IMPACT-se

Two Languages One Country

Turkey's Elective Kurdish Curriculum

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Contents

1 Executive Summary

6 Preface

8 Background and Introduction

10 Turkey's Elective Kurdish Education

- 18 The Textbooks

20 Main Themes

- 20 The Kurdish Language
- 21 Boundaries of Identity: Turkey, Iraq, Iran
- 23 Boundaries of Identity: The Diaspora
- 24 Kurdish Figures: Scholars and Poets
- 32 A Hint about the Turks
- 33 Ethnic and Gender Representations
- 36 Islam, Gender and Kurdishness
- 40 Courtesy and the Environment
- 41 Folklore, Newroz, Yezidis

45 Conclusion

48 Methodology

52 Researched Kurdish Textbooks

51 Bibliography

Executive Summary

Key Points

- Full education in Kurdish not allowed by the Turkish constitution. For first time, Kurdish elective language program for grades 5–7 for two hours per week offered.
- Kurdish identity strengthened.
- Elements of "nation-building;" pan-Kurdish worldview assumed but no hate against Turks. Included are Kurdish-historic places in Turkey, Iran and Iraq (but not Syria). Also featured, Kurdish diaspora in Europe.
- Newroz, the Kurdish national holiday, carries revolutionary message of people's uprising against tyranny.
- Children's names exclusively Kurdish. Turks not represented. But all students study about Turkey in remainder of Turkish curriculum.
- Program generally meets international standards. Avoids Turkish-Kurdish dilemma.
- No peace education. Newroz metaphor for Kurdish uprising hard to ignore.
- Kurdish education remains minimalistic. Does not meet cultural needs.
- Kurdish curriculum should be enhanced and enlarged. Ought to include peace education—as should general Turkish curriculum.
- Examined textbooks a good beginning.

The Turkish-Kurdish conflict dates back at least to the early twentieth century. From the vantage point of various elites in the Turkish Republic, the Kurdish question is perceived as posing a serious security threat, mainly to the nation's territorial integrity. Nevertheless, many would argue that there are serious **economic and social challenges to be addressed**: critical among them is **cultural discrimination**.[1]

The current IMPACT-se research examines a number of **pioneering Kurdish textbooks** issued by the Turkish Ministry of Education as a first step on the path to meeting the Kurdish minority cultural needs. In June 2012, the Turkish government announced for the first time, that a Kurdish elective language course entitled: "Living Languages and Dialects" [*Yaşayan Diller ve Lehçeler*],[2] would be offered as an elective language for grades 5–7 for two hours per week.

[1] Serra Hakyemez, "Turkey's Failed Peace Process with the Kurds: A Different Explanation," *Middle East Brie*f 111, no. 3 (June 2017), p. 7.
https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB111.pdf.

[2] "MEB, İlkokul ve Ortaokul Derslerini Belirledi" [Ministry of Education Has Decided on the Courses for the Primary and Secondary Schools], *Sabah,* June 27, 2012.
http://www.sabah.com.tr/egitim/2012/06/27/meb-ilkokul-ve-ortaokul-derslerini-belirledi.

These textbooks were **authored as part of a wider Turkish-Kurdish rapprochement**. The peace process began secretly in Oslo in 2009, turned public in 2011, and finally collapsed in 2015. **Peace was supported by majorities in the two communities** (In 2014, support among Turks was 57 percent, with 83 percent among Kurds).[3]

Full education in Kurdish is not allowed by the Turkish constitution, which stipulates: "No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institution of education." And yet, Turkish authorities looked the other way between 2013 and 2016, as five fully Kurdish elementary private schools were opened. This did not last long and by October 2016 all these schools were closed down.

The Kurdish elective language courses survived the crisis. Arguably, the Turkish government is pursuing a paradoxical three-pronged educational policy toward the Kurdish question: denial of the Kurdish issue in the general curriculum across the nation; some elective Kurdish schooling in Kurdish populated areas; more Imam Hatip religious schools (featuring no Atatürkism; no elective Kurdish; more Sharia).

Kurdish courses were offered in twenty-eight Turkish cities, mostly in the Kurmanji dialect.[4] In 2013, expectations ran high. Some observers believed that 160 thousand students wanted to take these courses, described as a "leap forward" and a "beginning of the solution to the problem of the mother tongue."[5] Unfortunately, reliable statistics are not available.

The scope of **the elective Kurdish studies project was limited and exploratory from the beginning**. It appears to have gradually become more limited, yet it continues, keeping its symbolic value and the hope for things to come.

Main Findings

The current research examines the elective Kurdish textbooks for grades 5–7, in Turkish elementary and middle schools. The plan was to have Kurdish textbooks for grades 5–8 in the two main dialects: Kurmanji and Zazaki. We conducted detailed research after textbooks for grades 5–6 were published in both dialects, in 2014. Our research was also able to include another textbook published in 2015 for seventh grade. Unfortunately, the eighth grade textbook was never published.

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[3] Serra Hakyemez, "Turkey's Failed Peace Process," p. 4.

[4] Including the cities of Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Şırnak, Hakkari, Van, Ağrı and Urfa (now officially Şanlıurfa). "İşte Seçmeli Kürtçe'nin Türkiye Haritası [Here is the Map of the Elective Kurdish Course in Turkey]," *Hürriyet*. Feb. 6, 2013, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22534618.asp.

