

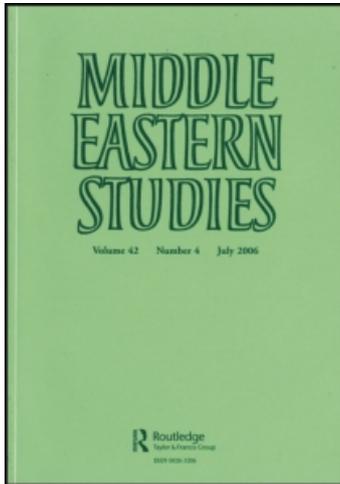
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Formation of a Diasporic Community: The History of Migration and Resettlement of Muslim Albanians in the Black Sea Region of Turkey

ŞERIFE GENİŞ & KELLY LYNNE MAYNARD

Turkey is a well-known but under-studied case of a multicultural society. The major source of this multicultural social structure is Turkey's heritage as the successor to the Ottoman Empire, which was a multi-religious, multi-ethnic society. While Turkey lost most of its non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities during the transition to nation-state, it gained many non-Turkish speaking Muslim groups from the former lands of the Ottoman Empire through migrations and population exchanges.¹ This article is concerned with the Albanians in Turkey, one of the Muslim communities that migrated to Anatolia during and after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire to escape conflict and massacre in the Balkans.

Taking a chronological perspective, the ethnic Albanians currently living in Turkey today could be categorized into three groups: Ottoman Albanians, Balkan Albanians, and twentieth century Albanians.² The first category is comprised of descendants of Albanians who relocated to the Marmara and Aegean regions as part of the Ottoman Empire's administrative structure. Official Ottoman documents record the existence of Albanians living in and around Istanbul (Constantinople), Iznik (Nicaea), and Izmir (Smyrna). For example, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries Albanian boys were brought to Istanbul and housed in Topkapı Palace as part of the *devşirme* system (an early Ottoman practice of human tribute required of Christian citizens) to serve as civil servants and Janissaries.³ In the 1600s Albanian seasonal workers were employed by these Albanian Janissaries in and around Istanbul and Iznik,⁴ and in 1860 Kayserili Ahmet, the governor of Izmir, employed Albanians to fight the raiding Zeybeks.⁵ Today, the descendants of Ottoman Albanians do not form a community *per se*, but at least some still identify as ethnically Albanian.⁶ However, it is unknown how many, if any, of these Ottoman Albanians retain Albanian language skills.

The second category of ethnic Albanians living in modern Turkey is composed of people who are the descendants of refugees from the Balkans who because of war were forced to migrate inwards towards Eastern Thrace and Anatolia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the Ottoman Empire dissolved. These

Balkan Albanians are the largest group of ethnic Albanians living in Turkey today, and can be subcategorized into those who ended up in actual Albanian-speaking communities and those who were relocated into villages where they were the only Albanian-speaking migrants. Not surprisingly, the language is retained by some of the descendants from those of the former, but not those of the latter.

The third category of ethnic Albanians in Turkey is comprised of recent or twentieth century migrants from the Balkans. These recent migrants can be subcategorized into those who came from Kosovo in the 1950s–1970s, those who came from Kosovo in 1999, and those who came from the Republic of Albania after 1992. All of these in the third category know a variety of modern Albanian and are mostly located in the western parts of Turkey in large metropolitan areas.

Our research focuses on the history of migration and community formation of the Albanians located in the Samsun Province in the Black Sea region around 1912–1913 who would fall into the second category discussed above (see Figure 1). Turkish census data between 1927 and 1965 recorded the presence of Albanian speakers in Samsun Province,⁷ and the fieldwork we have been conducting in Samsun since September 2005 has revealed that there is still a significant number of Albanians living in the city and its surrounding region. According to the community leaders we interviewed, there are about 30,000–40,000 ethnic Albanian Turkish citizens in Samsun Province.⁸ The community was largely rural, located in the villages and engaged in agricultural activities until the 1970s. After this time, gradual migration to urban areas, particularly smaller towns and nearby cities has been observed. Long-distance rural-to-urban migration also began in later years mostly due to increasing demand for education and better jobs. Those who migrated to areas outside of Samsun Province generally preferred the cities located in the west of Turkey, particularly metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa mainly because of the job opportunities as well as the large Albanian communities already residing in these cities. Today, the size of the Albanian community in Samsun

Figure 1. Map of Turkey



Province is considered to be much smaller and gradually shrinking because of outward migration. Our observation is that the Albanians in Samsun seem to be fully integrated into Turkish society, and engaged in agriculture and small trading businesses. As education becomes accessible to the wider society and modernization accelerates transportation and hence communication of urban values, younger generations have also started to acquire professional occupations. Whilst a significant number of people still speak Albanian fluently as the language in the family, they have a perfect command of the Turkish language and cannot be distinguished from the rest of the population in terms of occupation, education, dress and traditions.

In this article, we are interested in the history of this Albanian community in Samsun. Given the lack of any research on the Albanian presence in Turkey, our questions are simple and exploratory. When and where did these people come from? How and why did they choose Samsun as a site of resettlement? How did the socio-cultural characteristics of this community change over time? It is generally believed that the Albanians in Samsun Province are the descendants of the migrants and refugees from Kosovo who arrived in Turkey during the wars of 1912–13. Based on our research in Samsun Province, we argue that this information is partial and misleading. The interviews we conducted with the Albanian families and community leaders in the region and the review of Ottoman history show that part of the Albanian community in Samsun was founded through three stages of successive migrations. The first migration involved the forced removal of Muslim Albanians from the Sançak of Nish in 1878; the second migration occurred when these migrants' children fled from the massacres in Kosovo in 1912–13 to Anatolia; and the third migration took place between 1913 and 1924 from the scattered villages in Central Anatolia where they were originally placed to the Samsun area in the Black Sea Region. Thus, the Albanian community founded in the 1920s in Samsun was in many ways a reassembling of the demolished Muslim Albanian community of Nish. This trajectory of the Albanian community of Nish shows that the fate of this community was intimately bound up with the fate of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the socio-cultural composition of modern Turkey still carries on the legacy of its historical ancestor. To support this argument, we dwell on the historical records and original data derived from oral interviews to account for the history of our community in Samsun which begins with the dissolution of, and emigration from, the Sançak of Nish.

