and facets of social and religious customs of local people. Stated briefly, this can be evidence that his book is relatively comprehensive and cannot be definitely deemed as an unworthy product of nineteenth century Orientalism. In fact, the book, particularly in the light of oriental discourse, can be seen as a wide-ranging source of information, without which we would be deprived of knowledge on Christian and Islamic culture, customs and mutual relations between Christians and Muslim, for whom the Urmia plain seemed to be a distinguished and significant interface at that time.

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**Culture and Political Power on Local Level in Turkey  
The Case of Diyarbakir (Amed)**

The interconnectivity between culture and political power is apparent and obvious. Throughout history, those in power have used artists and their arts for their own purposes. Most art works in history have been commissioned under protection of influential people who gave artists the opportunity to realize their vocation. It was very rare that this kind of work was effected without the support of a Maecenas or a patron.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the involvement of people with political power in the arts has been a necessity. The French philosopher Régis Debray said that any political order needs the means to maintain its symbolic legitimacy, and nowhere are these means more significant than when that symbolic legitimacy must be established or protected. In this sense, one can say that cultural policy represents “a trans-historical imperative for all political orders”<sup>2</sup> and the instrumentality is a common trait of the cultural policies of all governments.

Whenever there are analysis on links between culture and politics in Turkey, the focus is given to issues of cultural policy of the Turkish central government, especially activity of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, protection of Anatolian cultural heritage and the Istanbul artistic scene. However, recently some new factors have enriched the discourse and open horizons on new needs in the sphere of cultural policy. These are primarily questions of cultural diversity of local communities and the need to introduce a semi-autonomous or more decentralized cultural policies implemented by local governments.

The ongoing cultural policy so far has been mainly located in Istanbul. It is commonly accepted that the metropolis have left a mark on Turkey’s cultural profile and nowadays is the cultural capital of Turkey. The city accommodates the Turkish film and music industries, media and broadcasting companies, a selection of museums, galleries and exhibition spaces, entertainment industry venues, and small, large and medium-sized cultural initiatives. Istanbul is constituting a centre that accumulates expertise and information on cultural policy, and serves both for Istanbul

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<sup>1</sup> Kees Vuyk, *The arts as an instrument? Notes on the controversy surrounding the value of art*, “International Journal of Cultural Policy” Vol. 16, No. 2, May 2010, pp. 173–183.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Ahearne, *Cultural policy explicit and implicit: a distinction and some uses*, “International Journal of Cultural Policy” Vol. 15, No. 2, May 2009, pp. 141–153.

and the rest of the country. The cultural organisations, activities and initiatives that take place in Istanbul set the cultural agenda of the country as a whole. It is a fact that this process led by Istanbul, as well as – what should be stressed – intentional, colonial policy of the government in Ankara based on a firm denial of the existence of cultures other than national Turkish, have worked against the welfare and cultural lives of other Anatolian cities as well as local ethnic communities.

However, long-standing national policy of cultural hegemony and Istanbul's special place on the cultural map of Turkey have not changed the fact that nowadays cultural production takes place in other cities and towns too. Culture is “produced” on a daily basis in the peripheries, within both formal structures established or supported by the municipalities of Ankara, Izmir and Antalya as well as Diyarbakır and the more informal networks of local associations, music schools, religious centers, local galleries and public parks. There are many cultural communities and interesting locally rooted cultural activities outside the mainstream attention shown by many external observers. Generally, the majority of this kind of cultural production in the peripheries remains out of sight.

A decentralized approach to the cultural sector and infrastructure and more focus on socio-cultural developments outside of traditional centers would also automatically encourage an involvement with the political processes that are already gradually transforming the local structures determining cultural policy across Turkey. In its recent “Strategic Development Report” from 2006, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism suggested that when the advantages and weaknesses of culture in the country are compared and analyzed, the principle of “multiplicity within unity” appears as its major strength. The document described culture as having a “polyphonic nature” and Turkey is described as “the country that possesses the heritage of many civilizations” (and Istanbul as the capital of three Empires – Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman). It is also stated that the roots of Turkish culture are to be found in Central Asia and that it was the culture that respected the rights of others within it to be different.<sup>3</sup>

It is a known fact that the formulation of cultural policy both on national and local level in Turkey started to be considered a priority concurrently with the country application for European Union membership. In tandem with the country's ongoing EU membership negotiations, heavy external and internal pressures such as fulfillment of the requirements of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and the increasing demand by citizens for more democracy and freedom, important steps have been taken towards the internal reform processes in public life, including the adoption of an officially ratified cultural policy. Development processes have taken place during the

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<sup>3</sup> Serhan Ada, *For a New Cultural Policy* [in] Introduction to Cultural Policy in Turkey, (ed.) S. Ada, H. Ayça İnce, Istanbul 2009, pp. 87-117.

last ten to fifteen years in which organs of the state gradually have had to reduce their involvement in cultural production. The old interventionist, omnipotent policy of monitoring and controlling culture that had taken place before that period is falling out of favour. One can observe that now it's much more complicated in Turkey to control and manipulate the phenomenon such as cultural polyphony.

