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## UNUTULAN TÜRKLER: LÜBNAN'DA TÜRK VARLIĞI

## THE FORGOTTEN TURKS: TURKMENS OF LEBANON

## الأترك المنسيون الوجود التركماني في لبنان

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

مركز الشرق الاوسط للدراسات الإستراتيجية



# **THE FORGOTTEN TURKS: TURKMENS OF LEBANON**

**Report No: 11**

**February 2010**

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Oytun Orhan  
ORSAM Middle East Researcher  
oytunorhan@orsam.org.tr

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# THE FORGOTTEN TURKS: TURKMENS OF LEBANON

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## Summary

The Turkish presence in Lebanon is barely known to the Turkish public. In order to fill this gap, and to get information about the Turks in Lebanon, ORSAM conducted a field study between June 10 and June 20 in Lebanon. Every Turkmen village and Turkish community in Lebanon was visited, and their authorities, prominent figures and villagers were interviewed.

There are five Turkish communities in Lebanon. Each of these communities have a different history. These groups are: Akkar Turkmens living in two villages near Qoubaiyat in the Northern Province, The Baalbeck Turkmens living in five small settlements around the City of Baalbeck and one village near the city of Hermel in the Bekaa Province of Eastern Lebanon, the Cretan Turks who were brought to the lands under Ottoman control (Lebanon and Syria) when the island of Crete fell to Greece and attacks on the island's Turks increased. They currently live in Tripoli, the Turkish citizens in Beirut, who migrated from the southeastern Turkey due to economic reasons and settled in Lebanon, particularly in Beirut, in the 1940s, and Syrian Turkmens who migrated from Syria to Lebanon and lastly the Circassians who settled in the Middle East after the Ottoman-Russian War between 1877 and 1878.

As in every part of Lebanon, sectarianism is also extremely drastic among Turks in Lebanon. Therefore, their sectarian identity is more important to them than their ethnical identity. The dominant element of their identity is Sunni Islam. Although they are aware of their Turkmen identity, until recently they tended not to protect it, and their ethnic identity was eroded with each new generation. However, in recent years the idea of preserving Turkmen identity has come into prominence for

certain reasons. These are the efforts of Turkish Embassy, Turkey's increasing interest in Lebanon, Turkish troops coming to Southern Lebanon within the framework of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) and Turkishness being a source of pride for Turkmen in Lebanon.

Religion and Sunni Islam are two of the main points of reference in social relations and in the political views of Turkmen in Lebanon. It can be said that they are conservative and devout, but they do not have radical tendencies. Turkmen are not exposed to any oppression or threat for being Turkmen, but they have some problems because of their being Sunni. Since they are Sunnis, they support Saad Hariri and his party, the Movement of the Future. In all the villages visited Hariri posters and the flags of the Movement of the Future were frequently seen.

Thus Lebanon's Turkmen's relationship with Turkey is restricted to their ties with our Beirut Embassy and the Turkish military unit. Lebanese Turkmen visit the Turkish Embassy and the Turkish military unit frequently. In Turkmen villages many projects were completed, and some of them still continue thanks to the Embassy, the military unit and the Red Crescent society. Turkmen in Lebanon have been sympathetic to Turkey as Turkish interest in Turkmen has grown in recent years. There are some, who describe Turkey as their homeland.

### Introduction

The Turkish presence in Lebanon is barely known to the Turkish public. In order to fill this gap, and to get information about the Turks in Lebanon, ORSAM conducted a field study between June 10 and June 20 in Lebanon. The study is significant for two reasons: First, although there have been some articles and short documentaries about the Turkmen of Lebanon, this is the first detailed study which was conducted specifically to get information about the Turkish presence in Lebanon. Second, the study is based on field-

work. Every Turkmen village and Turkish community in Lebanon was visited, and their authorities, prominent figures and villagers were interviewed.

The primary aim of the study was to get information about the Turkish presence in Lebanon. On the other hand, alternative approaches for improving the living standards of the Turkmen, to strengthen their bonds with Turkey and to protect their threatened cultural identity have been developed as well. This is the framework for the six main sections of this study. The first section briefly deals with the history of the Turkmen of Lebanon. The second section deals with the settlement areas and demographic qualities of the Turkmen. The following three sections deal with cultural identity, political tendencies and relations with Turkey. The study concludes by offering some short and long term project recommendations for the Turkmen of Lebanon.

### History

There is no precise information about the history of Turkmen in Lebanon. Information is limited to the stories of the Lebanese Turkmen and the estimates of the Turkish authorities in Lebanon. Nor are there academic studies of the Turkmen in Lebanon. Still there is information that can provide some clues regarding the history of Turkmen in histories of Lebanon itself. These clues draw a picture that differs from the stories of the Turkmen. The stories and academic research offer us three different scenarios for the history of Turkmen in Lebanon:

The first scenario is based on the comments and stories of the prominent Turkmen villagers. According to the villagers, the Turkmen were brought along with Sultan Selim I's army during his campaign to Egypt and were settled in the conquered lands, beginning with Aleppo. They were rewarded with land and money and were encouraged to work in agriculture and animal husbandry. This strategy is believed to have served three purposes: to provide an in-

formation and intelligence link for Istanbul in these lands, to establish an intelligence network for possible counter strikes against the ongoing campaign, and to utilize the Turkmen villages as logistics stations during the return and on the next campaign. The Turkmens think that afterwards they were encouraged by the Ottoman Empire to stay in these lands.

The second scenario is also related to Sultan Selim I and his campaign to Egypt. According to it, Turkmens were settled in these lands before the campaign began in order to meet the logistical needs of the Ottoman soldiers during the campaign. Here the aim is the same as in the first scenario. Only the timing is different.

The third scenario is based on academic research and is completely different from the first two.<sup>1</sup> Studies of Lebanon and the Mamluks clearly state that the Turkmen presence in Lebanon dates to much earlier than the 1500's. In his research on Lebanon, Charles Winslow states: *"During the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the Mamluks who dominated Mount Lebanon divided the area between Kisrawan and Tripoli into regions and settled Turkmen families at strategic locations. However, after the Circassian Lord Berkuk overthrew the Turkish dynasty in 1382, relations between the Turkish families and the Circassian administration ceased. During the 1440s Turkmen lords ruled Kisrawan."*<sup>2</sup> The Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi's book, *A House of Many Mansions* states that Kisrawan was under Turkmen rule from 1306 to the 16th century.<sup>3</sup> Winslow's study says that in order to help keep the northern regions of Beirut under control, the Mamluks settled the Turkmen Assaf family in the region in 1306. It has also been claimed that the Turkmens collected taxes through farming contracts. The Turkmen branches mentioned were of Sunni and Turkish origin, just like the Mamluks and the Ottomans. Turks strengthened their hand by supporting the Ottomans in the Battle of Marj Dabiq were awarded a wider area of influence and their taxes were lowered in return.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this information, we can state that it is unlikely that the Turkmen presence in modern Lebanon dates to Sultan Selim I's campaign to Egypt as claimed. History books clearly indicate that Turkmen tribes were there before the Ottomans conquered these lands. Those tribes were settled during the rule of the Mamluks. They played an important role in Sultan Selim's campaign to Egypt and the Battle of Marj Dabiq and expanded their influence with Ottoman support afterwards. They served as a logistics station during the Battle of Marj Dabiq, but were not settled by the Ottomans to this end. They also ruled Kisrwan (close to where the Baalbeck Turkmens live today) and Tripoli (close to today's Akkar Turks) for a long time. Given the historical data, it is more likely that the Turkmens of Lebanon are the descendants of the Turkmen tribes who settled in the area in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### **The Turkmens of Lebanon: Geography, Population, Culture, Identity, Economy**