[5] "Kürtçe Dersi için Kadrolu Öğretmen Yok, ama 160 Bin Öğrenci Var [160,000 Students Want to Learn Kurdish but There are no Permanent Teachers for Kurdish Courses],"*T24*, Sept. 9, 2013. http://t24.com.tr/haber/kurtce-dersi-icin-kadrolu-ogretmen-yok-ama-160-bin-ogrenci-var,239032.

Broadly, the textbooks aim to help students augment their communicative skills in the Kurmanji or Zazaki dialect through basic speaking, reading, listening and writing exercises They include Kurdish-Turkish glossaries at the end and as with all textbooks in the Turkish curriculum (at the time of publication), the first few pages feature Turkish patriotic language pages: Turkey's national anthem; a speech to the youth by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic; and Atatürk's full-page picture.

Kurdish Culture and identity constitute an important part of the textbooks. They include images, works and short bios of important scholars, poets, artists and activists associated with the Kurdish cause. Examples include internationally acclaimed filmmaker Yılmaz Güney and iconic singer Şiwan Perwer**.** Other examples are seventeenth century scholar and poet Ahmad Khani and members of the famous twentieth century Bedir Xan family.

The books include much material that strengthens Kurdish identity. Arguably, elements of "nation building"[6] and pan-Kurdish identification (*Kurdayetî*)[7] are also featured. Pointedly, the tourist section handles nationalist-historic places in Kurdish-populated areas in Turkey, Iran and Iraq (but not Syria). Two meaningful aspects of Kurdish identity also featured are the connection to Yezidism and the Kurdish diaspora in Western Europe.

Kurdish folklore such as dance and, significantly, Newroz, the Kurdish national holiday are covered as well. The central myth of the holiday offers a revolutionary message: that of the people's uprising against tyranny, led by the legendary Kawa the Blacksmith.

> When Kawa the Blacksmith saw that they were taking his last son from him, he lost his temper, and without restraint called out like a lion, saying to the people:
>
> 'Don't fear! Death is better than captivity.'
>
> [The people] all attacked together. In doing so, they ended the tyrant's brutality. From then on, a new day had begun. This day was March 21 and was named Newroz. Since that day, Newroz has represented two festivals: the festival for the beginning of spring and festival of emancipation.
>
> ***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 59.

Children's names in the books are exclusively Kurdish; no Turks or other ethnicities are represented. Images depict typical Kurdish features. Leisure-time activities, here and in all textbooks, feature typical Kurdish children's games. The textbooks are also devoid of negative images of "Others," including those nationalities and ethnicities in the region with which Kurdish

[6] Ertan Erol, "Kurdish Mother Tongue Education Policy of PKK Terrorist Organization," *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi/The Journal of International Social Research* 10, no. 53 (2017): pp. 193–204.
[7] William Gourlay, "Kurdayetî: Pan-Kurdish Solidarity and Cross-Border Links in Times of War and Trauma, *Middle East Critique* 27, no. 1 (2018): pp. 25–42.

groups have been engaged in bloody struggles. One small exception is an image of a boy examining a film poster with the Turkish title: *Two Languages One Suitcase* (*İki Dil Bir Bavul*).

IMPACT-se Standards

Our IMPACT-se UNESCO derived methodology is designed to analyze national curricula with the perspective of depicting "Others"—mainly rival nations. The current study combines the analysis of the important paradigm of the Other within the context of the beginnings of an minority curriculum.

Our first criterion is that of RESPECT. Given that these elective Kurdish courses belong to the Turkish curriculum, the examined textbooks are bursting with respect for the Kurdish "Other." Turks, as a culture, are not featured at all, except for the obligatory nationalist preface to the textbooks.

There is NO HATE in the Kurdish textbooks. A Kurdish INDIVIDUAL OTHER is represented. Though traditional roles are featured, GENDER is not a major issue as depicted in the textbooks. Elements of this elective curriculum encourage SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION. LGBTQ issues are not dealt with in the texts.

Regarding PEACEMAKING and UNBIASED INFORMATION, the textbooks under examination focus on Kurdish language and culture and avoid directly addressing the Turkish-Kurdish dilemma. And since such a dilemma is not presented, PEACEMAKING, too, is absent. These textbooks do not impart "capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and the promotion of peace." Rather, in the mythological story of Kawa the Blacksmith, the metaphor for Kurdish uprising is hard to ignore. There is no Turk presented as an INDIVIDUAL OTHER, no vision of COOPERATION or RESPECT, though one must acknowledge that students enrolled in the Kurdish electives are simultaneously studying all about Turkey in the remainder of the Turkish curriculum.

Takeaway Points

The enormous demand for the program as it began, in geography and participation, is telling. Nevertheless, the **scope of this curriculum** has remained minimalistic and its effects are not likely to meet Kurdish cultural needs. In that sense; it is too little, too late. Yet, a conversation about this curriculum is worthwhile because **the question of Kurdish education in Turkey remains unanswered**.

The Kurdish textbooks appear at first glance to be simple and straightforward, no more than very little elective training in a minority population's mother tongue. They are not. Based on the presentations in the texts, **it is more reasonable to think of Kurdish identity being strengthened by these electives, rather than minimalized**.