We argue that uncovering this community's multilayered history is important because it brings to light the ultimate fate of the Muslim Albanians of the Sançak of Nish. It is also significant theoretically because it shows how a community can form, dissolve, and regroup across borders, and thus raises the issue of how diaspora communities are created and perpetuated across generations and through multiple migrations.⁹ Finally, this article demonstrates the importance of Turkey's pre-nation state history for understanding the social and cultural composition of contemporary Turkish society.

Our research strategy comprised several stages. Our first goal was to locate Albanian communities in Turkey. To do this, Şerife Geniş placed advertisements on several

websites established by Balkan migrants calling for people who would be interested in participating in our research. After we received responses and identified through them the places where ethnic Albanian communities seem to be concentrated, we chose Samsun.¹⁰ We then started meeting with the people in Samsun and became acquainted with several who were willing to talk and give interviews on their family histories in September 2005. This is how we met with our main informant family and other Albanian families and individuals in Samsun Province. Our initial interviews showed that there is a common history behind the Albanian community of Samsun which we decided to explore.¹¹

We conducted formal interviews with members of six different families who shared with us their families' story of migration and of settlement in the region. In addition to these extended formal interviews on family histories, we also conducted formal and informal interviews with many individuals including community leaders during our daily encounters. Our major source of information, however, has been the members of one extended family (our informant family) who have been willing to host us in their homes in the city and village for longer durations. We developed a very close relationship with the family and spent days and nights together talking about their family history, their ancestors' life back in Kosovo, their relationships to relatives in Turkey, in Kosovo, and their life in Samsun. We now have many audiotapes and videotapes of the long conversations we had with members of the family.

Our informant family is descended from a man called Hamit Reçicë (*reçits* or *reçitsa*). The descendants of the family now extend to the sixth generation and the members of the family total approximately 150 people. The two eldest surviving sons of Hamit (who are now in their 70s) still live in Yeşildağ village where their father settled.¹² They have households of their own composed of their eldest sons (with their wives and children) and any of their children not yet married. But most of Hamit's grandchildren have moved either to the city of Samsun, the town of Bafra or in the case of daughters to other villages in the area or to central cities such as Ankara, Bursa and Istanbul where Albanians have formed large communities. Thus some grandchildren of Hamit still live in Yeşildağ, but most live elsewhere. We were able to meet most of the family members in the Samsun area as well as those who lived in other cities.

We utilize here the data gathered from all the interviews to reconstruct the history of migration and settlement of Nishan Albanians to the Samsun area. However, we will particularly rely on the information we gathered from our informant family and present their family story in detail. The story of this family is important not only because it provides a prototypical case study but also because the person that the family is descended from took a leadership role in forming an all-Albanian village in the region.

Using secondary sources, we establish that there have been Albanians living in the area of Nish for at least 500 years, that the Ottoman Empire controlled the area from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries which led to many Albanians converting to Islam, that the Muslim Albanians of Nish were forced to leave in 1878, and that at that time most of these Nishan Albanians migrated south into Kosovo, although

some went to Skopje in Macedonia. We will then discuss the Balkan Wars and the Albanian migration to and resettlement in Turkey.

The two greatest political powers in the Balkans in the early fourteenth century were the Byzantine Empire and the Serbian Empire. By the end of the fourteenth century the Ottoman Empire controlled the central Balkans. A civil war began within the Byzantine Empire in 1341 which severely weakened its ability to defend itself. The Serbian King, Stephen Dušan, took advantage of the situation and invaded the Byzantine areas from the north and west, while the Ottomans attacked the Byzantines from the south-east. This set the stage for a series of battles between the Serbian Empire and the Ottoman Empire including the battle of 1363 along the Madritsa River, the battle of 1371 in Macedonia, and the well-known battle of Kosovo in 1389. Dušan's death in 1355 left the Serbian Empire in disarray, and they and their allies lost all these battles. The Ottomans, led by Sultan Murad, won much territory, and the Ottoman Empire controlled, at first through vassalage then later through complete incorporation, the central Balkans for the next five centuries.¹³

Our interviews indicate that Samsun Albanians descend from Albanians who had been living in the villages around the city of Nish. The Ottomans gained control of Nish and its environs from Serbia in 1386.¹⁴ Even before the Ottomans invaded the Balkans, there were Albanians inhabiting Nish and the surrounding areas. According to Malcolm, three sources record Albanians living in and around Kosovo in the fourteenth century: Serybian *Chrysobulls*, the Dušan code book, and royal biographies. The demographic data provided by these historic sources indicate that in the 1300s the majority of the population in the area surrounding Nish was Serbian, but that large numbers of Albanians and Vlachs were also present, as were some Bulgarian, Greeks, Armenian, and Venetians. Records of Albanians in and around Kosovo in the 1400s are found in Ottoman *Defters* 'registers', Venetian traders' accounts, and some travellers' accounts. For example, Ottomans made a register of 'Albania' in 1431, and one in Skopje and eastern Kosovo in 1455.¹⁵

There is also philological evidence that Albanians had inhabited the region for centuries if not millennia. According to Katičić (1976), Nish is an Albanian and Slavic toponym that developed from Ancient Greek, which presupposes Albanian language mediation.¹⁶ In other words, based on the strict rules of sound change the only way the Greek City *Ναισσός* (Naissu) could have the phonetic outcome Nish (*niš*) is via the sound changes which Albanian underwent. It was then borrowed from Albanian into Slavic. This means that when the Slavs arrived in Nish (seventh century) there would have already been a historic (proto)-Albanian presence.