Turkey first found out about the Turkmens of Lebanon in 1989. A private named Halit Esad from the village of Kavashra serving in the Lebanese Army was heard speaking Turkish by his commander. The officer took the private to the Turkish Embassy, and thus the first contact was established. Ibrahim Dicleli, then Turkish Ambassador to Beirut, held a conversation with Esad, who stated that he was a Turkmen from Kavashra. Thereupon, Dicleli invited the prominent figures and elders of the village to the embassy and paid them a visit in return, establishing the first bonds. The Mayor of Kavashra says that villagers escorted the ambassador on his way back to Tripoli since civil war was still ongoing at the time. Since this first contact, every Turkish Ambassador has visited the Turkmen village in the Akkar region during their assignment to Beirut and this has become a custom. For a long time, the Turkmens of Lebanon were thought to live only in the Akkar region. With the guidance of the Kavashra villagers, Turkey contacted the Baalbeck Turkmens for the first time in 2007. The Cretan Turks were introduced to the Turkish community by the Cretan

Turk, Ali Bekraki, who went to medical school in Turkey and practices medicine in Tripoli. His personal efforts led to the first official contacts.

The Turkish presence in Lebanon can be classified under five headings:

**1. The Akkar Turkmen:** They live in two villages near Qoubaiyat in the northern Akkar Province.

**2. The Baalbeck Turkmen:** They live in five small settlements around the City of Baalbeck and one village near the city of Hermel which is in the Bekaa Province of Eastern Lebanon.

**3. The Cretan Turks:** These are Turks who were brought to the lands under Ottoman control (Lebanon and Syria) when the island of Crete fell to Greece and attacks on the island's Turks increased. They currently live in Tripoli.

**4. The Turkish Citizens and Syrian Turkmen in Beirut:** These are Turks who migrated from the southeastern Turkey due to economic reasons and settled in Lebanon, particularly in Beirut, in the 1940s, and Syrian Turkmen who migrated from Syria to Lebanon.

**5. Circassians:** These are Circassians who settled in the Middle East after the Ottoman-Russian War between 1877 and 1878.

During the fieldwork for this study, which deals specifically with the Turkmen of Lebanon, all the above communities and settlements were visited, and all of their prominent figures were interviewed. In the interviews, questions dealing with their population, geography, culture, identity definitions and political leanings, needs, opinions and expectations of Turkey were posed.

### **1. The Akkar Turkmen**

The Akkar region is in the province of North Lebanon. The Turkmen villages in Akkar which are located close to the Qoubaiyat settlement area are about 1 hour drive away from Tripoli. A passenger passes several Lebanese Army check points on the way. The villages are about

700-800 meters above from the sea level. Despite the high altitude, the villages are set on flat terrain. There are two Turkmen villages in Akkar.

#### *1.1 Kavashra Village*

The Kavashra Village takes center stage among these two villages since its villagers have managed to preserve their Turkish identity and are at least able to speak Turkish. The population is about 2,800 and consists of Sunni Turkmen. In the parliamentary elections of June 7, 2009, the official number of voters was 1,066.

The basic elements of Kavashra's cultural identity are Lebanese nationality and Sunni Islam. Being Turkmen comes after the sectarian identity. The middle aged and elder inhabitants of the village can at least speak Turkish, but the younger ones are about to forget their identity and language. Recently awareness has risen due to Turkey's interest and Turkish education. Since the village is pure Turkmen and has a lower level of education (than the other village in Akkar), the villagers of Kavashra know Turkish and are protecting their identities. Since official education is in Arabic and knowledge of Turkish does not give any advantage for the children's future, the desire to learn Turkish is diminishing. Given these circumstances, the lower level of education provides an advantage for the protection of Turkish.

The entire village supports Saad Hariri. Beginning with the signboard at the village's entrance on the main way, the whole village is decorated with Hariri's posters. There is a flag of the Movement of the Future in almost every house. There is no political disunity or disagreement in the village. The village has no problems with the neighboring settlements since the majority of Akkar region is of Sunni origin. Its economy is based on agriculture. They grow mostly wheat, barley, grapes and olives. There is a pond outside the village and a water supply made to enable irrigated farming. Although the pond still exists, irrigated farming is no longer feasible because the water supply was damaged

in the war. Younger people pursue occupations in the military, police and education. Most of them live in Beirut, but maintain their connections to their village. The infrastructure of the village is not bad. There are no problems with electricity or telecommunication, but water is supplied only twice a week at scheduled intervals. Education is adequate, but education levels remain low. Not all the children receive basic education. They need to visit neighboring settlements to get health care.

They define themselves as Sunni Lebanese, but they are fond of Turkey as well. Kavashra's people benefit most from the university scholarships that Turkey is providing for the Turkmens in Lebanon. That is why there are villagers who speak fluent Turkish and know Turkey very well. Still, the villagers generally have little knowledge of Turkey. Their connection to Turkey is limited to contacts with the Turkish Embassy and the Turkish unit of UNIFIL.

Kavashra is the Turkmen village where Turkey carries out the most projects. The Turkish Embassy to Beirut and the Turkish Crescent have built a school in the village. The Turkish soldiers in Lebanon have given the school a generator. Primary and secondary education is offered in the village. A building built by Turkey will be utilized as a high school. The military has a computer training center project and has provided 21 computers for the center. The embassy is creating a water supply network project for potable water. Also the irrigation projects for the use of the Akkar Turkmen community are planned to be accomplished within next year. A health clinic has been built for the Akkar Turkmens. The clinic is not in the Kavashra Village. The opening ceremony of the clinic was carried out during Foreign Minister Davutoglu's last visit to Lebanon and the Akkar Turkmen villages. The Turkish Embassy in Beirut will donate a full-equipped ambulance to the clinic. Every year four students are awarded scholarships to Turkish universities. Those who receive university education in Turkey work as doctors, engineers, pharmacists in their settlement ar-

reas. The Turkish Embassy brings teachers from Turkey, and they teach the villagers Turkish for free. Currently there are 30 students learning Turkish in Kavashra.