These experimental textbooks **open the door to a pan-Kurdish worldview**, although in a mild and friendly way. There is nothing against Turkey or the Turks. Moreover, this elective curriculum forms only a tiny part of the large nationalistic or Imam Hatip Turkish curricula to which all students are exposed on a daily basis. As such, it is extremely humble in scope and effectiveness. Introduced at a comparatively older age than students normally begin studying their native language, it is limited, elective and modest and cannot be expected to introduce dramatic change. Indeed, these textbooks cannot reasonably be considered a solution to the issue of minority education since their application is decidedly cautious and limited.

There are some that have the view that the Turkish government uses the program as a political maneuver to assuage Kurdish demands for education in their mother tongue and to deflect attention from the state's exclusion of Kurdish from the education system.. But what if the conflict between these two ethno-national groups cannot be easily dismissed? A cautious attitude by Turkish authorities is certainly not surprising. Yet, one must also take note that a policy of openness has persisted at least since 2012.

Our findings suggest that the Kurdish curriculum should be enhanced and enlarged. It ought to include a degree of education for peace and genuine recognition of the Other, aimed at organic vibrant coexistence. The general Turkish curriculum should follow the same path as well.

Educational openness within the context of severe ethno-national conflict between a majority and minority is never a simple undertaking. Prudence, courage and open-hearted dialogue are essential. The examined textbooks promise a good beginning.

Preface

A pessimistic view might downplay the significance of the few elective Kurdish textbooks for elementary and middle school students (grades 5–8). Criticism includes the argument that the best age to start educating a child in its mother tongue and culture is much earlier:[8]). Thorough education in one's native language of any subject requires extensive and rigorous study, which realistically occurs only in the higher grades (9–12 and college education).

Full education in Kurdish is not allowed by the Turkish constitution, which stipulates: "No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institution of education."[9] And yet, Turkish authorities looked the other way between 2013 and 2016, as five fully Kurdish elementary private schools were opened in the in the southeastern provinces of Diyarbakır, Şırnak and Hakkari. The last of these schools, Ferzad Kemanger[10] in Diyarbakır, was closed on October 9, 2016 (i.e., during the crackdown of the post July 2016 Turkish coup d'état attempt, which included the Turkish educational system at large).[11]

Against the background of historical mistrust and the closing of Kurdish private schools, the limited and unfinished scope of the elective textbooks may seem inadequate. Other languages participating in the elective living languages program have been completed and released relatively quickly, even though there was no real demand for them.[12]

It has been suggested by some that the program's creation during the expansion of *Imam Hatip* religious schools as well as the limited availability of qualified faculty,[13] was aimed to mollify Kurds, rather than address their cultural needs. According to this view, the Turkish government uses the program "as a political maneuver to co-opt their demands for education in their mother tongue" and to deflect attention from the state's exclusion of Kurdish from the educational

[8] Ergin Öpengin, "The Changing Status of Kurdish in Iraq and Turkey: A Comparative Assessment." *Singapore Middle East Papers* 3, no. 8, (2015): pp. 14–16.
[9] *Constitution of the Republic of Turkey*, Article 42, p. 20, https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf.
[10] Ferzad Kemanger (Persian: Farzad Kamangar) was an Iranian Kurdish elementary school teacher. He was wrongly accused of being a terrorist executed by Tehran in 2010. Fazel Hawramy, "In memory of Farzad Kamangar: Iranian Kurdish Teacher," *The Guardian*, May 16, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2012/may/16/iran-kurdish-teacher-farzad-kamangar.
[11] "Kurdish Schools Shut Down in Turkey," *The New Arab*, December 27, 2016, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2016/12/28/kurdish-schools-shut-down-in-turkey.
[12] It seems that small and powerless minorities tend to be more cautious and prefer to avoid the issue of minority-specific government education. Jacob M. Landau and Barbara Kellner Heinkele, *Politics of Language in the Ex-Soviet Muslim States: Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan*, London: Hurst and Company, 2001.
[13] Murat Varol, "Cumhuriyet'ten Günümüze Zazaca'nın Eğitim Faaliyetleri İçerisindeki Durumu" [The Position of Zazaki in the Education Activities from the Republican Period up to Present Day], *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 3 (2015): pp. 1070–71.

spheres.[14] The real purpose of this effort, then, is to open the gates for an old-new collective national identity, a sort of new-Ottoman style Turkish-dominated Islam, neo-Ottoman style.

We differ from this position. Our assumption is that the conflict between these two ethno-national groups is neither artificial nor superficial. The conflict between the two entities cannot be dismissed. Therefore, an educational openness policy persisting at least since 2012 is significant. Denial of the Kurdish question lingers on in the general curriculum, but at least there is no demonization. And one cannot ignore certain realities: Kurdish private schools were allowed (despite a violation of the Constitution); and the Kurdish language and culture was incorporated within the state curriculum (as electives). This educational enterprise did not block the 2015 eruption between the Turkish army and the PKK. But the conflict did not kill the program as it seemingly did to the private school initiatives.

Another reason why we should take this program seriously draws on the findings themselves. And the findings are clear: the attitude toward the Kurdish language and culture in these elective textbooks is serious and penetrating.