At the time of the Ottoman conquest, most of the Albanians, Vlachs, and Venetians living in and around Kosovo and Nish were Catholic, while most of the Serbians were Orthodox Christians. Most remained Christians for 140 years, but many families converted to Islam between 1520 and 1540. However there was still a large enough number of Christians for the Hapsburgs/Austrians to invade Nish on behalf of the Catholics in 1688, but Ottomans regained control of the city within two years. In 1690 much of the population of the city and surrounding area was killed or fled, and there was an emigration of Albanians from the Malësia e Madhe (North Central Albania/Eastern Montenegro) and Dukagjin Plateau (Western Kosovo) into

Nish. However, some of the population which had fled to Hungary returned to the area in 1691. Thus the Albanians who were living in Nish in the nineteenth century were a mixture of Northwest and Northeast Albanian clans. Because of the rebellion in 1688, a second wave of conversion to Islam occurred in the 1690s which arose mainly from political coercion. The most common Muslim sects in this area were Bektashi, Halveti and Sa'di.¹⁷

In the Ottoman Empire, a *sançak* was an administrative unit of an area of land. Each area of land contained a large town, by which the whole *sançak* was generally named, and would contain within it several estates of local landowners. The rulers of *sançaks* were collectively known as provincial rulers. A man who ruled more than one *sançak* was called a pasha. In the early Ottoman Empire the rulers of *sançaks* were under the direct control of the supreme landowner of their continent (i.e., *beglerbeg*), but in 1864 the Ottomans undertook an administrative reform which resulted in *sançaks* being sub-classified under larger groupings called *vilayets*. The Sançak of Nish was established in the 1400s.¹⁸

The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of nationalist movements all over the Balkans. Serbians, Greeks, Bulgarians all wanted to be independent from the Ottoman Empire. This resulted in a series of battles and administrative reforms. In 1864 the Ottomans still controlled the Sançak of Nish at which time it became part of the Vilayet of Nish which bordered the Vilayet of Kosovo in the south-west and bordered the newly created principality of Serbia to the north-west.¹⁹ In 1868 the administrative units were reclassified. At this time the Vilayet of Prizren was created. It was composed of four *sançaks*: Prizren, Debar, Skopje, and Nish. Albanians were the majority in the Sançaks of Skopje and of Nish. According to Malcolm, the upper Morava valley, the area of Serbia south of Nish had a large Muslim Albanian minority in the later Ottoman period, and by the 1870s the proportion of the population claiming Islam was 70 per cent compared to just 30 per cent claiming Christianity as their religion in Kosovo and surrounding areas.²⁰

In 1875, a Christian peasant rebellion in Bosnia led the Serbians and Montenegrins to declare war on the Ottomans in 1876. A few months later the Russian Empire declared war on the Ottoman Empire. This conflict is known as the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78. Russia and its allies won the war, and drew up the treaty of San Stefano in early 1878. However in July 1878, Great Britain and Austria forced renegotiations, known as the Congress of Berlin. It is from the terms of the treaty of San Stefano/Congress of Berlin that independent Serbia gained the Sançak of Nish as part of its territory.²¹

According to Shaw and Shaw, during this period the Russians and their allies committed various massacres of the local 'Turkish' (read Muslim) inhabitants of the area where the war took place.²² Malcolm also states that, 'the wars of the 1870s and the territorial changes of 1878 enabled the Serbian authorities to expel the Albanians [from the region of southern Nish] *en masse*'.²³

Due to the atrocities committed by the local non-Muslim populations and Russians, there was a massive migration from the Balkans to other areas of the Balkans, Thrace and Anatolia during and after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. There are no reliable sources as to the ethnic make-up of the Muslims who migrated during and after this war, because the Ottoman Empire registered people on the basis of their religious sect and not their ethnicity, but Tekeli states that during this period

1.5 million people migrated and 300,000 of them died on the road.²⁴ It is estimated that 300,000 refugees and wounded soldiers arrived in Constantinople during January and February 1878, that Colonel Blunt estimated 54,000 in 12 days based on a count of wagons and train cars near Adrianople, and that they came by land, sea (boats from Varna and Bourgas), and train.²⁵ However, in 1878 the Ottoman Empire still controlled most of the Balkans and many of the Muslims moved within these territories rather than migrating to Eastern Thrace and Anatolia.

McCarthy shows that the Sançak of Nish, which became a territory of Serbia after the 1877 Russo-Turkish War, had 131,000 Muslims in 1876, but only 12,000 in 1882. On the other hand, the Vilayet of Kosovo had a Muslim population of 360,000 in 1876 which had increased to 637,000 by 1882.²⁶ According to Malcolm, at the time there were major roads connecting Nish to Belgrade, Novi Pazar, Sophia, Prishtina and Skopje.²⁷ It can be reasonably assumed that the Muslims who survived the expulsion from Nish followed these roads, and settled in the adjacent areas. As a result, there would have been a majority of Albanians in the Vilayet of Kosovo (Prishtina), as well as the Sançak of Skopje in the Vilayet of Prizren.

Migration stories of Albanians settled on the Black Sea concur with this interpretation. Our interviews also revealed that some people in the same family went to Skopje while others to Prishtina.