### *1.2 Aydamun Village*

Aydamun is 15 minutes away from Kavashra. The village has a more heterogeneous demographic structure. Its population is 3,000, and Turkmens constitute 75% of the population. Thus, there are approximately 2,500 Turkmens living in Aydamun. The rest of the population consists of Christian Arabs. 80% of the Christian community is Greek Orthodox and 20%, Maronite. All the Turkmens are Sunnis. In the June 7, 2009 parliamentary elections, the official number of voters was 1,849: 1250-1300 Turkmens and 600 Arabs. The people of Aydamun are aware of their Turkmen origins, but they are proud to define themselves as Sunni and Lebanese. Turkish has been completely forgotten. No one speaks Turkish, except for one very old person and a few who were educated at Turkish universities. This is because they live together with the Arab community. A high level of education is another reason for their Arabization. Turkmen children learn only Arabic Language in school and are friends with Arab children. Therefore, Turkish is completely forgotten.

All of Aydamun supports The March 14 Alliance and Saad Hariri. There is no political disunity or disagreement in the village. They peacefully coexist with the Christian community. The economy is based on agriculture. Olive and almonds are the most common crops. In Aydamun, too, younger people pursue occupations in the military, police and education. Rug making, which used to be the village's successful trademark, ceased ten years ago. Building a pond would improve the village's economy. Such a project was developed by the former President Emile Lahoud for Aydamun and neighboring villages and was realized in the Kavashra village. A similar pond is the greatest wish of the habitants of Aydamun. In terms of education, the village is in good shape. There

are state primary and secondary schools and a high school in the village. There is also one private school offering primary and secondary education. There are many young people with a university diploma. The water and electricity infrastructure is not good. Water is supplied twice a week at scheduled intervals. There is no health center in the village and the nearest health centre is in Al Birah 15 kilometers away.

The villagers have no relations or relatives in Turkey. They have close relations with the Turkish Embassy and the Turkish troops in Lebanon. Their knowledge about Turkey is very limited, but still positive. They describe Turkey as a great, beautiful and developed country based on what they have heard from those who received education in Turkey or those who have visited Turkey. They would like to visit Turkey. There are young people who were educated in Turkey with Turkish scholarships, and they are the only ones who can speak fluent Turkish. Turkey is about to realize a school project in the village. Once the school is finished, it will be handed over to Lebanese authorities. Along with the usual curriculum, Turkish education will be offered as well in this school. The Turkish Embassy is implementing a well water project. It plans to supply water to homes 24 hours a day. The Turkish troops have donated 7 computers to the village school. The Turkish Em-

bassy brings Turkish teachers to teach Turkish for free. Currently there about 100 students learning Turkish.

## 2. Baalbeck Turkmen

Turkey became acquainted with the Baalbeck Turkmen in 2007 with the help of the Akkar Turkmen. One arrives in the Baalbeck Turkmen villages from the Akkar villages after a drive of 2 hours and 15 minutes. The trip is 95 kilometers. Although it is a short distance, the mountainous terrain and narrow roads make the journey take so long.<sup>5</sup>

The lifestyle, culture, socioeconomic level and Turkish of the Baalbeck Turkmen are unlike those of the Akkar Turkmen. The Baalbeck Turkmen are a more closed society and have a tribal structure. They live in an area with many Christians and Shiites. The villages are surrounded by communities that belong to a variety of religion and sects, but the Turkmen communities are homogenous. Except for Duris and Addus, the villages are entirely Sunni Turkmen. The Turkmen of the region are settled in 5 Turkmen villages around Baalbeck, all within 15 minutes from one to another, and in one village near Hermel. All these villages are known as Turkmen tribes by the locals. People from different villages are related and have ties with each other.

Akkar Turkmen Villages	Total Population	Population Distribution	Turkmen Population
Kavashra	2800	100% Turkmen	2800
Aydamun	3000	75% Turkmen 25% Christian Arab 80% of Christians are Orthodox 20% are Maronite	2250
<b>Total</b>			<b>5050</b>

### 2.1. *Sheymiye Village*

Sheymiye village is about 20 kilometer from Baalbeck. This village stands out among the Baalbeck villages for having the best preserved Turkish identity. They also speak Turkish better than any other village in Lebanon. Turkish is spoken everywhere. The population is about 1,000, and there were 500 voters in the last elections.

Sheymiye resembles a typical Anatolian village. Some families lead a life very similar to Anatolian Yörüks. They resemble the Yörüks in appearance as well. The villagers (including the young ones) had some difficulty understanding our questions in Turkish, but we could clearly understand them while they were speaking to each other. They speak the Turkmen language at their homes. Since the entire village is of Turkmen origin, since they live in a majority Shiite region, but are not very much liked by the Shiites, since they are identified as a Turkmen tribe, and their education level is low enough, they have managed to preserve their Turkish identity and language very well.

Politically, they support the Future Movement and Saad Hariri. Their economy is based on agriculture and animal husbandry. They are extremely poor. Some families live in tents, although there are some families who live in better conditions. The education level is medium. Children have to go to a settlement named Bid Neil since there is no school in the village. Health care is available in a health care center 10 kilometers away. They use the intermittent Lebanese water supply and electricity.

The Turkish Red Crescent built a school in a settlement named Mahamiye, since this settlement is close to the Baalbeck villages, but Turkmens do not attend this school. When we ask their opinions about Turkey and Turkishness, they say they have Turkish blood running in their veins.

### 2.2 *Duris Village*

While other settlements in Baalbeck are villages, Duris is a relative bigger town. Turkmens

are in the minority here. The total population is about 8,000, and there is an equal dispersion of Christians and Muslims in the town. 85% out of 4000 Muslims are Shiite and the rest are Sunni. Turkmens form the entire Sunni population, so there are about 600 Sunni Turkmens in Duris. According to figures obtained from Deputy Mayor's office, 2600 votes were cast in the last elections. Half of these voters are Muslim and 200 out of 1300 Muslim voters are Sunni.

The Turkmens of Duris have good economic conditions and good education. But due to their coexistence with the Arabs, education and an extroverted lifestyle, they have lost their Turkmen identity. They do not speak Turkish. Sunni religion and Lebanese nationality are the main constituents of their cultural identity. They feel sympathy for Turkey, in the way Sunni Lebanese do. The Turkish Embassy in Beirut has carried out a school Project for the Baalbek Turkmens.

Here the Turkmens support the Future Movement and Saad Hariri. The Shiites that support the March 8 Alliance (led by Hezbollah) are very influential in the region. Thus Turkmens were excluded from the political process until recently. Now the situation seems to be changing. Our informant regarding the general condition of Duris is the Deputy Mayor of the town and a Turkmen. He says that previously it would not have been possible for a Sunni to earn his position. Sectarian differences made for a tense political atmosphere in the town.<sup>6</sup> Close neighbors support different political groups, for example one flies the March 14 Movement and the other the March 8 Alliance flag in their home. Improved relations prevent conflict in town.

The general approach of the Turkmens here is very similar to those of a Sunni Lebanese. They perceive Iran and Israel as regional enemies, feel sympathy for Syrian people, but do not approve of the administration in Syria. Of the region's nations, they like and trust Saudi Arabia the most. They even see Saudi Arabia as the "mother of the Lebanese Sunnis." This

shows that the Turkmen of Duris are almost completely Arabized. Similar to the Sunni Lebanese, they have a positive attitude about Turkey and its role in the region. But this support depends on actual circumstances. Turkey's reaction against Israel, its role in the Doha crisis and its influence on Syria are believed to favor Lebanon's stability, and these are the main reasons for their positive feelings towards Turkey.