Criticism toward the program also comes from the Turkish side. A legitimate argument is whether the systematic teaching of Kurdish culture and language will lead eventually to also strengthen separatist tendencies? Are we witnessing the beginning of a slippery slope? What about majority rights?[15]

As a matter of principle, IMPACT-se would argue that pluralistic education, cherishing minority cultures; mutual recognition, respect, and freedom of choice in education are critical values. This does not mean that the issue is not complex. Our findings show that the Kurdish curriculum should be enhanced and enlarged, but also include education for peace and genuine recognition of the Other, aimed at organic vibrant coexistence. These are still missing. The general Turkish curriculum, as well, should follow the same path.

The educational openness within the context of severe ethno-national conflict between a majority and minority is never a simple undertaking. Prudence, courage and open-hearted dialogue are essential. The examined curriculum displays a significant good beginning. There is much more to do and improve. Time to move ahead.

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[14] Öpengin, "The Changing," pp. 14–16.
[15] Liav Orgad, *The Cultural Defense of Nations: A Liberal Theory of Majority Rights*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Background and Introduction

Turks and Kurds: A Seemingly Unbridgeable Gap

During World War I, just before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, half the population of the city of Istanbul consisted of non-Muslims.[16] The Ottoman capital demographically represented the most powerful and longest-lasting Islamic empire. Ruled by a Turkish speaking dynasty, the Ottomans were politically Islamic yet simultaneously multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural, encompassing an array of non-Ottoman nationals and a perplexing mixture of legal systems, both local and foreign. During its last century this complex, cosmopolitan and tolerant polity faced ever-growing challenges—chief among them the rise of nationalism. The end was bitter, as the following historical summation clearly shows:

> From 1911 to 1923, the Ottoman Empire and the people of Turkey participated in five long, hard, and destructive wars. These were the Tripolitanian War [*Trablusgarb Harbı/Türk Italyan Harbı*] (1911–12); the two Balkan Wars (1912–13); World War I (1914–18); and the Turkish War of National Liberation (1918–23). To most Turkish people who lived through that era, these wars were really only one, the *Seferberlik*, or period of mobilization, which went on continuously throughout these years.
>
> During these wars, the entire infrastructure of life in the Ottoman Empire was destroyed. Fields were left barren and uncultivated; roads and railroad lines were destroyed and their equipment wrecked; harbors and quays were blown up by repeated bombing, and many of the people living nearby were killed; Istanbul and the other great cities of the empire were partially destroyed by bombing, bombarding and great fires. Thus, the entire nation, for all practical purposes, was destroyed. One of the greatest miracles of Atatürk's leadership during and after the Turkish War of National Liberation was the manner in which he was able to raise the Turkish people from this wreckage and lead them to revive and reconstruct what became the Turkish Republic.
>
> In the midst of all this destruction, no fewer than 30 percent, one third of all the people who lived in the Ottoman Empire at the start of the war died. In the war zones, Macedonia and Thrace, Western Anatolia, northeastern Turkey and southeastern Turkey, that percentage was as high as sixty or even seventy percent, much higher than any other country that was involved in these wars. No-one was counting, so it is very difficult to give actual figures, but perhaps no fewer than four million people died in the lands of the Ottoman Empire during these wars, and these were people of all races and religions, all ethnic origins: they were Muslims, Jews and Christians; they were Turks and Armenians, Arabs and Greeks; and many more.[17]

[16] Touraj Atabaki, "pargar: moghayese-ye reza-shah va ataturk," (Host: Dariush Karimi) BBC-Persian, Feb. 4, 2014. http://youtu.be/QmeFRTpxJvE.

[17] Stanford J. Shaw, "The Ottoman Holocaust," Armenian Genocide Resource Center, Dec. 28, 2006. http://armenians-1915.blogspot.com/2006/12/1334-stanford-j-shaw-preeminent.html.

This historical background is needed for understanding, but by no means justifying the current attitude of Turkey's educational system toward a Kurdish-language curriculum. Turkey's War of Independence scuttled an Entente plan to dismember and subdue the country, but diversity suffered heavily. Most Greeks and Armenians died or were deported.[18] Islam was the factor that united Turks and Kurds against the infidel victors and the local Christians (Armenians and Greeks). Many Kurds willingly took part in Kemalist populism because it was a movement of Muslims against non-Muslims.[19] But with secularization, a protracted violent crisis ensued. A hundred years later, Kurdish integration into the Turkish Republic is still a work in progress. Defensive and determined Turkification by consecutive Turkish governments has threatened Kurdish collective existence.[20] Conversely, Kurdish regional aspirations for independence may be perceived to threaten Turkey's standing and territorial integrity.

The following offers a glance at Turkish sentiment in 1923, as expressed by a Turkish representative to the Lausanne negotiations:

> According to the Europeans, we have three different types of minorities: racial minorities, linguistic minorities, and religious minorities. This is a very serious situation as far as we are concerned; a great danger! It is remarkable how well and how profoundly these men think, when they are contemplating against our interests. . . . From a racial point of view, they will place the Circassians, the Abkhazians, the Bosnians, the Kurds, etc., together with the Greeks and the Armenians. From the linguistic point of view, they will make a minority of those who are Muslim but who speak other languages. From the religious point of view, they will make a minority of the two million Kızılbaş (Qizilbash-Alevites), who are pure Turks. In other words, they intend to divide us into bits and pieces. I shuddered when I heard this project. . . . With all my strength, I sought to eliminate this terminology.[21]

By 1923, the Turkish center viewed Kurds and others as a mortal threat for the budding Turkish Republic in the context of a powerful foreign intrusion. Traditional Ottoman polity combined Islam with tribal perceptions. Thus, the Muslims ruled while fighting for the empire. The dynasty originated from a Turkish tribe and the Kurdish tribes were a key element of the ruling Muslim

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[18] The definitive book on the subject will be, in all likelihood, the upcoming: Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities, 1894–1924*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, April 2019.