The fundamental issue is to transform the state by releasing it from its previous role as the main content-producer, operator and distributor of culture to that of a facilitator and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has begun to put the question into practice.<sup>4</sup> Culture, within the party's vision and the framework of "mind shift" policy, started to be a vehicle that can be utilized to bring success to the state's neo-liberal western-oriented economic policies. The AKP gave a new direction to the instrumentalization of culture. The approach in question, after all, encourages the utilization of the cultural sector in various fields – from promotion of the country to marketing of the cities – as an advantage point within global economic competition. Since the AKP came to power the instrumentalization of culture has been shifting towards a new argumentation, at least officially, beyond ideological and nationalistic concerns and using culture as a means to promote the country and trademark the cities in the world. The second innovation that the AKP brought into cultural policy was that it prioritized the inclusion of the private sector with its investment capacity and the intentional withdrawal of governmental institutions from the position of being a central administrator in the cultural field for the municipalities.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, under the AKP government more and more cultural activities such as festivals, exhibitions or biennales are being produced and organized by the private sector and local authorities.

The decentralization process, which targets a more efficient use of urban resources in particular, is a global phenomenon that can be called "an era of local development through culture".<sup>6</sup> Facing the difficulties to find private sector partnership in many cities in Turkey that could develop a cultural sector, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has decided to leave the management and organization of cultural institution to local administrations in order to boost local

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of Atilla Koç, the Minister of Culture and Tourism in the first cabinet of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (March 14, 2003 till August 28, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Asu Aksoy, *The Atatürk Cultural Centre and AKP's „Mind Shift” Policy* [in] Introduction to Cultural Policy in Turkey, (ed.) S. Ada, H. Ayça İnce, Istanbul 2009, pp. 171-212. The privatization and decentralization processes are being discussed in Turkey since 2000.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1990's culture in the West began to be conceived as an economic tool for city development. Cities had to confront a basic dilemma regarding the nature of culture as a local policy: an "instrumental approach" where culture is a tool to promote economic development by using important cultural events and 'high culture', and a "planning approach" aimed towards promoting cultural services and events among their inhabitants." See more [in] *Governing cultural issues and scenes: Towards the emergence of a "Local Cultural Policy Domain"*, Clemente J. Navarro, Terry N. Clark, City Future '09 Conference EURA/UAA, Madrid, 4-6 June 2009.



potential. This was the aim of a draft law prepared by the Ministry of Culture for transferring libraries, cultural centers, information offices, art galleries and museums in the cities, towns and provinces to the municipalities within municipalities borders, and to local provincial administrations outside of these borders. Entered on the agenda of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 2006, this draft law came to be known in brief as “museums being turned over to municipalities”. The long term objective of the law was to be “invigorating cultural life and expanding cultural activities to the whole country”. The essential goal, however, was creating new resources to maintain and manage cultural properties. Though, regardless of the initial support for the transfer of cultural institutions to local administrations, the Turkish national assembly did not pass the proposed law.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the lack of full regulation at the level of the parliamentary law, relatively new executive regulations framework that is still in the implementation-planning phase, what became evident, more and more local administrations across the whole country, based on government regulations and the law package referred to as the Public Administration Reform<sup>8</sup>, are attempting to undertake different cultural projects. Looking at the list of cultural activities in the municipalities, one can observe a great variety of undertakings, including organization of festivals of poetry, literature, crafts, dance etc., publishing of books, running of meetings and conferences, management of theme parks, and setting up of new cultural institutions. It can be easily noticed that municipalities have now started to treat culture as an issue of brand management and have increased their investment to this end. And the other important observation at this point is that the local cultural domain has the potential to be an autonomous arena for cultures of local communities to manifest its own identity.

As prescribed by Article 9 of Law 5018 (Public Management and Control Law, 24/12/2003), details of culture-related topics are limited as they are defined by the appropriate article of the strategic plan prepared by the public administration which means the special provincial administration under the governor’s chairmanship. The SPA now has a right to receive loans to cover the expenses incurred in its provision of services, to issue bonds, to establish a stock cooperation in the areas of its authority, and to perform services requiring special income and expenses by starting a budgetary enterprise with permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But still the increase of authority and the autonomy defined by the new law is a long way off. Numerous examples show that in spite of existing devolved authority, the deficiencies regarding the

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<sup>7</sup> H. Ayça İnce, *Cultural Policies and Local Public Administration*, [in] Introduction to Cultural Policy in Turkey, (ed.) S. Ada, H. Ayça İnce, Istanbul 2009, pp. 235-261.