### 2.3 Nananiye Village

The total population of this village is about 800, all Sunni Turkmen. The people are aware of their Turkishness, they are proud of it, but they are still about to lose their cultural identity. Only old people can speak Turkish fluently, and the young can barely speak Turkish. Many people have Turkish names. Income levels in the village are extremely low. The people of Nananiye became Lebanese citizens in 1994, that's why the village remains unregistered. In other words, officially it does not exist. People go to Duris for all kinds of official business. Since it is not registered, there is no administrative unit or authority. Like other Sunnis, the people support Saad Hariri and the Movement of the Future. They seem to be a conservative community with no extremist tendencies. They do not have any issues or conflicts with neighboring villages.

The economy is based on agriculture. Wheat, barley, potatoes and tomatoes are the main crops. Similar to other Turkmen villages, many people work in the military and the police. The education level is medium. 60% of the children attend school. Since there is no school in the village children attend a school in Baalbeck, which is 12 kilometer away. Well water is distributed through pipes to homes, and there are no infrastructure problems. Electricity is intermittent, but the problem is usually solved with generators. Villagers watch Turkish TV via satellite, and Turkish TV shows are very popular in all of Lebanon.

Since they did not have any relation to Turkey until two years ago, they are not interested in, or attached to, Turkey. Only a few have been to Turkey for a job. Connections have been established over the last 2 years since the Turkish Embassy in Beirut and the Turkish troops found out about the Baalbeck Turkmen. The Turkish Embassy makes efforts to build a school here. The Project will start as soon the land issues are solved. None of the students have benefited from the Turkish university scholarships until now.

Baalbeck Turkmen Villages	Total Population	Population Distribution	Turkmen Population
Sheymiye	1000	100% Turkmen	1000
Duris	8000	50% Muslim 85% Shiite - 15% Sunni Turkmen 50% Christian, Maronite and Greek Orthodox	600
Nananiye	800	100% Turkmen	800
Addus	800	85% Turkmen 15% Shiite Arab	700
Hadidiye	500	100% Turkmen	500
Al Qaa	500	100% Turkmen	200 (300 Turkmen are living within Syrian borders)
<b>Toplam</b>			<b>3800</b>

#### 2.4 Addus Village

Addus Village is located five minutes away from Nananiye. Actually, it is hard to discuss those two villages separately. The village's characteristics are virtually identical to those of Nananiye. The population is 800. 58% of the villagers are Sunni Turkmen, and the rest are Arab, so there are about 700 Turkmens living in Addus.

#### 2.5 Hadidiye Village

Hadidiye village is about 5 kilometers from Addus. It is an extremely small village. There are 30 houses and tents. The population is 500, and the people are all are Sunni Turkmen.

#### 2.6 Al Qaa Village

Al Qaa village is somewhat distant from the other Baalbeck villages. Although it lies within the borders of the Bekaa province, it is closer to the city of Hermel. It is an hour drive from the Baalbeck villages towards Syria. Al Qaa is located on the Lebanese-Syrian border. Some of the villagers are Lebanese, and others are Syrian citizens. The population is 500, all Sunni Turkmen. 300 are Syrian and 200 are Lebanese citizens. Even the Lebanese part of the village is under Syrian control. The soil is very fertile and the entire village works in agriculture.

### 3. Cretan Turks

The Cretan Turks that live in Tripoli (the northern province of Lebanon) have a different story than those of Baalbeck and Akkar Turkmens. Their history in Lebanon began when the Ottoman Empire lost its dominion over the island of Crete. In 1821, when Greece gained independence, the Greeks in Crete rebelled against the Ottoman Empire, too. Until 1897 many uprisings were put down by the Ottoman Empire. In 1897, just before the Ottoman-Greek war, the island rose up again. Although the Ottoman Empire won the war, a new administration under the protection of Czarist Russia, England, France and Italy was established on the island with the intervention of regional powers. Gregorios, the son of the Greek King was commissioned as commissar to the island.<sup>7</sup> After

1897, when the Ottoman Empire lost control of the island and the Ottoman soldiers left, the Muslim population of Crete was left to fend for itself. Attacks on the Muslim population of the island (45% of the population) began. In 1898, a counter-revolt was initiated under the leadership of Ali Bekraki, but since the attacks continued, the Ottoman Empire sent ships to protect the island's Muslim population. Most of the Cretan Turks were settled in Izmir and Mersin, but some of them were sent to Tripoli and Damascus. Sultan Abdulhamid II established the village of Hamidiye for those who arrived from Crete and gave them land. They were also compensated for their losses in Crete. After WWI, the Ottoman Empire lost Lebanon and Syria and the borders were redrawn. Some of the Cretan Turks remained in Syria and others in Tripoli where their relatives lived. Today, the Cretan Turks of Lebanon consist of those who were settled in Tripoli and those who were settled in Hamidiye, but migrated to Lebanon due to economic reasons. The detailed story of Cretan Turks can be found in Professor Abdulatif Bekraki's book "Girit Adası ve Göçmenler Tarihi" (The Island of Crete and the History of the Migrants).<sup>8</sup> According to Bekraki, 10,000 Cretans were taken to Tripoli, but they dispersed later.

The number of Cretan Turks in Lebanon is not known precisely, but their number is estimated to be around 10,000. Those people call themselves Turks, but they are aware that they are of Cretan origin, so they call themselves "muhacirler" (immigrants). When they were first settled in Tripoli, the Cretans remained distant from the Arab population and tended to preserve their identity. This tendency seems to change for the new generation. The first generations used to speak Turkish and Greek, but the new ones have forgotten both of them. Within the last 110 years, they have largely assimilated. Only some Turkish customs and traditions are still practiced. The locals in Tripoli call the Cretans "muhacirler" instead of Turks because when the Ottomans first sent the Cretans to Tripoli they advised the authorities by

saying that they are sending new immigrants from Crete. Today, the Cretan Turks can be distinguished by their family names since their surnames always end with “aki” or “eki” which means son in Greek. When we separate the Greek ending, we find the Turkish root. For example “Bekraki” is consisted of “Bekir” and “aki” and it means “son of Bekir” (Bekir is a common Turkish name).

The Cretan Turks are often referred to as “Ottoman,” and for that reason they feel close to Turkey, which they see as the continuation of the Ottoman Empire. The causes of their identity loss are listed below;

- a. They live together with Arabs.
- b. They were easily accepted by the locals since they are all Sunni. They were not subject to any oppression or discrimination.
- c. They did not have a separate place to protect their culture and identity since they lived in the city.
- d. Turkey was distant and unaware of their existence, accelerating their Arabization.
- e. They are an urbanized community with high levels of education, and this fact led Turkish to fade into oblivion.
- f. As communication was hard to establish in the earlier times, the Cretans in Syria and Lebanon lost contact with their relatives in Anatolia. The last link between the Cretans of Lebanon-Syria and Anatolia was lost too when the surname act was adopted in Turkey. They believe that they have many relatives in Izmir and Ayvalik but they cannot be certain of it.
- g. The only difference between the Cretans in Turkey and Lebanon is the region they were settled in fell out of Turkish control and they remained among the Arab community.