[19] Martin van Bruinessen, "Religion in Kurdistan," first published in *Kurdish Times* (New York), 4, nos. 1–2 (1991): pp. 5–27.
https://www.academia.edu/6265981/Religion_in_Kurdistan, p. 18.

[20] Languages, and therefore identity, are threated in the modern age. There are more than 7,100 languages in the world. UNESCO predicts more than half will be extinct by the end of the century. *World Economic Forum*, "The 15 languages that could soon be extinct," March 15, 2018,
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/15-languages-around-the-world-that-are-going-extinct.

[21] The speaker is ultra-nationalist Dr. Rıza Nur. Ayhan Aktar, "'Turkification' Policies in the Early Republican Era," in Catharina Dufft. ed. *Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory: "Multiculturalism" as a Literary Theme after 1980*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), pp. 37–38.

nation (*millet-i hakimiye*).[22] These tribes benefitted from a de facto autonomous status, even if refined city dwellers may have looked down at them. Until the twentieth century, there was no "real sense of Kurdish nationalism."[23] But nationalism—the quintessential vehicle of modernity—loomed large.

The idea that Turkey-proper (Anatolia) should become an ethnically Turkish bastion seems to have emerged in Ottoman times; following the losses and lessons of the Balkan Wars (1912–13). Just before, a more pluralistic "Secular Ottomanism" was attempted. But the lessons of the Balkan Wars led the Young Turks at the helm of the empire to return to an earlier common denominator, that of "Islamic Ottomanism."[24] Now, non-Muslims were by definition potentially unreliable.[25] With nationalism on the rise, ethnic Turks became the only fully trusted element. Hence, the Young Turks nationalist party launched a two-pronged policy. For the Arab provinces, they introduced a liberal multi-lingual "Islamic Ottomanism." For Anatolia, they envisioned a trustworthy "Turkish Core" that would lead the empire.[26] The Kurds of Anatolia, for better or worse, were expected to join the elitist Turkish Core.

> The policy guide of the imperial center was to get rid of non-Muslims from Anatolia and Turkify those Muslims on the basis of the ethnic and cultural category of Turkishness. Building on this device [policy], the Young Turks endeavored to homogenize Kurds, Arabs, Lazis, Circassians and other non-Turkish Muslim communities residing in or as immigrants to the lands that were regarded as the core of Turkish nationality.[27]

On the face of it, nothing changed. Anatolian Kurds who had been part of the Muslim "ruling nation" [*millet-i hakimiye*] now became part of the Turkish "dominant nation" [*millet-i hakime*].[28] But outcomes are rarely that simple. A determined nationalist and secular Turkish republic rose out of the ashes of the empire. For many years, the new state implemented assimilationist policies such as resettlement, banning the Kurdish language, replacing names of Kurdish villages, and forbidding the use of Kurdish names.[29] All things Kurdish were removed

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[22] Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), p. 102.
[23] Hakan Üzoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 72.
[24] Eyal Ginio, "Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912–13): Awakening from the Ottoman Dream," *War in History* 12, no. 2 (2005): pp. 156–77.
[25] Eyal Ginio, *The Ottoman Culture of Defeat: The Balkan Wars and Their Aftermath*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. The emerging "culture of defeat" led to marginalizing non-Muslim and non-Turkish minorities leading eventually to ethnic cleansing and eventually, genocide.
[26] Erol Ülker, "Contextualizing 'Turkification': Nation-Building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908–18," *Nations and Nationalism* 11 no. 4 (2005): pp. 613–36.
[27] Ibid., p. 629.
[28] Ibid., p. 632.
[29] Ayşe Kadıoğlu, "Denationalization of Citizenship: the Turkish Experience," *Citizenship Studies* 11, no. 3 (2007): pp. 288–89; Dilek Kurban and Mesut Yeğen, *Adaletin Kıyısında: 'Zorunlu' Göç Sonrasında Devlet ve Kürtler / 5233 Sayılı Tazminat Yasası'nın Bir Değerlendirmesi - Van Örneği* (At the Justice's Edge: The State and the Kurds after

from history books; any new books that contained references to Kurds or even the word "Kurdish" were confiscated immediately. All Kurdish art forms were either destroyed or removed from the museums. Currently, even in Kurdish cities, only Turkish art or those of ancient Mesopotamian civilizations are permitted to be displayed; but nothing by the Kurds who live there.[30]

A famous case is that of Leyla Zana, who in 1991 became the first Kurdish woman to be elected as a deputy in the Turkish National Assembly. For speaking Kurdish at her installment to the assembly, she was eventually imprisoned for ten years.[31]

In hindsight however, many scholars believe that such fears in themselves became the root cause of the problem. They argue that "the nation-state of Turkey has failed to incorporate the periphery into the center," and the "homogenizing reforms of Mustafa Kemal resulted in the politicization of peripheral identity."[32] Yet, it remains hard to believe that Kurdish longing for cultural and political self-determination could be reduced to a protest movement against a particular policy.[33] It is true that for historical reasons the Kurds were somewhat "late bloomers" in developing their modern ethno-national consciousness.[34] Nevertheless, Kurdish identity is distinct and has deep historical roots.