The conflict in the Balkans did not end with the 1878 Congress of Berlin. Local conflicts continued, and the leaders of the newly independent Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece, dissatisfied with the territories left to the Ottomans, allied themselves and waged a war against the Ottomans in 1912 followed by a war with each other in 1913 and the beginning of the First World War in 1914.²⁸ These wars produced many refugees. We will present evidence from literary sources about the large number of Muslim refugees created from 1912 to 1914.

According to Mazower, thousands of refugees arrived in Salonica from the countryside during the Balkan Wars. Salonica had been the main Balkan port and city of the Ottoman Empire where a significant number of Muslims and Albanians were located. On 24 October 1912 when the Greek army took Salonica from the Ottomans, large number of Muslims including Albanians had to again flee from the city to eastern Thrace and Anatolia. By the spring of 1914 tens of thousands of Muslim refugees had passed through Salonica *en route* to Istanbul and Izmir and that of the 140,000 who had left by April 1914 only 24,000 were from newly acquired Greek territories; the others were fleeing Serbs and Bulgarians.²⁹

According to documents found in the archive of the Federal Secretary of Foreign Labour in Belgrade, a mass expulsion of Albanians took place during the Balkan Wars. Not counting children under six years old, 281,747 people were expatriated between November 1912 and August 1914. Albanian families from Kosova, the Sanjak, and Macedonia were deported through Cavalo in Greece and by the land route to Turkey.³⁰ Another source for information about Muslim refugees encamped in Salonica between 1912 and 1914 is the Carnegie Report, which is a compilation of refugees' first-hand accounts of where they came from and what happened.³¹

Tekeli informs us that an influx of migrants from the Balkans to the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire in Thrace and Anatolia took place during and

after the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. Some 640,000 people had to leave their homes within a matter of days and move to Thrace and Anatolia in a rush.³² Mazower, citing Tonybee, writes that

Between 1912–1924 emigration – first voluntary then forced – depleted the place of Muslims ... with shops and warehouses, fields and public buildings being requisitioned before their eyes, more and more villagers abandoned their homes and made their way to Salonica, from where steamers carried them to lands still under Ottoman control. The real reason for the exodus, wrote the British consul, were not patriotic or religious feelings but ‘widespread massacres, forced conversions and the wholesale robbing of Muslim goods’ mostly by ‘Macedonian peasants’, in other words Slav peasants.³³

Referring to British consul reports, especially Lamb in Salonica and the Carnegie Report, McCarthy shows that during 1912 and 1913 tens of thousands of Muslims were murdered, and tens of thousands died of starvation and disease (typhus, typhoid, cholera). ‘Western observers estimated that approximately 5,000 Albanian Muslims were killed “between Kumanova and Üsküb” and 5,000 in the Prishtina area’.³⁴

McCarthy also notes that ‘unfortunately lists of empty and destroyed villages give little descriptive information on the fate of the villagers’.³⁵ The interviews in Samsun, however, tell us how our informants’ ancestors migrated from Kosovo to Anatolia at this time, so oral history can reveal the fate of some of these refugees.

It has been widely acknowledged that the Ottoman Empire faced the problem of large numbers of refugees in the 1870s.³⁶ These refugees were displaced people from all over the empire, but particularly its northern edges. They were the result of a number of smaller conflicts in the rebelling *vilayets* as well as the massive disruption caused by the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 which had both an eastern front (fought in Kars, Erzurum, etc.) as well as a western one (fought in Serbia, Bulgaria, etc.). As the empire collapsed Muslim refugees fled further into the centre of the empire while Christians fled outwards. The Balkan wars of 1912–14 created a second period of mass exodus and an even larger number of refugees. Because the empire’s borders were contracted, the Muslim subjects of the empire continued to come inward, but this time to Anatolia via Salonica and Istanbul.

The Union and Progress Party (1908–18) was in power when the second wave of mass migration from the Balkans to Anatolia took place. Encountered with a problem of massive numbers of refugees from the Balkans in its first years in power, the Union and Progress Party accepted all Muslims without discrimination on the basis of ethnic identity. However, according to Dündar, they conducted extensive population censuses based on ethnic identity, but the censuses were unofficial and their results were never publicized. Yet these secret censuses were used to relocate non-Turkish Muslim refugees and migrants. The aim was to disperse non-Turkish ethnicities in small groups to different parts of the country to prevent them from establishing ethnic communities capable of sustaining their identity and language.³⁷

Albanian migrants and refugees were one of the groups targeted by this policy. They were not allowed to settle in places of their own choice but were sent to areas chosen by the government. According to the relocation and settlement policy of the Union and Progress Party, Albanians were to be located in places far from the Balkans, and were not to be permitted to concentrate in one region, but were to be dispersed in small groups to different parts of the country. Thus Albanian migrants and refugees concentrated in the Aegean and Thrace, such as those in Aydın, Edirne, İzmit and İstanbul, were escorted to inner parts of Anatolia by land and sea and distributed among various cities and towns in the Black Sea (Samsun and Bafra), Central Anatolia (Ankara, Konya, Sivas, Yozgat), Southeast Anatolia (Diyarbakır) and Mediterranean (Adana, Kahraman Maraş) regions.³⁸

Overall the policy of dispersing the Balkan migrants in order to accelerate their acculturation was highly successful in Turkey, yet our fieldwork reveals that in some places Albanian communities did form. Migrants soon left the places where they had been relocated and regrouped in other areas and villages. One of the largest regroupings seems to have been in the Black Sea region in the villages around the city of Samsun and the town of Bafra. Many of these people regrouped there because they were related to people who had been sent there, and from them they heard that there was plenty of land and many friends. Perhaps because they had already been displaced once before, the desire to regroup was particularly strong in the refugee families from Nish.