The Cretan Turks of Lebanon are still in relation with their relatives in Syria. They are 45

minutes distant from the Hamidiye village and they hold visits from time to time. Even not as much as the Cretans of Lebanon, the Cretan Turks of Syria are assimilated as well. They relatively managed to protect their identical qualities as they are living in the rural, they are a more self enclosed community and education level is low. For example, Cretans in Lebanon have forgotten their languages completely, but those in Hamidiye can still speak Greek. As we know, the Greeks who were living in Turkey and were sent to Greece after the population exchange could speak better Turkish than Greek. This is because of the language spoken in the lands they lived. The locals of Hamidiye do not describe themselves as Cretan Turks, but as Cretan Muslims or Ottomans. Some of the better educated locals in Tripoli have researched their roots and define themselves as Cretan Turks. The majority of the Cretan Turks of Tripoli establishes relations or sympathizes with Turkey.

There is an association of Cretan Turks in Lebanon. The “Cretan Immigrants Association” which was established and registered in 1962 by Ibrahim Bekraki, did not survive because of the civil war at the time. Turkey was not aware of the existence of Cretan Turks in Lebanon until 1985. Cretan Turks contacted the Turkish Embassy in Lebanon that year.

#### **4. The Turkish Citizens and Syrian Turks in Beirut**

##### *4.1 Turkish Citizens in Beirut*

One can often hear Turkish spoken in the streets of Beirut. The number of persons having both Turkish and Lebanese citizenship is not known precisely. Some Turkish citizens in Beirut have been organized within associations. The figures of these associations indicate that 20,000 Turks live in Beirut. Most of them migrated in the 1940s for economic reasons from southeastern Turkey. They are mostly from the Söğütlü, Ömerli, Çavuşşlu, Şenköy, Midyat and Gelinkaya districts near Mardin. Some of these emigrants went to Syria, and some came to Beirut. The Turks who live in Beirut today are the

second and third generation. The middle aged and older Turks speak Turkish fluently, but the younger generation is about to forget their language. Most of them have still family ties in Turkey. They have relatives and property in Turkey, and they visit very often for business. This community used to belong to the lower socioeconomic level, but their conditions have recently been improving. Most of them want to return to Turkey. Many of them were not registered as Lebanese citizens until 1994, and their conditions have improved since then. Some of them have both Turkish and Lebanese citizenships. They can get the Turkish citizenship when they furnish legal proof of their Turkish origins, but some of them fail to submit the paperwork and obtain Turkish citizenship. Turkish citizenship is their greatest wish. They also want Turkish education.

There are two associations in Beirut, established by the emigrants from Söğütlü. Their names are "Future Star" (Nujum al Mustakbel) and "New Future" (Jiel Mustakbel). As these names show, they support the March 14 Alliance and Saad Hariri. The associations have 800 members but they have also direct relations with the families who are not members.

#### *4.2 Syrian Turkmens in Beirut*

There are a few Syrian Turkmen families living in Beirut and Tripoli. They migrated from Syria for economic reasons. They are fluent in Turkish. They live in hard conditions in Lebanon. Most of them earn their lives by selling lottery tickets or shoe shining. They still have family ties to Syria. Our knowledge about these people is limited to the interviews we held with those we met on the streets by coincidence. They estimate their numbers to be between 50 and 100. They live in Beirut and Tripoli.

### **5. Circassians**

The Circassians were transferred from the Balkans to the Middle East after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78. They remained in Syria, Israel and Jordan after the Ottoman

Empire lost these territories. Some of them moved to Lebanon for work. The Circassians of Lebanon see Turkey as their second homeland and maintain relationships with their relatives in Turkey. They do not live as a community in a specific region, but are dispersed throughout the country. There is no precise knowledge about the numbers of their population.

Besides the Turkish existence we classified under five chapters, we were informed about Turks living in Halba<sup>9</sup> which is in northern Akkar, in Tripoli and in Meshaa which is close to Halba. We were unable to study these communities. These people are aware of their Turkmen origins, but have been completely Arabized and forgotten Turkish.

### **The Cultural Identity of Turkmens in Lebanon**

As in every part of Lebanon, sectarianism is also extremely drastic among Turkmens. Therefore, their sectarian identity is more important to them than their ethnical identity. The dominant element of their identity is Sunni Islam. Although they are aware of their Turkmen identity, until recently they tended not to protect it, and their ethnic identity was eroded with each new generation. However, in recent years the idea of preserving Turkmen identity has come into prominence for certain reasons. These are the efforts of Turkish Embassy, Turkey's increasing interest in Lebanon, Turkish troops coming to Southern Lebanon within the framework of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) and Turkishness being a source of pride<sup>10</sup> for Turkmens in Lebanon.

When we compared the Akkar and Baalbeck Turkmens' cultural identity the following results were obtained. The majority of the Turkmens live in villages where only Sunni Turkmens are present. On the other hand, there are also some villages, such as Aydamun and Duris, where Turkmens live with Christians and Shiite Arabs. Since the villages in Akkar are mainly found in Sunni regions, they have no problems with their neighbors. They are known as Sunni

villages, rather than as Turkmen villages. They are not under political pressure. Hariri and the Movement of the Future, which are supported by Akkar Turkmen, won all seven parliamentary elections in Akkar. Therefore, Turkmen are members of the community, the vast majority of which is Sunni. This gives the Akkar Turkmen a role in national politics and helps them socialize with their neighbors. An incentive to protect their Turkmen identity does not emerge in an atmosphere where the difference does not seem to matter. The same conditions apply for the Cretan Turks. It seems that this situation accelerated the Arabization of the Akkar and Cretan Turks.

The majority of Baalbeck Turkmen also live in villages with mainly Turkmen populations. However, the neighboring villages and towns are predominantly Shiite and Christian, therefore they are in minority position. They are also politically weak. Ten deputies from the region are in the parliament, and they were all elected by the March 8 Alliance supported by Shiite community. As for Turkmen, they support Hariri and his March 14 Alliance. Many of the Turkmen we interviewed emphasized that they are not welcome in the neighborhood and are pressured not to participate in political activities. This atmosphere isolated the Baalbeck Turkmen. They are referred to as the “Turkmen Horde” by Shiites. Being different and minority decelerated their “Arabization.”

We observed that the education levels in the villages are directly proportional with Turkmen identity and the protection of Turkish language. We saw that Turkmen, who were friends with Arab children and got training in Arab language, forgot Turkish. In Aydamun, which has the highest education level among all the villages, Turkish was forgotten. Yet in Baalbeck, where the education level is low, Turkish was better preserved. In Kavashra, however, the education level is lower than Aydamun’s and higher than Baalbeck’s. Therefore, they are better than Aydamun, but lag behind

Baalbeck Turks in maintaining competence in Turkish and their Turkmen identities.