<sup>8</sup>The Law 5527 (Basic Principles and Reconstitution of Public Administration)15/07/2004

transfer of the budget have been evident.<sup>9</sup>

Listed among the culture-related responsibilities and competencies of municipalities are “providing culture and arts, tourism and publicity service; ensuring protection of cultural and natural heritage, and sites of historical significance; maintenance and repair of these sites and faithful reconstruction where protection is not possible.” In the other article of the same law, it is stated that “municipalities handle the necessary work to build social and cultural relationships between fellow residents and to protect cultural values”. Measures are required to ensure the participation of universities, public vocational institutions, unions, non-governmental organizations and experts in these activities. The other significant obligations posed by the transformation package are making strategic plans and performance programmes or setting performance-based budgets. But again the law package and financial mechanisms are still not sufficiently constructed and implemented.<sup>10</sup>

Cultural practices and activities carried out by municipalities and provinces differ according to the cultural background of the city and region, its geographical position and historical setting. Local influential personalities such as actors, the governor, rector or mayor and the composition of administration staff or financial capabilities also play a significant role in building up and developing the cultural sector. Each municipality has special priorities regarding their infrastructure, budget and requirements, but generally the most pressing issues in cities lie outside the sphere of culture. The services expected by citizens from the local officials are fundamentally basic necessities such as refuse disposal, water-supply and transportation issues rather than investment in culture and cultural activities. The most basic needs of villages and towns receive the most priority.

In above context the newly emerging centres such as Diyarbakır – the Kurdish metropolis in south-eastern Turkey, informally called the capital city of Turkish Kurdistan – are really interesting cases to analyze. The issue of decentralization of cultural policy in this city is especially complicated and has a strong connection with the Kurdish struggle for cultural rights and recognition of Kurdish identity by the central government. The situation here is entirely different from that of other cities in the western part of Turkey.

The specific circumstances prevailing in the city and the whole region can be traced back to recent historical events. The appearance of political parties in the political mainstream arena in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem. Within the current organization scheme, e.g. public museums have no direct administrative or financial links with the local administrations in their city or region. Allowances for public museums are allocated from the central budget. The state’s budget allocated to culture in general and to museums specifically is insufficient to meet the needs of these institutions.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

1990's<sup>11</sup> transformed the conflict from rural to urban localities. Since 1999 when the pro-Kurdish parties began to take over local municipalities in south-eastern provinces, they have played a pivotal role in channeling the political demands of the Kurdish nationalists and establishing a new agenda of Kurdish nationalism alternative to PKK. Since their arrival and the beginning of the decentralization process in the whole country, Diyarbakır has been marked by the strength of the pro-Kurdish parties and activists environment, and widely publicized Kurdish nationalist aspirations and demands. The Kurdish local authorities first initiated festivals dedicated to Kurdish culture where three Kurdish dialects – Kurmanji, Zaza and Sorani – were used. They started ipso facto to introduce counter-narratives in the culture domain to those of the old authorities, what is – paraphrasing philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre – a natural order as each new form of political power introduces its own particular way of producing the content of cultural narrative and cultural policy. The struggle for culture that was initiated by these municipal councils, the fact that should not be omitted from the beginning, have encountered many obstacles created by the state appointed governorship and the military. The latter agents of the national state have often intervened by banning organizations and prohibiting taking up some undertakings and practices.<sup>12</sup>

Over a decade of Kurdish cultural policy on the local level in the city of Diyarbakır looks to be thriving. It's worth exploring its current mission and objectives as well as what kind of forms it will take. As the subject matter experts explain, the first and primary aim of the policy is to become the owner of ones own culture and to save it from extinction. The municipality of Diyarbakır has found a way to protect its culture – for nearly 90 years threatened and destroyed by applying colonial methods – by making it visible and vivid through publishing literature in Kurdish, setting up its own cultural bodies and organizing live cultural events. Their goal is to revive the Kurdish culture, “not just to exhibit it as artifacts in museum”<sup>13</sup>, in order to generate a widespread interest in the culture. From the formal point of view, Diyarbakır city authorities can operate in the sphere of culture within the framework of a five-year plan – the strategic action plan of the municipal that remains the responsibility of the department of culture and tourism. For cultural purposes they have at their disposal 3.5-4% of the total local budget.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>For the first time legally recognized political party representing the Kurds in Turkey Halkın Emek Partisi (People's Labor Party) gained seats in the Grand National Assembly.

<sup>12</sup>Muna Güvenç, *Constructing Narratives of Kurdish Nationalism in the Urban Space of Diyarbakir*, Turkey, TDSR Vol. XXIII, No 1 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Cevahir Sadak Düzgün, deputy head of the Department of Culture and Tourism of the municipal council of the city of Diyarbakır (Amêd), Diyarbakır, 8 July 2013 r.

<sup>14</sup> This part of the paper is mainly based on interviews made with officials and intellectualists active in the cultural sector in Northern Kurdistan (Turkey) in 2013.

In the process of a new rebirth of culture one of the main elements, emphasized by many interlocutors<sup>15</sup>, is to revitalize the role of language. The ambitious task is especially difficult to fulfill, mainly because of the lack of written culture in Kurdistan and hence primary sources speaking about the past that can be used. To save it before disappearing, there is a need – using the words of municipality official – "to create it again". For the purpose of restoring the language the municipality organizes among others conferences on Kurdish language and literature in Diyarbakır. The initial one held in 2003 garnered much attention and interest and was an unprecedented event, if only because for the first time in Kurdish history, Kurdish intellectuals were discussing their native literature. That conference, till now organized on regular basis, is still a very popular and acclaimed event. There are also special rewards funded by the city council for those authors, in particular, who write their works in Kurdish. Other basic difficulties encountered today are that the Kurdish language ceased to be the language of the city and region and as before speaking in Kurdish is understood in political terms. Generally, common unfamiliarity with Kurdish causes a big problem with the public or in other words recipients of the Kurdish cultural production. In order to prepare the Kurds to be conscious participants of their own culture the city council entities have started offering courses of Kurmanji for residents so that they can communicate in their mother tongue.

