

Ercan Çağlayan, *Zazalar: Tarih, Kültür ve Kimlik*, İstanbul: "İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları", 2016.—248 pp. + 28 illustrations.

This volume provides a comprehensive compilation of historical sources on the Zazas, an ethnic group living in Eastern Turkey. As the author indicates in the foreword, the study addresses the "serious contamination of knowledge" on the Zazas. The book is comprised of four main parts covering first, terminology; second, history; third, religion and socio-political life of the Zazas; and fourth, discusses the language status of Zazaca, i.e. Zazaki.

The introduction briefly outlines relevant theories on ethnic groups understood as modern constructions that are, indeed, dynamic and heterogeneous. To offer a clear definition of the group's boundaries, Çağlayan examines its constituents based on definitions by Anthony Smith, including shared name, ancestral myth, history, culture, territory and experience (p. 9). He then outlines the contradictive debate on the Zazas' identification with either Kurdish or Zaza nationalist movements: one group considers Zazaca as a dialect of Kurmanci and, therefore, identifies itself with Kurdish ethnicity; the other regards Zazaca as a distinct language and, consequently, identifies itself as a separate Zaza ethnicity. The author criticises those taking the second position as "philological nationalists" clinging to the essentialist idea that language defines ethnic origin. Clearly arguing that the Zazas are of Kurdish ethnicity, Çağlayan dismisses those Zazas who seek to differentiate themselves from this. He argues that the discourse around "Zazas are no Kurds" is maintained by a new "Zaza nationalism" induced by an ultranationalist Turkish secret service since the 1980s in order to weaken and split the Kurdish movement (p. 11). Focusing on common cultural and political features shared by Zazaki and Kurmanci speakers, the study fails to critically broach the importance of religious and historical differences ascribed to specifically Alevi Zazaca speakers.

The first part discusses various terms used in Arab, Ottoman, Turkish Republican and Western sources to designate the groups nowadays known as Zazas by examining them in relation to their respective habitation areas and religious affiliations. Çağlayan argues that the term Zaza, although an external designation of unclear meaning and derivation, has

spread increasingly in recent decades, while the other terms, especially *Kurd* and *Kirmanc* as self-designations, are used less and less (p. 35). In the author's view, *Dimuli* represents the name of a Kurdish tribe from Mosul, not from the Caspian region of Deylam, which is a generally accepted view. He underlines that the term *Zaza* is used only by the Sunni Zazas, not by the *Zaza* Alevis. The latter prefer the term *Kirmanc* as an ethno-religious self-identification. Although recognising this differentiation along religious lines, he assumes that the proximity of the terms *Kirmanc* and *Kurmanc* would testify to a Kurdish umbrella identification embracing Sunni and Alevi *Zazaca* speakers. The use of the term *Zaza* as an external designation throughout the study may be misleading.

The second part of this book presents the knowledge produced on Zazas in the historical sources. Based on his previous studies he draws on Arab sources referring to Dünbülis as Kurds since the 9th century. But it is only in Ottoman sources that the term *Zaza* is first used by Evliya Çelebi in the 17th century. A detailed discussion of the Kemalist discourse on *Zazaca*-speaking Alevis from Dersim elucidates the elite's indecisiveness over whether to integrate this population into their vision of the Turkish nation. The author, stressing the Turkish appropriative discourse on Zazas after the violent crimes in Dersim in 1938, relates its impact on all Zazas in Turkey. At this point, an analytical distinction regarding the persecution and violence suffered by Alevi *Zazaca* speakers in Dersim compared to the historical experience of Sunni *Zazaca* speakers in the adjacent regions would have been revealing for a better understanding of the former attempts to identify differently. Then, he revises the Western studies on Zazas and *Zazaca* since the 19th century, underlining that these would mostly regard Zazas as Kurds.

The third part discusses the importance of religious and political organisational structures within the *Zaza* communities. Çağlayan focusses mainly on Sunni *Zazaca* speakers and glosses over the disparity of Alevi community structures. The decrease in importance of traditional leaders has led to an increase in party politics since the 1980s. The author points out that Alevi *Zazaca* speakers support either Turkish or Kurdish leftist parties, whereas Sunni *Zazaca* speakers vote for the conservative right, but draws no conclusions from this political difference.

The fourth part criticises the first literary works in Zazaki available since the 1980s and characterised by the author as a project of Zaza nationalists in European exile. In line with Ziya Gökalp, Çağlayan declares literature published in the Zazaki language as unsubstantial when compared to Kurmanci literature.

Overall, this study makes a useful contribution to the research on this topic by reconsidering the historical sources in their political context. However, levelling out differences between Zaza communities to pave the way for an overarching Kurdish identity obscures insights into their varied identifications.

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