We will now discuss the interviews we conducted that reveal what our respondents actually remember of their roots.

In autumn 2005 we started gathering oral histories from the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of Hamit Reçiçë. According to them, Hamit was born in Kosovo in or around 1900, but he always claimed the family was originally from the village of Reçiçë in the Sançak of Nish. This village was reportedly near Prokupje. Hamit also told his children that the village was attacked and destroyed by Serbian militias during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. To escape from being massacred, some members of the family fled to Skopje while others headed to Prishtina. During this time, Hamit's family lost touch with the other relatives who left for Skopje. They knew that some of their relatives were aiming to flee to Anatolia from Skopje, but they did not know whether they succeeded or not. In 1878–79, Hamit's immediate family settled in or around the village of Groshka in Prishtina, Kosovo.

We followed up on the information provided by Hamit's descendants and found that Professor Amet Gashi's *Ethnic Map of Albania* locates a village *Raçiçë* slightly north and west of the town Prokupje, and about 10 km inwards from the Albanian ethnic boundary.³⁹ On the *Kosovo International Travel Map* a village, *Donja Rešica*, is indicated in the same location. This is very likely the family's home village in Nish.

Our other interviews in Samsun Province indicate that it was not only Hamit who claimed that his ancestors were not native Kosovars but that they had migrated to Kosovo from Nish. For example, interviews with the eldest member of another Albanian family in Samsun province, Arif Thaqi (*thaçi*), also revealed that while the first migrant to Turkey in his family (his father) came from Kosovo, the family had originally migrated to Kosovo from Tërnova in the Sançak of Nish in 1878.

Additional interviews we conducted in 2005, 2006 and 2007 with various Albanians living in the region also suggested that a significant number of the Albanian community in Samsun area are descended from Albanians removed from the Sançak of Nish, an observation also corroborated by Jakupi.⁴⁰

Jakupi is an Albanian professor of economics from Kosovo who wrote a travelogue based on a journal he kept when he visited the province of Samsun in 1997. Jakupi met with several members of the Albanian community in Samsun Province. Mostly he recorded conversations with people living in the town of Bafra which is within the administrative boundaries of Samsun Province. Jakupi's assessment of the origins of the Albanians in Samsun is similar to ours. He wrote that

Shqiptarët në Bafra janë vendosur që nga viti 1912/13/14. Kryesisht janë nga Rrafshi i Kosovës, përkatësisht nga komuna e Prishtinës, Vushtrrisë, Podujevës, Lipjanit, Ferizajit, Gjilanit, Kamenicës. Pothuajse në tërësi janë pjesëtarë të ardhur nga Sanxhaku i Nishit në Kosovë.

The Albanians in Bafra have been living there since 1912/13/14. They are mainly from the Plain of Kosovo from the communes of Prishtina, Vushtrrisë, Podujevës, Lipjanit, Ferizajit, Gjilanit, Kamenicës. Nearly all of them are part of those that came to Kosovo from the Sançak of Nish.⁴¹

Jakupi backs up his claim that most of the Albanians come from the Sançak of Nish with more detailed oral history data from some of the people he interviewed. For example, Jakupi specifically mentions Hacı İbrahim Baca. İbrahim Baca was born in 1909 in Pomazatin in the plain of Kosovo, but his family had arrived there from Nish when the Albanians were evicted in 1878.⁴² Likewise three brothers named Prebreza relate that their family originally came from the area of Toplicë, near Prokupje, in Nish, but migrated to Podje in Prishtina, and then moved to Turkey.⁴³ Another large family in Bafra is the Sfarça family. According to Jakupi, some members of the family migrated from Kosovo to Turkey in 1913 while others left in 1925. However, their family history also indicates that the family had arrived to Kosovo from the area of Toplicë in the Sançak of Nish. We were able to interview Hacı Ahmet Sfarça in Bafra several times and confirm their oral history as given by Jakupi. These interviews indicate that Hamit's story is not an exception but one commonly shared by the members of Albanian community in Samsun Province.

We continue to follow Hamit's story to shed light on the journey of Nish Albanians from Nish to Kosovo and from there to Turkey. Hamit told his descendants that after settling in the village of Groska, the Reçicë family lived there for about 30 years until the Balkan Wars broke out in 1912. Hamit was born in this village. The exact date of Hamit's birth is unknown. However, Hamit thought he was around 12 years old when the war started. According to Hamit, their village in Kosovo was attacked by the Serbian militias very late at night and the villagers were caught off-guard. The Serbian militias killed all the men in Hamit's immediate family. His mother was able to save him from the militias by dressing him as a girl. Hamit travelled to the inner Ottoman lands together with his mother, two sisters and some other relatives from the village.

Unfortunately, we could not gather any reliable information as to how Hamit and his relatives travelled to the Ottoman lands in Anatolia. His children were not able to give us much detail about the journey to Turkey. All they were able to tell us was that their relatives took a ship to Turkey. They did not know where they boarded the ship and whether they travelled within Turkey before they arrived at Samsun. As a result, we were not able to form a detailed map of the route Hamit and his relatives took to the Ottoman lands and then finally to Samsun.

Although we could not locate many scholarly works on the travel of the Balkan migrants to the Ottoman lands after the Balkan Wars, we know for sure that Kosovo migrants could not sail directly to the Ottoman lands. They either had to take the land route through Bulgaria or take a ship from Greece in order to arrive in Anatolia. This is supported by the fact that Albanian migrants, along with others, were concentrated in the western part of Turkey, the Aegean coast, and Edirne and Istanbul in Thrace after the Balkan Wars. From there, they were dispersed to the other parts of Anatolia by land and sea as part of the government's systematic population resettlement plan as discussed previously.