Beyond issues of language the local authorities take up a lot of activities on a varying scale and scope. The Kurdish cultural festival introduced at the end of 90s have worked well and achieved its goals. Born out of the festival more mature forms of activities have been created. Nowadays the municipality has provided and given leeway to specialized festivals: theater, music, film, literature, engaged in publishing and established many cultural institutions, such as the Aram Tigran Conservatory, the Mehmed Uzun Library, the Diyarbakır City Museum etc. It has also an extensive external cooperation with Kurdish cultural and academic organizations and institutions, including those from the Iraqi Kurdistan, and abroad. There is a strong relationship with the Institute of Culture in Istanbul, the Navenda Çanda Mesopotamya (the Mesopotamia Cultural Center) and the Mardin Artuklu University. Though, as the authorities ensure, they try to invite all the organizations functioning in the region when there are plans to organize some cultural or scientific projects.

In terms of foreign cooperation, the Diyarbakır municipality tries to be very open with different international contacts, that is confirmed by the fact that the Kurdish capital city are twinned with Dohuk, Las Vegas, Nashville and Hanover or by ad hoc cooperation with artists,

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<sup>15</sup>Interviews with vice rector of the Mardin Artuklu University, Kadri Yıldırım and mayor of Diyarbakır, Osman Baydemir, July 2013.

teachers and intellectuals from Austria, France or Armenia. To give festivals in Kurdistan an international reach, they are turning to foreign embassies to gain support. They also have strong connections to city councils in Kurdistan in Iraq that are invited and involved in many projects staged in Diyarbakır.

In the beginning of 2000's legal obstacles or financial problems with the Turkish state occurred on daily basis. The central government and its provincial administration created a lot of difficulties in the organization of various projects. Now the situation is more calm but at the same time, according to interlocutors, the state started to use another method to reduce the importance of the work undertaken by the municipalities of Diyarbakır. It began to organise an alternative and competitive cultural policy for the Kurdish city council. One example of Ankara's deliberate policy was the fact that after setting up the Sümer Park by the city administration, the state response was the creation of a children's playground next to the park. This kind of competition and their superior budget capabilities – as claimed by Kurdish officials – is a big challenge for the not too rich Kurdish authorities having to spend on infrastructure and other basic needs.

Cultural policy is, as mentioned before, by definition instrumental and without intrinsic value – it may only be of value for different groups of citizens or the society at large. All cultural policy is therefore directed to goals that are beyond culture itself.<sup>16</sup> It seems that the Kurdish local authorities, representing a significant group of the Turkish Kurds, take benefit of current political, legal and administrative opportunities in Turkey and use culture in their own way to achieve – not purely cultural – objectives and implement values that lay behind their nationalist agenda.

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<sup>16</sup> See more: Geir Vestheim, *Cultural Policy and Democracy. Theoretical Reflections*, "International Journal of Cultural Policy", Vol. 13, No. 2, 2007.

## Aleksander Chodźko's Report on the Kurds of North and East Iran

Aleksander Chodźko (1804-1891) was a Polish romantic poet, Russian diplomat in Qajar Iran, professor of Slavic literatures in Collège de France and an outstanding orientalist.<sup>1</sup> He has been known as one of the first scholars who wrote on Kurdish language. His *Études philologiques sur la langue kurde (dialecte de Soléimanié)* published in the *Journal Asiatique* No 4 (1857)<sup>2</sup> are, in reality, an outline of Kurdish grammar, with some textual examples. As Chodźko explains in his introduction, he wrote this work in Paris, some fifteen years after his visits to Khorāsān, Alamut, Hamadān, Garrus (south-west of Hamadān), Takht-e Soleymān, Marāghe and the shores of the lake Shāhi, the regions inhabited or visited by different Kurdish tribes, where he had taken some notes of their dialects. Yet, he was able to make use of these notes only after many years, with substantial help from a certain Ahmad-khān, native of Soleymāniye, who came to Paris, apparently as a Turkish diplomat, in 1853 and stayed over the next year. In spite of some serious health problems while in Paris, Ahmad-khān agreed to cooperate with Chodźko in his work on the Kurdish language, checked his notes, dictated to him a large amount of new material and explained to him some grammatical peculiarities of his native language of which however, as Chodźko states, he had much less knowledge than he had of Persian and Turkish.