> Even before Islam and the Muslim conquest, the terms *kurd* and *akrad* existed in the discourse of the area's residents, who used to refer to the pastoral or pastoral-agricultural tribal population living in the large mountainous area to the north and northeast of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys and the Syrian Desert. From the linguistic point of view, that population was also distinct from the Arab tribes, the Armenians, and the Turkmenian tribes in that it spoke Kurdish dialects that were close to Persian. In other words, the relevance of *kurd* and *akrad* was socioeconomic, ecological, and linguistic, or any combination of these—similar to the signifiers *Arab* or *Bedu* (Bedouin) for members of

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the 'Forced' Migration/An Evaluation of Law No. 5233 'Law on Compensation' - Van Case) (İstanbul: TESEV, 2012), p. 14.

[30] Mehmed S. Kaya, *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey: A Middle Eastern Minority in a Globalized Society* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2011), pp. 115–16.

[31] Bruce R. Kuniholm, "Sovereignty, Democracy and Identity: Turkey's Kurdish Problem and the West's Turkish Problem," *Mediterranean Politics* 1, No. 3 (1996): pp. 353–70.

[32] Hakan Yavuz's Review on Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*. *CEMOTI, Cahiers d'Études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien* 27 (Jan.–June 1999); p. 343; A comparative view of Kurdish nationalism suggesting pliability of this identity: Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran*, Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005.

[33] Kurdish uprisings go back to the Ottoman era and even to 1920, before a real policy could be devised. The Muslim "Great Arab Revolt" of 1916–18 should also be considered. The assumption that nationalism is but a corollary of "Othering" is problematic. Mistreatment by Others and their demonization are not a requirement for maintaining group identity; Erich Gruen, "A Wandering Jew: Some Reflections," *Ancient Jew Review* (September 12, 2018), pp. 5–6.
http://www.ancientjewreview.com/articles/2018/9/12/a-wandering-jew-some-reflections.

[34] Michael Eppel, *A People Without a State: The Kurds from the Rise of Islam to the Dawn of Nationalism* (Austin TX: The University of Texas Press, 2016), pp. 45–64.

> the nomadic pastoral or pastoral-agricultural tribes who spoke Arabic dialects in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula and Syria. [35]

The Kurds constitute one of the largest ethnic blocs in the Middle East (behind the Arabs, Persians and Turks) and the "world's largest stateless ethnic group."[36] There are good indications that any predominant linguistic minority will tend to compete with the majority and challenge the "official" language.[37] In Turkey, the Kurds constitute the largest minority. Approximately 18 percent[38] to 25 percent[39] of the population (or from 13 to 20 million people) are Kurds. The perceived dangers posed to Turkey's territorial integrity by the creation of a Kurdish state is self-evident.

Imagined Map of Kurdistan[40]

Kurdish revolts initially followed the onset of Islamic conquests and Ottoman rule. One uprising occurred during Turkey's War of Independence[41] as well as during the one-party Kemalist period (1923–46).[42] A full scale Kurdish insurgency, led by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), began in 1984 and lasted until 1999.[43] Uprisings continue to this day. Some estimates put the total number of Kurds killed at more than forty thousand with tremendous suffering and damage to

[35] Ibid., p. 16.
[36] Uzi Rabi, "Forward," in *Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland*, ed. Ofra Bengio (Austin TX: The University of Texas Press, 2015), p. xi.
[37] Landau and Kellner-Heinkele, *Politics of Language*
[38] Central Intelligence Agency, "Turkey," *The World Factbook*, April 7, 2014. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html.
[39] Ali K. Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Ocalan* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.1.
[40] Institut Kurde de Paris. https://www.institutkurde.org/images/cartes_and_maps/ckur100.gif.
[41] The Kızılbaş Koçgiri tribe rebellion, 1920–21.
[42] Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, Mount Ararat Revolt in 1930 and the Dersim Revolt in 1936–38. Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow. *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), pp. 101-07.
[43] *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK).*

Kurdish population centers. According to reports, the Turkish army is currently preparing major attacks against Kurds in Northern Syria.[44] But there have also been attempts to find peaceful solutions.[45]

The Rise of the AKP: A Turning-point in Kurdish Language Rights

In July 2015, a fierce conflict erupted again between the Turkish government and the Kurdish militias. The background for this seems to have been a combination of inner politics in Turkey and the wars in Iraq and Syria. On both fronts, Kurdish groups fared well, putting pressure on the Turkish government.

Nevertheless, the current Turkish regime seems more open toward Kurdish affairs than former governments. In 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) came to power. The quasi-Islamist agenda of this party appeared more lenient regarding Kurdish linguistic rights. There may be several reasons for this including: an adherence to European standards of openness and multi-culturalism; Islam, the resurgent uniting national identity, is ethnically blind (theoretically); the more populist AKP agenda is naturally directed to the poor and more religious countryside.