Given this information, it is plausible to construct two scenarios of Hamit's and his relatives' escape to Anatolia. The first possibility is that they arrived at the Aegean coast in Greece via a land route and from there they took a ship to Istanbul. The second possibility is that they took the land route via Bulgaria to Edirne and then Istanbul. In either of the two scenarios, after their arrival in Istanbul they must have been shipped to Samsun by the Ottoman authorities. Samsun, however, was not their final destination. From Samsun, Hamit and his relatives were sent to the village of Erbağlı in Tokat, because 'the state told them there were empty places to settle'. Yet like many other Albanian migrants, they did not stay in the place they were assigned to inhabit. After three years in Erbağlı, they decided to leave 'because there was no empty land, all the land was populated by the Turks'. Their next destination was Bafra, a small town about 70 km west of Samsun city. The town of Bafra was also one of the official sites for relocation of Albanian refugees after the Balkan Wars. It is possible that while staying in Yozgat, Hamit and his relatives acquired the knowledge that Bafra hosted an Albanian community. This hunch is corroborated by one of Hamit's sons who recalled his father saying that Albanian was the language predominantly spoken in the area at the time of their arrival. One of the reasons Hamit and his relatives chose to move to Bafra, could be because they wanted to find their community.

In Bafra, Hamit and his mother occupied a derelict house left by the Greeks. They were struggling to survive in conditions of absolute poverty. Shortly after their arrival in Bafra, Hamit was left all alone at the age of 13 or 14. Hamit's sisters had died in Erbağlı before they left for Bafra. His cousin was recruited to military service shortly after they arrived in Bafra. A couple of months later, his mother died from an accident that occurred when they were trying to collect wood to sell from the derelict houses in the area. Hamit survived on temporary jobs here and there for a couple of years. He then joined the Muslim militias in their fight against the Greeks in the area. That is how he got to know the area where he eventually settled. Later, in 1925, Hamit and his cousin Yunus decided to settle in the village which came to be called Yeşildağ. Yeşildağ is located in a mountainous area between Samsun and Bafra. The village is about 20 km from Samsun, and about 50 km from Bafra. Yeşildağ is at

Figure 2. The house built by Hamit Reçicë. *Source:* Photograph by Şerife Geniş.



least 10 km. from the main road that links the village to the main road travelling to Samsun and Bafra.

When Hamit and his cousin Yunus moved to Yeşildağ, it was deserted. The Greeks had either left their land and migrated to Greece, or moved to the city of Samsun, where it was safer. The Greeks were to leave the area altogether for good by 1924 as part of the population exchange agreement signed between Turkey and Greece.⁴⁴

Hamit and his cousin stayed in Yeşildağ by themselves for a couple of years before starting their own families. They also invited others to settle in Yeşildağ and form a community. Yeşildağ and its environs gradually became an all-Albanian settlement with about 200 households by the 1940s. Figure 2 shows the original house built by Hamit Reçicë. One of Hamit's sons related the settlement of his father and cousin in Yeşildağ as follows:

My father and Koca Yunus were the first people settling in this village after the Rums [Greeks] left. Koca Yunus was my father's cousin. They stayed here alone by themselves for five years. . . . Just the two of them. . . . My father was single. Uncle Yunus was married. All the Rums left. All of their houses were torn down. There was only the church left. After 5 years, they started calling people from Bafra and other places, saying 'you come, you come.' This is how they populated this village.

Hamit's descendants also recall that by the 1950s the village totalled 200 Albanian families. The villagers lived in a state of isolation as the village was in a mountainous area and there was no modern transportation infrastructure until the early 1960s. The villagers had to walk or travel by donkey from the village to the main road, a distance of about 10 km, to find some means of transport to the city and town centres. In an emergency it was not uncommon for many of them to walk all the way

to Samsun or Bafra, the two largest urban areas nearby. It was only in the late 1960s that the first motorized vehicle became available in the village. One of Hamit's grandsons remembers seeing a motorized vehicle for the first time in his life in the village in 1965 when he was 10 years old. Today, there is a daily minibus leaving to the city of Samsun and Bafra in the morning and returning in the late afternoon. Some families also own private vehicles.

The first primary school in the area was built in the late 1940s. Hamit's older sons attended primary school at around the age of 16, but only for two years. None of his daughters, on the other hand, had schooling and they are still illiterate in Turkish. The sons recall that they did not speak much Turkish until the age of 16 and only started learning Turkish in school. The language used in the village continued to be predominantly Albanian as the population of the village was almost all Albanian. This was to change with the demographic transformation observed in the village in later years.

To reiterate, the inhabitants of Yeşildağ village were almost all Albanian until the early 1960s. However, as transportation started to improve during these years, the demographic composition of the village began to change. According to Hamit's children, non-Albanian East Black Sea migrants started to settle in the village during the 1960s. This trend continues to this day. Now, there are only about 10 Albanian families left in the village. One of Hamit's sons related the demographic transformation of the village as follows:

The first Lazi comes to this area in 1924. My father's cousin goes to Çorum to buy some cattle and he meets with an Albanian. He tells him 'Why do you stay here. Come and stay with us.' There is plenty of land here then. That person tells my father's cousin that there is a 'Hoca' (a person with religious education) in Çorum. Then my uncle says to him 'Go get him too. He would be useful.' They do not have anybody to do the religious work here, so he invites the Hoca as well. That's how we learned some Turkish; from that person. Before we only spoke Albanian here.

So, before it was all Albanian around here; about 200 families in total. There were only two Lazi families in different neighbourhoods of Yeşildağ. Others were all Albanians. But now there are few Albanians. All left.⁴⁵

When we asked why Albanians leave the village and where they move to, Hamit's descendants' answer was that they mostly leave in search of better employment and educational opportunities. While some move to Samsun City, others prefer going to Istanbul or to Bursa where there are sizeable Albanian communities and better opportunities for employment. There are also those who left to acquire better land, particularly in Bafra, as land is limited and less easily cultivated in the mountains of Yeşildağ.