In the 1990s, Turkey’s close relations with Israel created one of the main obstacles for the public expression of Turkmen cultural identity. Being close with Israel is unacceptable from the point of view of the Lebanese. Some Turkmen in Lebanon stated that “the defense cooperation agreements signed in 1990’s between Turkey and Israel put them to shame”. The relative decline in Turkey-Israel relations allows Turkmen to express their identities more comfortably. As a matter of fact, with the Davos incident occurred they began to articulate their pride in their Turkmen identity.<sup>11</sup> Turkey’s becoming a center of attraction in Lebanon is also strengthening Turkmen identity.

Interviews with Turkmen villagers revealed that they rely on Lebanese army, and it will protect them to the extent of its ability to do so. However, they think that the army is weak in comparison to Hezbollah, and that, should conflict occur, the army might split up. For this reason, they believe that Sunnis in the region should support them, and that Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey will never abandon them. Two results can be inferred from this view. First, the Turkmen; understanding of politics is the same as that of the Sunni Lebanese. Secondly, they think that Turkey will help them, not because they are Turkmen, but because they are a “Sunni nation.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Political Tendencies of Turkmen in Lebanon**

Religion and Sunni Islam are two of the main points of reference in social relations and in the political views of Turkmen in Lebanon. It can be said that they are conservative and devout, but they do not have radical tendencies. Northern Lebanon, where the Akkar Turkmen and Cretan Turks live, is the Islamist Muslim Brothers best stronghold in Lebanon. However, no Turkmen support the Muslim Brothers. Turkmen, who describe themselves as a com-

munity that avoids extremes of all kinds, also avoid radical tendencies in politics.

Turkmens are not exposed to any oppression or threat for being Turkmen, but they have some problems because of their being Sunni. Since they are Sunnis, they support Saad Hariri and his party, the Movement of the Future. In all the villages visited Hariri posters and the flags of the Movement of the Future were frequently seen. Northern Lebanon, where the Akkar Turkmens and Cretan Turks live, is the region where Saad Hariri rules. During the electoral campaign, Hariri held his election campaign rally for the region of Akkar at the entrance to Kavashra village. In the Baalbeck Turkmens area, although Hezbollah is very strong, Turkmens continue to support Hariri. Even the Turkmens who live with Shiite Arabs in villages, such as Duris, fly the flags of the Movement of the Future.

Among the Turkmens of Lebanon, there is no one who has reached a senior position. There are no politicians, opinion leaders, artists or scientists. Since Kavashra village is completely composed of Turkmens, the mayor is a Turkmen, as well. Although Turkmens are in a majority in Aydamun village, the mayor is a Christian. The Baalbeck villages, since they are not officially registered, do not have an administrative structure or local administrators. Only Duris has an administrative structure. In this town with a Shiite majority a Turkmen is deputy mayor.

In Lebanon Assembly, the sects are represented with quotas, which were allocated for them. The 1989 Taif Accord stipulates that Christian and Muslim deputies be equally represented in the Assembly with 64 deputies each. Muslims are divided into 4 sects: Sunnis, Shiites, Druzes and Alawis. These sects have deputy quotas of 27, 27, 8 and 2 representatives, respectively. Turkmens have yet to have one of their own voted into the national Assembly, but have an opportunity to see their deputies in the As-

sembly if they take advantage of the 27-person Sunni quota.

### **Lebanon's Turkmens and Turkey**

Lebanese Turkmens do not have relatives in Turkey, and therefore regular visits to Turkey are out of the question. Only people educated in Turkey who maintain their professional contacts visit Turkey. As for Cretan Turks, although they assume that they have relatives in Turkey, they do not possess information about where those relatives are. Thus Lebanon's Turkmens' relationship with Turkey is restricted to their ties with our Beirut Embassy and the Turkish military unit.

Lebanese Turkmens visit the Turkish Embassy and the Turkish military unit frequently. Visits are regularly organized in religious and national bayrams. Turkmens are invited to the activities organized by the Embassy and the military unit. Every 6 months, they reunite for medal ceremonies. Bonds were established with Baalbeck Turkmens, whose existence was recently discovered. Serdar Kılıç, who is currently the Ambassador to Beirut, was the first authority to visit the Baalbeck Turkmens. Baalbeck Turkmens also began to participate in bilateral visits. Furthermore, in Turkmen villages many projects were completed, and some of them still continue thanks to the Embassy, the military unit and the Red Crescent society. Among these, there are projects such as schools, computer laboratories and a water supply network. The Turkmens are very pleased with these projects.

Turkmens in Lebanon have been sympathetic to Turkey as Turkish interest in Turkmens has grown in recent years. There are some, who describe Turkey as their homeland. One of the common characteristics of all Turkmens is their hospitality. They attach great importance to the guests coming from Turkey and they treat them as special. They express their love, attachment and longing for Turkey on all occasions. However, they have limited information about Turkey. Their information is limited

to what they are told by educated people and what they see on Turkish television series.

All the sects in Lebanon feel close to a given foreign nation that is a force in the region and a need for the protection of its security umbrella. Eighteen officially recognized ethnic groups and sect live together in this small country, and the violence that has occurred between these groups in the past justifies this feeling. This historical relationship causes feelings of mutual mistrust. Central authority in Lebanon is extremely weak and none of the sects believes that the army can offer them security. The sectarian division spread in the army and the security units. They even wonder whether or not Shiites in the government's forces will even fight against Hezbollah, should the Lebanese army clash with the organization. In this atmosphere, sects feel the need for protection. Saudi Arabia has been the regional force that Lebanese Sunnis depend on. We may deem the Turkmens who are predominantly conscious of their Sunni identity to share this view.

The latest development concerning relation between Lebanese Turkmens and Turkey was Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Lebanon in July 2009. During his official visit, Davutoğlu visited Kavashra, establishing high-level contacts with the Lebanese Embassy and Lebanese Turkmens (the Turkish military unit in Lebanon did not take part in this). In his Kavashra speech, Davutoğlu gave the message that Turkey's support will continue with these words: "You are the bridge of friendship between Lebanon and Turkey. We will always stand by you as we also do for our Palestinian brothers in Gaza. When you are in peace and in prosperity, we are also at peace. Your problem is our problem." During the visit, the people who live in Kavashra greeted the minister with Turkish flags and chanted, "Long live Turkey."<sup>13</sup>

### **Conclusion: Suggestions for the Turkmens of Lebanon**

The suggestions section will be divided into two subsections: short term and long term suggestions. The short term projects will be divided

into village based projects and comprehensive projects. The village based projects, projects for improving the living standards of villages in Lebanon where Turkmens live will be presented separately. Then the comprehensive projects, again for Turkmens, but including all the Turkmen villages, will be listed. The long term policy suggestions, which aim to bring all the projects together, will be put into practice over the long term and contribute to Turkey's Lebanon policy, and not include only the Turkmens, will then be listed.