In 2004, Turkey's Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) started to broadcast in Kurdish, for two hours per week. On January 1, 2009, the AKP government launched a new 24-hour Kurdish-language television station, called TRT 6.[46]

The AKP government later undertook a number of reforms, including linguistic rights that started in August 2009. Restrictions of Kurdish by prisoners and their visitors were lifted. In 2011, Turkey's first Kurdish language department opened in the Mardin Artuklu and Muş Alparslan Universities under the AKP's Kurdish initiatives. Batman University in the Kurdish heartland was also expected to open a Kurdish language department.[47] Although the department has not yet opened, the university website features a (non-updated) Kurdish page; there is also a

[44] The Turkish army aims at targeting the armed Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), formed in 2004 as an offshoot of Turkey's Kurdish PKK. The YPG is now part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG)*. At the urging of the US, operating under the umbrella of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to better incorporate Arabs and minorities into the war effort. Selcan Hacaoglu "What a U.S. Withdrawal from Syria Would Mean for the Kurdish Forces Left Behind," *Bloomberg*, Dec. 31, 2018. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-31/about-kurdish-forces-u-s-would-leave-behind-in-syria-quicktake-jqcmvd28.

[45] Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, "A Tale of Political Consciousness: The Rise of Nonviolent Kurdish Political Movement in Turkey," in Bengio, ed. *Kurdish Awakening*, pp. 137–54.

[46] Ergin Öpengin, "The Changing Status of Kurdish in Iraq and Turkey: A Comparative Assessment," *Singapore Middle East Papers* 3, no. 8 (2015):13–14.

[47] "Batman Üniversitesi'nde Kürt ve Süryani Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümleri Açılacak" [Kurdish and Syriac Language and Literature Departments will be Opened at Batman University], *Haberler*, January 29, 2012. https://www.haberler.com/batman-universitesi-nde-kurt-ve-suryani-dili-ve-3311407-haberi/.

Kurdish menu in the cafeteria.[48] An anti-Israeli proclamation was published in eight languages by the University's senate, though Kurdish was not included.[49] The school's rector remains adamant about Islam's multi-ethnic pedigree, while contrasting that with the idea that Westerners are out to destroy Islam.

> My body is a Turkish body, my friend's is a Kurdish body, an Arab body, but our spirit is Islam. No matter what our bodies are, it is the spirit that gives personality to people. What makes us is a spirit, that is, Islam. The Westerner's goal is to destroy Islam.[50]

Thus, the way to unite Turks, Kurds and Arabs, is in sharing the same religion, Islam, and confronting one enemy, the West. While this would appear to allow more leeway for minority language education, in reality the introduction of Kurdish studies is not easily digestible by Turkish authorities. This becomes apparent in the racial references to body rather than language in the rector's wording. Given the scarcity of qualified staff in this area, among other reasons, most "Kurdish Departments" exist only nominally, with relatively little academic activity.[51]

As demonstrated in IMPACT-se's 2016 Turkey curriculum report, the Kurdish question is still largely ignored or denied. Even so, the Islam being taught includes Sufi and Alevi traditions that are tolerant and mesh well with Kurdish tenets.

In June 2012, the Turkish government allowed Kurdish to be taught as an elective language in Turkish schools. Despite the resumption of Turkish-Kurdish hostilities in 2015, Kurdish is still being offered in the curriculum, although predominantly within Kurdish areas; so the national Turkish curriculum persists in its quasi-total denial of the Kurdish problem. And yet, in Kurdish-majority areas, a more educationally-liberal policy parallels the raging violence. Simultaneously, more and more schools are turning into Sharia-intensive Imam Hatip schools, ostensibly aiming at preparing students for religious careers.[52] Since these schools offer many hours of religious

[48] Batman University website/Kurdish section, https://www.batman.edu.tr/ku.

[49] "Bir kınama da Kürtçe olsaydı güzel olmaz mıydı? 8 dil arasında neden Kürtçe yok?" [Wouldn't it be nice if there was a condemnation in Kurdish? Why Kurdish is not among the eight languages?], *Batman Yön*, July 26, 2018. http://www.batmanyon.com/haber/21349/bir-kinama-da-kurtce-olsaydi-guzel-olmaz-miydi.

[50] "Batman Üniversitesi Rektörü Durmuş: Türk'ü, Kürt'ü, Arap'ıyla bizi bir yapan ruh İslam'dır," [Batman University's Rector (Aydın) Durmuş: Turk, Kurdish and Arab: The Spirit that Makes Us One is Islam], *İslami Analiz*, March 3, 2018. http://islamianaliz.com/haber/batman-universitesi-rektoru-durmus-turku-kurtu-arapiyla-bizi-bir-yapan-ruh-islamdir-63678#sthash.0QohFYhb.wGk4GKoF.dpbs.

[51] Ergin Öpengin, "The Changing Status of Kurdish in Iraq and Turkey: A Comparative Assessment," *Singapore Middle East Papers* 3, no. 8 (2015):14–15.