Ahmad-khān planned to put Chodźko in touch with the poet Na'li who lived in Damascus and was famous for his study of various Kurdish dialects, as a person who would be able to verify the raw material of the work. Besides, he promised Chodźko to get him some books of Kurdish poetry, in particular the epos of *Mam-o Zin* by Ahmad Khāni (acc. to Chodźko: *un poëte indigène, du XVIIe siècle, contemporain du poëte persan Djami. Son takhallos est Dabel, et son véritable nom, Chéikh Ahmedi*).<sup>3</sup> But since Ahmad-khān was unexpectedly called back to Istanbul, their cooperation ceased and after several years Chodźko decided to publish his notes as they were, in particular as some works on Kurdish

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<sup>1</sup> See: J. Calmard, *Chodzko, Alexandre*, Encyclopaedia Iranica V, Costa Mesa 1992, pp. 502-4; A. Krasnowolska, *Aleksander Chodźko (1804-1891) and his 'Oriental' poems*, "Folia Orientalia" 39, 2003, pp. 71-81.

<sup>2</sup> Also in form of a separate brochure, the pages numbered 1-60.

<sup>3</sup> *Études*, p. 2

language and literature, especially by Russian scholars, were already appearing in Europe. In this context he names, among others, the works by Berezin, the publication of *Tārikh-e akrād* of Sharaf-khān and a Kurdish translation of Sa'di's *Golestān* edited by Von Dorn, as well as some popular songs, collected from Kurdish prisoners of the Crimean war and published by Lerch. He does not mention the works in this field by his Lithuanian compatriot and former university colleague August Žaba (1801-1894), probably because by that time they had not been published yet.

In Chodźko's time systematical research on Iranian languages was just beginning, so he had difficulties with the classification of the language which was the object of his investigation. He notices its close similarities to Persian (*la grammaire en est presque identique avec celle du farsi, persan moderne*<sup>4</sup>, that is not quite precise, as we know today) and its large (ca 1/3) amount of borrowings: from Persian, Turkish and Arabic. As for the rest of Kurdish vocabulary, Chodźko states that it belongs "to an unknown language and, in consequence, is much older than islamism, modern Persian and Turkish: this is the Kurdish language proper, probably identical with the language of the cuneiform inscriptions of Ninive, Khorsabad etc."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Chodźko supposes the Kurds to be native inhabitants of the lands of North Mesopotamia and Anatolia, probably to be connected with the ancient civilizations of the region. On the other hand, while noticing grammatical similarities between the Kurdish and Persian, languages, he seems to be unaware of their common roots.

Chodźko notices the existence of dialectal differences within the Kurdish language. As for the dialect which is the object of his study, he decides to call it *le dialecte de Soléimanié*<sup>6</sup>, (being probably the first to use this term), although he considers this designation merely a working term. About the city of Soleymāniye he writes that it has been founded recently (1714) by Soleymān, the leader of local Kurdish tribe of Bébé (Bābān)<sup>7</sup> of the Shahr-e zur (*Chehri-Zour*) province (his source, Ahmad-khān, introduced himself as one of Soleymān's descendents). And if Chodźko decides not to use the name *Bébé* to designate the dialect in question, it is, as he explains, only because "... the enormous tribe of the Bébé Kurds dwells in different regions and speaks, apparently, more than one dialect; thus, for example, the Rishvand (*Richvend*) Kurds who live in the villages of Alamut (*Alemoute*) and Rudbar-e

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem., p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Loc. cit; this and the following quotations transl. by A. Krasnowolska.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> See W. Behn, *Bābān*, EIr III, London-N. York 1989, p. 307.

Qazvin (*Roudbari Kazbine*), and with whom I had contact for several years, belong to the Bébé tribe, as well. Yet, their language which they call lulu (*loulou*) contains the words which Ahmad-Khān does not remember to have ever heard in his native country.”<sup>8</sup>

Chodźko spent over a decade in Iran, mostly in the city of Rasht in Gilān, where he was the Russian consul from 1830 until 1841. He made several trips to various destinations in the northern part of Iran, of which he made many detailed and valuable observations. He published a part of his travel notes in the form of articles and separate brochures, mainly in French, less frequently in Polish, although Polish was, apparently, the original language of his travelogues. In his reports from these travels, made in the thirties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chodźko in several instances speaks of the Rishvand and some other Kurdish tribes, met by him in the north and the north-east of Iran, in the areas outside of Kurdistan proper. As we know today, their presence in those provinces of Iran had been a result of mass relocations of nomadic tribes by the Safavid shah Abbās I (1581-1629), and to less extent by his predecessors; further moves and resettlements of the tribes occurred under Nāder-shāh (1736-47) and during the tribal wars for power, which were going on in Iran throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In his monograph of the Gilān province, Chodźko mentions the Kurds as one of the ethnic groups incoming to Gilān and he characterizes them as follows:

The Kurds who have arrived in Gilān in the times of Nāder-shāh Afshār, all belong to the Rishvand family. Their leader, with the *ilkhani* title, resides in Quchān, in the highlands of Khorāsān. The Rishvand Kurds are a branch of the large Bébé tribe, which originates from the land between Erzerum and Shahr-e zur.<sup>9</sup>

In the sequel of his report Chodźko tells us that on the order of Shāh Abbās the First, 800 *ojaq* (families)<sup>10</sup> of the Rishvand Kurds were moved from their fatherlands, and now they live on both sides of Shāh-rud and along the right bank of Sefīd-rud, from the Menjil bridge up to Deylamān (*Deliman*). The Kurds speak among themselves a dialect which neither the Persians nor the Turks can understand. The following examples of their language can be

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<sup>8</sup> Chodźko, op. cit., p. 6

<sup>9</sup> *Le Ghilan ou les marais caspiens; description historique et géographique du pays qui borde au sud la mer caspienne ...*, Paris 1850 p.84-5; Persian translation: *Sarzamīn-e Gilān*, tarj. Dr. S. Sahāmi, Rasht 1384 (2005).