### **1. Short Term Projects for the Improvement of Turkmens' Living Conditions and Strengthening Ties with Turkey**

In Lebanon, even basic government services are subject to sectarian discrimination. Especially in rural areas, limited services are provided. Therefore, even the smallest projects leave a great impression on people, including the Turkmens. Basic low budget projects make a big difference to Turkmens living in hard conditions. In our interviews, we asked the prominent locals their expectations from Turkey. Here is a list of recommendations, based on their responses:

#### *1.1 Village Based Project Recommendations*

a. Kavashra village had been given a school, a computer classroom, Turkish language education and university scholarships in Turkey. The Turkish Red Crescent also asked the mayor to make a list of their needs. The most urgent needs are listed by the mayor are well water, water supply project, city hall, meeting room<sup>14</sup>, health center and ambulance. The construction of a health clinic for the use of all Turkmens in the area has been accomplished. The embassy is making efforts to arrange an ambulance. Other demands on the list have not been realized yet but are on the agenda.

b. There are no problems in Aydamun, in terms of education. Along with the current schools, the Turkish Embassy's school project is underway. Turkish education will be intensified when the new school project is completed. The village's infrastructure is not good. Turkey is still

trying to finish a water well project and supply water to houses 24 hours a day. A water project for agricultural irrigation is also needed, so the construction of a dam pond for irrigation purposes is of vital importance for the economic development of the village. The village headman (muhtar) states that such project will revitalize their village thanks to Turkey. Secondly, the villagers want a village clinic because they feel uncomfortable with going to a distant, majority Christian settlement.

c. Nananiye's most urgent needs are a school building and the establishment of small scale business to provide employment opportunities for young people. The income level of the village is extremely low. A project to establish a workshop would help to solve such problems. The Turkish Embassy in Beirut gained ground regarding the school Project. The Project will start as soon the land issue is solved.

d. The Baalbeck Turkmens received Lebanese citizenship in 1994. That is why some of the villages where they live are not registered and legally do not exist. There is no administrative authority in their villages, and they do not have basic social services. In order to resolve these issues, the villages need to be legally registered, and an administrative authority needs to be provided to them.

e. Since we only recently found out about the Baalbeck Turkmen, Turkey has not launched any projects there. The first suggestion would be the construction of a school building for the common use of all the Baalbeck villages. The Baalbeck Turkmens live in villages that are 15 minutes away from one another. That is why we recommend the construction of one common school offering Turkish education, instead of building a school in each of the villages. This way, all the Baalbeck Turkmens can be gathered under a single roof, the education level will improve and preservation of the Turkish language can be managed. It was only possible to send a Turkish teacher to the Akkar Turkmens, but the Baalbeck Turkmens wish to receive Turkish education, too, and they have the necessary

background for learning Turkish. The Baalbeck Turkmens would not benefit from Turkish university scholarships yet. Students that improve their Turkish skills could be placed in Turkish universities.

f. Sheymiye village is suitable for the implementation of projects. Osman Bozan is a prominent figure who is called the muhtar, although this is not official. He has built some building with the village's own resources. One is a school building. The building needs to be completed and equipped. There are classrooms available for computer lessons in the school. The muhtar's efforts can be assisted, and the school can be finished for use. The village needs a clinic as well.

### *1.2 Complementary Projects*

a. Currently Turkey gives four scholarships in Turkish universities for Turkmen students in Lebanon. The number recently increased from 2 to 4 thanks to the efforts of the Turkish Ambassador to Lebanon, Mr. Serdar Kılıç. Still, the number of scholarships available to Turkmens is insufficient. Only Akkar Turkmens have received education scholarships. None of the Cretans or Baalbeck Turkmens has received scholarships. Almost all the Lebanese Turkmens have returned to their country after finishing their education in Turkey. These educated people who speak fluent Turkish are working hard to protect the Turkmen identity. Lebanese Arabs who received university education in Turkey have established the Lebanon-Turkish Association in Tripoli. Similarly, the Turkmen Association in Tripoli was established by Turkmens who received education in Turkey. Ali Bekraki, who got his medical education in Turkey with his own resources, is making great efforts to protect the Cretan Turkish identity on his own. Increasing the number of scholarships as much as possible would greatly help the Turkmens to protect their identities, to learn and spread the Turkish language, and strengthen their bonds with Turkey. If the vacancies cannot be increased, reducing the tuition and fees for foreigners in the case of Lebanese Turkmens would increase the numbers of

those wanting to pursue a university education in Turkey with their own resources.

b. Turkish TV shows are very popular in all of Lebanon, which has special TV channels that air only Turkish TV shows. In our interviews we found that the Turkmen in Lebanon are great fans of these shows as well, but the shows are aired in Arab channels with Arabic dubbing. If the Turkish shows, already a phenomenon in Lebanon, were aired in Turkish, it would be a vital contribution to the establishment of stronger bonds with Turkey and the relearning of Turkish. We found that the Armenian citizens we interviewed in Beirut speak Turkish very well. When we asked why, they said that they speak Turkish at home and watch Turkish TV shows. This shows that TV shows give a motivation to learn and maintain Turkish language skills. We learned that, except for one, the Turkmen villages are unable to watch Turkish channels. A small effort to place satellites in the villages would make a great difference.

c. We asked the people in Turkmen villages about their knowledge of Turkey and we found that they do not have any knowledge except for what they hear from those who were educated in Turkey and what they see on TV shows. It would be very efficient to organize travel programs to Turkey for young people, children and women from Turkmen communities to increase their knowledge about Turkey.

Some villages are not mentioned in the recommendation due to below stated reasons:

The Addus and Nananiye villages are intertwined. Addus would benefit from every project realized in Nananiye. Hadidiye consists of 30 houses. Duris is relatively a developed town and school has already been built by the Turkish embassy here. Cretan Turks and Turkish citizens in Lebanon already live in big cities. It is impossible to launch infrastructure projects for Turkmen there. Recommendations targeting these communities are handled in the next section within the long term project recommendations.

## **2. Long Term Projects Contributing to Turkey's Relationship with Lebanon**

While the recommendations here target the Turkmen community, they will also help Turkey to maintain a favorable relationship with Lebanon. Those long term projects will serve as a framework and an organizational structure for the short term projects as well.

1. The establishment of three basic institutions in Lebanon would support the realization of other recommendations: a Turkish Cultural Center, a Turkish College and a Lebanese Turkmen Association.

The cultural center would enable us to bring all the village projects under a single roof. Vocational training, the promotion of Turkish culture and Turkish language education can be conducted in a more organized manner. Programs that provide employment, vocational training and travel opportunities can be carried out. The shortest way to strengthen a sense of community among the Turkmen and to protect their language and cultural identity is to establish a Turkish Cultural Center.<sup>15</sup>

A Turkish College is another recommendation to serve the same aim. Like the social structure of Lebanon, there are institutions that enable different communities to have their own style of education. Colleges and high school from different countries are also common, but there is no Turkish College in Lebanon. In this context, there is a great potential in Lebanon for Turkey. The Turkish College should not target just the Turkmen Community. Turkey is becoming an attraction center for Lebanon, and the establishment of a Turkish College has become a necessity in terms of the Turkish policy towards Lebanon.