Today Yeşildağ, like many other Albanian villages in the region, has become a multi-ethnic place wherein Albanians are one among many other groups. The village is better integrated with the urban centres and modern institutions of Turkish society at large. This trend seems to have had significant implications for the Albanians of Yeşildağ. First of all, the significance of the Albanian language in the community and family seem to be decreasing. Turkish has become the primary language spoken

in public places, while Albanian has retreated to the private domain of the family. However, the fact that in the third and fourth generations the mother tongue has become Turkish rather than Albanian indicates the possibility of the disappearance of the Albanian language over time.

Demographic and socio-economic changes have had significant impacts on marriage patterns as well. Today, with socio-cultural mixing and modernization of social relationships, out-group marriage has become more common in almost all families. According to one of Hamit's sons, until very recently things were different:

There was no marriage relationship with non-Albanians. It was all with Albanians. Particularly we would not give any girls to outsiders. Until very recently ... We would take brides. But we would not give our daughters. But now, it is all mixed. Now, we give and take. We are giving and taking. But still (we would prefer) Albanians though. If possible, we prefer Albanians.

These trends observed in Yeşildağ village indicate the gradual socio-cultural integration of Albanian descendants into the larger Turkish society as modernization and urbanization have deepened their impact on the rural regions. The unfortunate side of this development is the threat it poses to the language spoken by this community which continues some archaic features of a long-isolated dialect of the Albanian language brought to Turkey by a century-old diasporic community.⁴⁶

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire from the mid nineteenth century through the early twentieth century resulted in hundreds of thousands of displaced persons from a wide variety of locations in the Balkans. The first wave came in the 1870s and 1880s following the Turkish–Russian wars, and a second wave occurred following the Balkan wars in 1912/13. The Albanian community in Samsun was formed as a result of these population movements.

Specifically in our paper we have shown that the Samsun Albanian community was founded because of three successive migrations. The first migration involved the forced removal of Albanian Muslims from the Sançak of Nish in 1878. Secondary sources and oral history data show that most of these Albanians went to Kosovo which was an area immediately adjacent, and at that time was still part of the Ottoman Empire. We have oral history data that state some Albanians moved all the way to Bafra at that time, while others went to Macedonia.

The second migration occurred when the children of the migrants from the Sançak of Nish fled the massacres taking place in Kosovo during the Balkan wars of 1912–13. Hundreds of thousands of Albanians and other Muslims walked or rode in oxen carts to Salonica, Erdirne, or Istanbul and from there were relocated by the Union and Progress Party officials to various cities and villages of Anatolia designated as relocation sites.

The third migration of Albanians was from the scattered villages where they were originally placed to a concentrated area in the Black Sea Region between 1913 and 1924. Our interviews indicate that a large number of Albanians living in Samsun area are descendants of Albanians who had been living in the Sançak of Nish in 1878.

Thus, the Albanian community that was founded in the 1920s in the province of Samsun was in many ways a reassembling of the destroyed Muslim Albanian community of Nish.

We have also demonstrated through our case study of one Albanian family and village that the socio-economic transformation of this community followed the general trends of modernization and urbanization of Turkey. Modernization touched the socio-cultural and demographic patterns of the village in the 1950s but its effects could only deepen in the late 1970s. This process ignited and widened the demand for rural-to-urban migration, higher education and urban professional occupations. Urbanization dispersed the community and weakened the transmission of language from generation to generation. However, the fact that many Albanians utilized community networks in deciding where to migrate and chose places where Albanians formed urban communities indicate a possibility of sustaining the native language through modern means and institutions, and of a revitalization of identity in a new national and international context.

Notes

We thank first and foremost our respondents in Samsun for enabling us to conduct this research. We are particularly indebted to the members of the Reçicë family who opened their houses as well as their hearts and became our family in Samsun. We can never thank them enough for their trust and generosity. We regret that we cannot list their names here. We would like to dedicate this article to them and to all Albanian refugees and immigrants in Turkey.

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1. For example, see F. Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskan Politikası 1913–1918* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001); R. Hirschon (ed.), *Ege'yi Geçerken: 1923 Türk-Yunan Zorunlu Nüfus Mübadelesi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005); I. Tekeli, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Günümüze Nüfusun Zorunlu Yer Değiştirmesi ve İskan Sorunu', *Toplum ve Bilim*, No.50 (1990), pp.49–72.

There is still little research on non-Turkish Muslim diaspora communities in Turkey. The reasons for this could be the low profile most of these communities prefer to keep for political and cultural reasons as well as the ideological barrier researchers have developed with regards to ethnicity studies in Turkey. For example, see S. Aydın, *Amacımız Devletin Bekası: Demokratikleşme Sürecinde Devlet ve Yurttaşlar* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2005) on how many non-Turkish Muslims are afraid of being discriminated against if they voice any public claims regarding their identity and roots. However, promising work has also been done recently on one of the most prolific non-Turkish Muslim diasporic communities in Turkey, the Circassians. See, for example, M. Çelikpala, 'From Immigrants to Diaspora: Influence of the North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.42 (2006), pp.423–46 and A. Kaya, 'Cultural Reification in Circassian Diaspora: Stereotypes, Prejudices and Ethnic Relations', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.31 (2005), pp.129–49.