<sup>10</sup> Chodźko estimates the size of an average nomad family for 6 persons.



mentioned: *wakkaka* meaning a gun, *ghiawisl* – a stone, *deilezzi* – a horse, *ou-bedu* – a sheep, *courtan* – bread, *ketch* – girl, *znar* – boy.<sup>11</sup>

Chodźko comments, in particular, on one group of the Rishvands, namely the Ammārlu Kurds<sup>12</sup>:

The Rishvands who live in the mountains of Gilān are known under the name of Ammārlu (*Emmerlou* in his rendering). Their presence in the borderlands of Gilān brings more damage than benefits; for no social unrests in Gilān can pass without the bands of armed Rishvands and Ammārlus looting the caravans of Rasht.<sup>13</sup>

In another place in the same book Chodźko speculates, rather unrealistically, on the origin of the name of the Ammārlu tribe, connecting it with the name of an ancient people of Amardoi [Mardoi in Herodotus], which had lived at the Caspian shores in antiquity:

The Emmerlous are a Kurdish tribe, scattered along the right banks of Sefid-rud, between the bridge of Menjil and Deylamān. We know that the Amardis were driven to that very area under the pressure of the Deylamis. The Rishvand Kurds, who replaced them in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in this territory, have kept the name of the native inhabitants of that land, adding to it the Turkish ending *-lu*.<sup>14</sup>

More details on the history of the Rishvand tribe, as remembered by its representatives, are found in Chodźko's report from an expedition to Alamut<sup>15</sup>, made on the days 1-8 May 1835.<sup>16</sup> In the village of Mohammadābād in Rudbār-e Alamut Chodźko was hosted by Aliqoli-khān Rishvand, who told him about the past of his people. Chodźko's summary of this tale is as follows:

The Rishvand tribe is a branch of a great family of Kurds known as Bébé, settled in Kurdistan, between Erzerum and Van and speaking the lulu (*loulou*) language. Esmāil-shāh of the Safavi

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<sup>11</sup> *Le Ghilan*, p.85; in the introduction to his *Études philologiques* (p. 5) Chodźko would state, that his informer from Soleymāniye does not know these words.

<sup>12</sup> P. Oberling, *Ammārlu*, EIr I, London-Boston 1985, p. 977, qualifies the `Ammārlu and Rishvand at two separate tribes, competing with one another; on their localization he quotes briefly an evidence by Chodźko's contemporary, Rawlinson.

<sup>13</sup> *Le Ghillan*, pp. 84-5; *Sarzamin*, p. 92

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Alamut is located close to Gāzorkhān, east from the township of Mo'allem Kalāye, N.E. from Qazwin

<sup>16</sup> *Hasan Sebbah i jego zwolennicy legitymiści perscy*, „Przegląd Poznański” XVI, 1853, pp. 107-119.

dynasty [1501-1524] transferred the Rishvands from the region of Erzerum to Herāt. They lived there until the time of Nāder-shāh who allowed them to return to their homeland. Such a removal takes a long time. Some 1000 Rishvand families had reached Rudbar walking through the mountains as a sort of vanguard, another dozen thousand of them had just entered Khorāsān, and the rest did not yet leave Afghanistan, when the news of Nāder-shāh's death reached them. The Rishvands gave up their further way and settled where they were at the moment. Aliqoli-khān was a descendant of those newcomers who settled in Rudbar of Alamut, but who still acknowledged, as their leader, Rezāqoli-khān who resided in Quchān in Khorasani Kurdistan, with the title of *ilkhāni*, i.e. the hereditary khan of the Rishvand Kurds.”<sup>17</sup>.

Another Kurdish tribe met by Chodźko on his way to Alamut, in the plains around Qazvin, was the Māfi tribe<sup>18</sup>, who lived in black tents, “pastured sheep, and, whenever a chance arose, looted and robbed caravans”<sup>19</sup>.

Besides, Chodźko mentions the presence of Jalilvand Kurds<sup>20</sup> in the Alamut district. Their leader, Safar Ali-khān was the elder of the Shahrak village, east of Mo'allem Kalāye. Chodźko and his companions spent a night in his house, in absence of the host but entertained by his family women who treated the guests to a lavish meal, however without showing themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Oberling in his entry on Kurdish tribes in Iran (*EIr*), basing himself on Rabino, states the presence of Rishvand and Ammārlu in Gilān in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and confirms it for the present times (Rishvand living now mostly in Qazvin province, Ammārlu between Menjil and Pirakuh in S.E. Gilān). As for Māfi and Jalilvand, he includes them in a larger group of small Kurdish tribes, still inhabiting the Qazvin province, of the Māfi saying that they dwell nowadays along the Qazvin-Teheran road.