A Lebanese Turkmen Association should be established to bring the different Turkmen communities of Lebanon, which only know of each other's existence, together. The association can have branch offices in Beirut, Tripoli, Akkar and Baalbeck. Currently such an association

exists in Tripoli. Unfortunately, the association has not succeeded at bringing people together. In fact, it is actively disliked. Many people we interviewed have negative opinions about the center. The center can only represent the Turkmens on a limited basis, since it requires members of the association to have at least a high school diploma.

The organizational structures of all three recommended institutions need to be engaged with Turkey.<sup>16</sup> Cooperation with Lebanese authorities is necessary, but Turkey must have control. The institutions should not be handed over to local authorities for two reasons. First, associations become dysfunctional due to incompetency. Second, it is almost impossible for associations not to get involved in political and business related issues. This may damage Turkey's neutral image and cause Turkey to be associated with undesirable persons or groups.

2. The Turkmens of Lebanon want the Turkish community to be aware of their existence. There have been no academic studies of Lebanese Turkmens until now. The history of Baalbeck and Akkar Turkmens is not clear. There is knowledge about the history of Cretan Turks, but mainly regarding those who settled in Anatolia. This study deals with information about the history of Turkmens in Lebanon. This information is a basis for further studies. The encouragement of further studies dealing with Lebanese Turkmens' history would help them to learn and protect their cultural identity. Documentaries would help to instruct the Turkish community about the Turkmens in Lebanon.

3. Sister village and sister town relationships with partners in Turkey can be established for

the Turkish villages and Turkmen villages of Akkar and Baalbeck. This would help to create bonds between Lebanese Turkmens and the Turkish community. The Turkmens living in rural areas expect basic services. The sister village implementation may support the Turkmen areas with environmental planning and infrastructure projects. Along with project based periodic support, a permanent system can be established that enables the villages to develop. Experiences gained by the mutual visits between sister villages and towns might be useful for the Lebanese Turkmens. Cultural and social adaptation can be achieved through cultural and youth cooperation programs.

4. All these activities on behalf of the Turkmens in Lebanon can include a complementary package that includes different groups. For example, if travel to Turkey is organized for the Turkmens of Tripoli, Akkar or Baalbeck; such a trip must contain young Sunni Arabs from Tripoli, Alawites from Akkar, Christians from Ayudamun and Shiites from Baalbeck. Arab students can also benefit from scholarship opportunities in Turkish universities. There is a large demand for this, especially in Tripoli. The Turkish Cultural Center and Turkish College are Turkmen oriented projects, but they should include Arabs too. The sister town projects doesn't have to be limited to Turkmen villages only. For example, we interviewed the mayor of Sur in southern Lebanon, and he stated that his city would like to become the sister city of Izmir. Such projects can be implemented for the non-Turkmen villages in Akkar and Baalbeck as well. If the Turkmen oriented projects include such complementary projects, the Turkmens of Lebanon will not be harmed in any way, and Turkey's Lebanon policies will benefit from these projects, too.

## END NOTES

- 1 Associate Prof. Veysel Ayhan, who released a book about the history of Lebanon, says that Turkmens settled in Lebanon during the reign of the Mamluks. Again, he was the one who informed me that Turkmens came to the region before Sultan Selim I. I want to thank him for his contributions. For detailed information: Veysel Ayhan, *Özlem Tür; Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, Dora Publications, Bursa, November 2009.
- 2 Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, London and New York: Routledge Pub., p. 15, cited by Veysel Ayhan, *Özlem Tür; Lübnan Sorunu ve Türkiye: Savaş, Barış ve Direniş*, (The Lebanese Problem, and Turkey: War, Peace and Resistance) Ankara: ORSAM Yay., 2009, (forthcoming).
- 3 Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, I. B. Tauris, Londra, 2005, p. 103.
- 4 Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society*, London and New York: Routledge Pub., p. 15. Abdulrahim Abu Husayn's study "The View from Istanbul" deals briefly with the history of the Sanjaq (state) of Tripoli and states: "The sanjaq of Tripoli has been under the control of the Turkmen Assaf Rulers since 1516 when it was taken under control by the Ottoman Empire. After 1579 it was taken over by the Turkmen Saifas family. Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, *The View from Istanbul: Ottoman Lebanon and the Druze Emirate*, I. B. Tauris, 2003, p. 92.
- 5 Some parts of the road are extremely dangerous. A Turkish engineer died there on a foggy day, some three years ago.
- 6 They are friendly with the Shiites in their daily life, but try not to discuss politics with them because such discussions easily lead to conflict. Although there is no violence, the air is always tense since both sides have hostile feelings.
- 7 The Island of Crete officially became part of Greece after the declaration of the second constitutionalist monarchy in 1908. With the signing of the London and Bucharest Treaties after the Balkan War, Ottoman Empire officially accepted the annexation of Crete by Greece and thus the issue of Crete was concluded. For detailed information about the process see Aşşe Nühket Adıyeke, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit Bunalımı (1896-1908)*, (Ottoman Empire and the Crisis with Crete: 1896-1908) Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınları, 2000.
- 8 This information is quoted from Haşım Söylemez's study "Lübnan'daki Giritli Türkler-Cretan Turks in Lebanon" in the *Aksiyon Journal* issue 722, released on 6 October 2008.
- 9 We were informed about the existence of a family named "Türkmeni."
- 10 Some of the Turkmens I interviewed are stating that the security treaty with Israel that was signed in the 1990's was a matter of dishonor for them and they hesitated to reveal their Turkmen identity at these times.
- 11 The Davos incident had an incredible effect in all of Lebanon. All groups we met in Lebanon had mentioned the Davos incident once they found out that we were from Turkey. The incident has changed Turkey's image in a positive way and encouraged the Turkmens to express their identity.
- 12 In Lebanon, Turkey is perceived as a Sunni power in general. This perception bears risks for Turkey's Lebanon policy. First of all, the Sunnis have high expectations from Turkey. They see Turkey as a political, economical and even a military support against the Shiites. Second, the non-Sunni groups in Lebanon have a negative perception regarding Turkey for this matter. This damages Turkey's "equidistance policy".
- 13 Abdülhamit Bilici, "Lübnan'daki Türkmen Köyünde Bayram", *Zaman*, 01 August 2009.
- 14 Such fields dot the Lebanese countryside and are used for funerals and special occasions.
- 15 The Turkish Embassy in Beirut has received necessary approval regarding the fund allocation for the establishment of three Turkish Culture Centers in Duris, Akkar and Beirut. Thus, the project will have the chance to become realized and the Turkmens of Beqaa, Akkar and Beirut will be able to enjoy their culture and language which they are about to forget.
- 16 The ideas about the Turkish College and Turkish Cultural Center were suggested by Mr. Ali Bekraki, a Cretan Turk interviewed in Tripoli. I want to thank him for his contributions.

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