2. K.L. Maynard. Project Description, *Documenting Endangered Languages Fellowship Proposal* (NSF/NEH, 2006) pp.6–7. For a slightly different periodization see G. de Rapper, 'Albanians facing the Ottoman Past', in S. Gangloff (ed.), *The Perception of the Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), pp.197–214.
3. F. Schevill, *A History of the Balkans* (New York: Dorset, 1991) [Originally published as *History of the Balkan Peninsula from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922)], pp. 185, 230–31.
4. S. Faroqhi and B. McGowan, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Vol.2 1600–1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.447.

5. R. Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (New York, SUNY Series in Middle Eastern Studies, 1988), p.69.
6. S.L. Malcomson, *Borderlands: Nation and Empire* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), pp.148–50.
7. F. Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (Istanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1999), pp.81–3.
8. It is impossible to provide any official or precise numbers of those who identify themselves as ethnic Albanians as census data do not ask for ethnic identification in Turkey.
9. See J. Lie on the significance of diaspora studies in deciphering the complex transnational networks that transcend national borders and help sustain communities embedded in transnational relations and identities. J. Lie, 'From International Migration to Transnational Diaspora', *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol.24 (1995), pp.303–6.
10. Some of the places we received responses from, in addition to Samsun, were Adapazarı, Ankara, Bursa, Eskişehir, İstanbul and İzmir. Later we came to know communities from Adana as well. We chose Samsun for the sake of convenience as Dr. Geniş started working in Samsun at the time we were planning fieldwork on this subject. We have extended our research to these localities as well since 2006 and started to interview families from these cities. We plan to use the data gathered from these interviews in future publications but it will suffice to state for now that our observation on the migration and settlement history of Samsun Albanians is a common experience shared by Albanians settled elsewhere in Turkey.
11. The fact that both of us have some affiliation with Albanians and Kosovars has helped to facilitate our research greatly. While Şerife Geniş herself has a grandfather who migrated from Kosovo after the Balkan Wars, Kelly Lynne Maynard wrote her Senior Thesis on an Albanian refugee community in Greece and her Ph.D. on the history and dialects of the Albanian language. Kelly speaks a Southern Albanian dialect and was able to communicate with the elders of the community. Şerife does not speak any Albanian except a couple of words even though she has Albanian-speaking parents. This situation created an interesting context and ignited debates on the future of Albanian identity and language in the diaspora among our informants. We plan to discuss the relationship between the identity of the researcher and the informants and the effect of this relationship on fieldwork in a future article.
12. We are using a pseudonym for the village to protect the anonymity of our respondents.
13. Schevill, *A History of the Balkans*, pp.184–8.
14. *Ibid.*, pp.186–7.
15. N. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp.97–8.
16. R. Katičić, 'Ancient Languages of the Balkans', State of the Art Reports 4, in W. Winter (ed.), *Trends in Linguistics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p.186.
17. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, pp.134–5, 177.
18. Schevill, *A History of the Balkans*, pp.228–9.
19. In 1804 a group of Serbians around Belgrade revolted and thus began the nine-year Serbian War of Independence which in the end was only partly successful. In 1815 the Ottomans created the principality of Serbia. This principality was still part of the Ottoman Empire, but had a degree of autonomy. Earlier in 1799 the principality of Montenegro had been acknowledged by the Sultan. See Schevill, *A History of the Balkans*, pp.318–20.
20. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, p.194.
21. Schevill, *A History of the Balkans*; S.J. Shaw and E.K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Vol 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
22. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, p.183.
23. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, p.5.
24. Tekeli, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Günümüze', p.56.
25. D. Anderson, *The Balkan Volunteers* (London: Hutchison, 1968), p.193.
26. J. McCarthy, 'Muslims in Ottoman Europe: Population from 1800–1912', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28 (2000), p.35.
27. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, pp.6–7.
28. Schevill, *A History of the Balkans*, pp.470–81.
29. M. Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews 1430–1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), pp.313–17.
30. See http://www.kosovaelire.com/histori_kelark_speciale_argumente_020.php. The document is entitled 'Shpërngulja e Shqiptarëve Prej Kosovës në Turqi 1912–1915' (XX).

31. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914), pp.417, maps, il.
32. Tekeli, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Günümüze', pp.56–7.
33. Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, pp.313–17.
34. J. McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995), p.141.
35. *Ibid.*, p.142.
36. Anderson, *The Balkan Volunteers*; Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları Iskan Politikası*; and McCarthy, *Death and Exile*.
37. Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları Iskan Politikası*, pp.84–6.
38. *Ibid.*, pp.112–21.
39. A. Gashi, *Shqipëria Hartë Etnike* (no information available on place of publication and date of publication)
40. A. Jakupi, *Për ata, Kosova është ëndërr- Shqiptarët në Vilajetin e Samsunit – (udhëpërshkrime-ese)* (Prishtina: Vatra, 1998).
41. Jakupi, Për ata, *Kosova është ëndërr- shqiptarët në vilajetin e samsunit – (udhëpërshkrime-ese)*, p.49
42. Jakupi, Për ata, *Kosova është ëndërr- shqiptarët në vilajetin e samsunit – (udhëpërshkrime-ese)*, p.62
43. Jakupi, Për ata, *Kosova është ëndërr- shqiptarët në vilajetin e samsunit – (udhëpërshkrime-ese)*, p.70.
44. On the population exchange see, R. Hirschon (ed.), *Ege'yi Geçerken: 1923 Türk–Yunan Zorunlu Nüfus Mübadelesi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005).
45. It should be noted that some of the persons identified as Lazi by our respondents might not be really Lazi by ethnic origin. It is common in Turkey to identify people from the Eastern Black Sea region as Lazi. In reality, however, Lazis are only one among many different ethnic groups in that region. See M.E. Meeker, 'The Black Sea Turks: Some Aspects of Their Ethnic and Cultural Background', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.2, No.4 (1971), pp.318–45.
46. Maynard, Project Description.