Another journey in which Chodźko met Kurdish nomads, was his expedition in search for the Caspian Pyles of Alexander the Great, made on February 18-24, 1835, together with the British Captain Rawlinson<sup>22</sup>. Their itinerary led east from Teheran, through Rey and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Mā`āfi acc. to P. Oberling, see his entry *Kurdish tribes in Persia*, EIr, [www.iranica.com](http://www.iranica.com)

<sup>19</sup> Hasan Sebbah, p. 108

<sup>20</sup> See P. Oberling's entry Jalilavand in EIr, [www.iranica.com](http://www.iranica.com).

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 110

<sup>22</sup> *Une excursion de Téhéran aux Pyles caspiennes* (1835), « Nouvelles annales des voyages », sept. 1850, t. III, 280-308. Rawlinson also has left his travel notes from this expedition, but they were non-available to the

Varāmin, towards the borders of the Khorāsān province. When proceeding from Varāmin eastwards, alongside the southern outskirts of the Alborz mountains, Chodźko lists a dozen of nomad and semi-nomad tribes of different origins, camping in the plains around Eyvān-e Key, (some 6 farsakhs east from Varāmin)<sup>23</sup>, among which he notes a thousand families described as “Kurds – a Persian tribe from Shirāz and Khorāsān”, and an unknown number of “Pazeki – Turks from Khorāsān, who are being employed as the shah’s *haras* (guards)”. According to Oberling “the Pāzuki is the principal Kurdish group in the [Tehrān] province. According to Albert Houtum-Schindler (p. 50), it was once a powerful tribe residing near Erzerum in Anatolia; but it was broken up in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, a fragment settling around Varāmin and Qār”.

Going further east, Chodźko notes the presence of 200 more Kurdish families, grazing their herds in the plains of Qār at the borders of Khorāsān<sup>24</sup>. In none of these cases do we learn the more precise identities of the group in question.

In another article written on the base of his field notes<sup>25</sup>, Chodźko gives a review and short characteristics of the nomad and sedentary tribes as they were located in the thirties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the Perso-Turkmeno-Afghan borderlands of Khorāsān.

Here, on the northern outskirts of Khorāsān, Chodźko reports a massive presence of the Kurds, again qualifying them as Rishvand. As he explains, the aim of their settling there was the protection of Khorāsān against the regular raids of Turkmen nomads, who kidnapped the inhabitants and traded them as slaves in Bukhara and Khiva.

The Safavid shahs had found a way to protect the Khorāsān (*Korâçân*) against this permanent disaster: they colonized all the southern slopes of the Albourz mountains by some 60 thousand families of Rishvand Kurds, a warlike race, coming from the large Bébé tribe originating from the lands between Erzerum and Shahr-e zur.

As he continues, under Nāder-shāh the Kurds were exempted from taxes and they protected all the mountain passes from the invaders, so that Khorāsān became safe and flourishing, and steadily the Kurdish khans turned into powerful lords and gained much

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author of the present article.

<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., p.295.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 302.

<sup>25</sup> *Le Korâçân et son hero populaire Buniad Hezaré*, « La Revue orientale » 2/2, 1852.

influence in the region. They resided in the fortified towns such as Shirvān, Bojnurd, Chenārān<sup>26</sup> and Samalqān<sup>27</sup>. Especially after the fall of Nāder-shāh and the Zands they felt independent and became insolent, frequently entering in cooperation with the Turkmens in slave trading. Writing his report some time around 1835, Chodźko adds:

In spite of the severe punitive expedition led against them by the deceased heir apparent Abbās-mirzā who, in 1831 came on the head of a regular army and destroyed their strongholds, the Kurds never stopped to depopulate Khorāsān, either in complicity with the Turkomans, or on their own.<sup>28</sup>

As can be seen, Chodźko qualifies the majority of the Kurds met in Gilān, Rudbar and Khorāsān, as belonging to the Rishvand tribe, part of a still larger Bābān confederation, speaking a language called *lulu*, and originating from the country which stretches between Erzerum and Shahr-e zur, up to the lake of Van. In spite of the differences which he observed, Chodźko qualifies the language of his Soleymāni source as the same language which is spoken by the Kurds from the north-east.

As can be concluded from the intermediary sources, Rabino and Rawlinson, who visited the same places at the Caspian shores as Chodźko did in approximately the same time, give similar information on the local Kurdish tribes of Rishvand and Ammārlu. Rawlinson calls the Ammārlus “a division of the great Lulu tribe”. According to Oberling, no such tribe has ever existed, although he admits, that Minorski suggests the traces of a Kurdish tribe named Lolo somewhere in Upper Syria.

Relatively little research has been done about these dispersed pockets of Kurdish populations transferred to the east either by the Safavids (Abbās I in particular) or later on. They have survived and kept their identity until recent times.

A.H. Sa’idiān describes the range of Kurdish population in the today Khorāsān as “all over the North of Khorāsān, in the regions of Bojnurd, Shirvān, Quchān, Chenārān, Darre Gaz, up to Kalāt, north of Torbat-e Heydāriye and Esferā’in.”<sup>29</sup> As he adds, these Kurdish

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<sup>26</sup> Between Shirvān and Bojnurd

<sup>27</sup> West from Bojnurd (Āsh-khāne of today?)

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem,

<sup>29</sup> A.H. Sa’idiān, *Mardom-e Irān*. Mardomsenāsi-vo ādāb-o rosum-e aqvām-e irāni, Tehrān 1375 (1996), p. 501.

tribes of Khorāsān which still live a nomad's life, in summer graze their herds "in the highlands of Quchān, Shirvān, Hezār Masjed, Kappe-dāgh, Shāhjahān, Binālud, and in general in the mountains of the North of Khorāsān, and their winter quarters are in Gonbad and Marāve-tappe, in the East of Mazandaran, at the shores of the Atrak river, in the valleys around Bojnurd, Darre Gaz, Chenārān, Ahmadābād, Jennatābād, Sarakhs, and in particular in the valleys of Quchān."<sup>30</sup> From Sa'idiān's list of nomad tribes of Khorāsān, not always their ethnic identity can be guessed. Those, which he presents as Kurdish, the following can be named:

- Chasmgazak, composed of the sub-tribes of Za'farānlu, Sādlu, Qāchkānlu (Bāchvānlu), Kāvānlu, Ammārlu, Qarāchurlu, settled in Khorāsān in the times of the Safavids, Afshars and Qājārs, in: Kapkān, Atānlu, Dotānlu, Bajvānlu, Pālkānlu and Noukhandān.<sup>31</sup>
- Bāchvānlu or Qāchkānlu, a sub-tribe of Chasmgazak, settled during the reign of Esmā'il and Abbās I, living in the villages of Khanlānlu, Borj-[e] Qal'e, Pālkānlu and Jolfā.
- Zeydānlu of the Kormanj tribe, settled in the Qājār times, living in the village of Zeydānlu in the district (*dahestān*) of Bāchvānlu of the Noukhandān *bakhsh*.

Oberling, in his article on the ethnic groups of Khorāsān (*Eir*), as the most powerful Kurdish tribes settled in this province since the Safavid period, names the Za'farānlu, the Šādlu (or Šādilu), Keyvānlu and Ammārlu tribes.

About the Za'farānlu he writes that they were brought to Khorāsān by Abbās I around 1600, and settled to the north of the Atrak river, but in the subsequent years they crossed to its southern side and settled in the mountain territory around the towns of Shirvān and Quchān. From the time of shāh Abbās I until Rezā-shāh Pahlavi (1925-41) the leaders of the Za'farānlu tribe, with the title of *ilkhāni*, were hereditary governors of the latter town. So, when Chodźko, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mentions a branch of the Rishvands, whose tribal leader resides in Quchān, he certainly means the Za'farānlu tribe. According to British Intelligence sources quoted by Oberling, in 1945 some 12,5 thousand families lived around Quchān and Shirvān, 2.600 of them being nomadic.

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<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., p. 504.

The Shādлу tribe was transferred to Khorāsān about the same time as the Za'farānлу, and just like them they first settled in the Turkmen territories north of the present Iranian border, and then, under the pressure of Turkmen tribes, they steadily moved southwards and settled around the city of Bojnurd (west from Shirvān). Their principality, which survived till the early years of Rezā-shāh, stretched from Samalqān and Māne in the north to Jājarm (south-west from Bojnurd) and Esferā'in in the south. Until the early 30s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Shādлу and Za'farānлу formed a federation, which then split in two, when the khan of the Shādлу tribe rebelled against the Za'farānлу leadership. Chodźko does not mention this event. In 1945 the Shādлу numbered some 15 thousand families, all of them sedentary.

The Keyvānлу were transferred to the north of Khorāsān about the same time as the two previous groups. A part of the tribe lived in Rādkān district (half-way between Mashhad and Quchān), with the Hezār Masjed mountains as their summer grazing grounds (north east from Rādkān), a part of them living in Darre Gaz (north from Rādkān, on the Turkmen border), and another part in Joveyn. According to the reports from the early years of Rezā-shāh's rule they numbered some 8,000 families.

The Amārlу were settled in Khorāsān by Nāder-shāh, thus in the 40s of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They live northwest of Nishāpur, and in the 20s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were estimated to be 500 families.

Besides these four big tribal units, Oberling after Afshār-e Sistāni names some 25 smaller ones, dispersed in the north of Khorāsān. As he states, the Khorasani Kurds speak a northern dialect, close to Mokri, but with many Persian and Turkish borrowings, and most of them are Shi'ite.

What can be added is, that the Khorāsāni Kurds designate their language as Kurmanji and some of them seem to be Ahl-e Haqq<sup>32</sup>. Until recently they have kept their traditional dress, their music and dances (e.g. of the *chub-bāzi* type) and some typically Kurdish customs, such as the staging of the New Year King (*khān-khāni*) on the Nouruz<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Oral communication by the Kurds from the Radio Khorāsān in Mashhad in 1977.

<sup>33</sup> Oral communication on the customs of Joveyn and the region by the late prof. A. Joveyni, Kraków 1990 (?)