[52] Imam Hatip education extended in 2012 to middle schools, which are attended by students aged 10–14. Imam Hatip middle school students formed 11.7% of this age-group in 2017. The government plan to build fifty new girl's religious boarding schools in the east and mainly-Kurdish southeast. Daren Butler, "With More Islamic Schooling, Erdogan aims to Reshape Turkey," *Reuters*, Jan. 25, 2018. https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/turkey-erdogan-education/;

studies, little time remains for elective Kurdish learning. According to one source, 40 percent of the curriculum involves religious studies. The Islam taught follows mainstream conservative Sunni-Hanafi, while Kurdish culture tends to be Alevite, Sufi and egalitarian.[53]

From the perspective of the Turkish curriculum, the government is pursuing a three-pronged policy toward the Kurdish question: denial of the Kurdish issue in the general curriculum across the nation; some elective Kurdish schooling in regional secular schools; more Imam Hatip religious schools with the aim of further Islamization of the republic (no Atatürkism; no elective Kurdish; more Sharia). Another aspect is that Imam Hatip schools have shown steady growth since the mid-1970s attaining full university recognition in the 1980s, way before the 2002 AKP's electoral victory. Regardless of these caveats, the AKP should be credited for addressing the Kurdish question, albeit in a limited manner. One cannot but question how the same dilemmas facing the Ottomans in the early twentieth century, persist in contemporary Turkey.

Turkey's Elective Kurdish Education

The current research examines elective Kurdish textbooks for grades 5–7, in Turkish elementary and middle schools. The plan was to have Kurdish textbooks for grades 5–8 in the two dialects: Kurmanji and Zazaki. We conducted detailed research after textbooks for grades 5–6 were published in both dialects, in 2014. We were also able to include another textbook published in 2015 for seventh grade in our research. Unfortunately, the eighth grade textbook was never published.

Kurdish has four dialect groups. The two most widely spoken dialects are Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) and Sorani (Central Kurdish); the two other dialects spoken by smaller numbers are Hawrami (also known as Gorani) and Zazaki (also known as "Dimili;" "Kirdkî" by Zazaki speakers). Kurmanji is the most commonly spoken dialect in Turkey (75 percent of Kurds

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According to a 2017 *Economist* report, the "*Imam Hatip* schools, used to train Muslim preachers, has shot up from about 60,000 in 2002 to over 1.1m, or about a tenth of all public-school students." "Erdogan v Darwin: The Decline of Turkish schools," *The Economist*, September 30, 2017, https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/09/30/the-decline-of-turkish-schools;
The 2018 government budget allocation per student in Imam Hatip schools is double that of students in secular schools (12,707 vs. 6,153 TL). Aydın Tonga, "İmam hatiplerin ne kadar ayrıcalıklı olduğunu bu rakamları görünce daha iyi anlayacaksınız" [You will better understand how privileged are Imam Hatip schools, when you see these numbers], *Oda TV*, May 5, 2018, https://odatv.com/imam-hatiplerin-ne-kadar-ayricalikli-oldugunu-bu-rakamlari-gorunce-daha-iyi-anlayacaksiniz-03051854.html.

[53] Mahfud Junaedi, "Imam Hatip School [*Imam Hatip Lisesi*]: Islamic School in Contemporary Secular Turkey," *Analisa* 1, no. 1 (2016): pp. 121–38; Van Bruinessen, "Religion in Kurdistan." Field interviews.

worldwide are estimated to speak Kurmanji).[54] There are approximately three million Zazaki-speaking Kurds in Turkey[55] who identify as ethnic Kurds.[56]

In June 2012, the Turkish government announced for the first time, that a Kurdish elective language course entitled: "Living Languages and Dialects" [*Yaşayan Diller ve Lehçeler*][57] would be offered as an elective language for grades 5–7 for two hours per week. Within the scope of this project, Zazaki, Kurmanji, Abkhaz, Adyghe, Lazi and Georgian could be taught in certain middle schools if more than ten students officially demanded to learn the language.[58]

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at that time called the teaching of the Kurdish language in public schools "a historic step" for Turkey.

> Our students will now be able to take Kurdish as an optional course if a sufficient number of students decide to learn the language. I kindly ask our Kurdish citizens to follow what will be said about the major reforms being implemented by our government.[59]

The minister of national education, Ömer Dinçer, announced that two Kurdish textbooks, one in Kurmanji and one in the Zazaki dialect, would be included in the fifth grade curriculum for the 2013–14 academic year. During the first year of the "Living Languages and Dialects" project, 28,587 students selected the elective course.[60]

Kurdish courses were offered in twenty-eight Turkish cities, the mostly in the Kurmanji dialect.[61] The following year, another Kurdish textbook in the Kurmanji dialect was included in the sixth grade curriculum. In 2013, expectations ran high. Some observers believed that 160 thousand students wanted to take these courses, described as a "leap forward" and a "beginning of the

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[54] Shelley K. Taylor and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, "The Educational Language Rights of Kurdish Children in Turkey, Denmark and Kurdistan (Iraq)," in *Handbook of Social Justice in Education*, ed. William Ayers, Therese M. Quinn and David Stovall (New York: Routledge, 2009), p.179.

[55] Mehmed S. Kaya, *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey: A Middle Eastern Minority in a Globalized Society* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2011), p.4.

[56] Ibid.

[57] "MEB, İlkokul ve Ortaokul Derslerini Belirledi" [Ministry of Education Has Decided on the Courses for the Primary and Secondary Schools], *Sabah,* June 27, 2012. http://www.sabah.com.tr/egitim/2012/06/27/meb-ilkokul-ve-ortaokul-derslerini-belirledi.

[58] "Kürtçe, Zazaca, Lazca, Abhazca Seçmeli Ders [Kurdish, Laz and Abkhazian Elective Courses]," *Hürriyet*. http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/20749000.asp.

[59] Deniz Zeyrek. "Haftada iki Saatlik Seçmeli Kürtçe [Two Hours a Week Elective Kurdish]," *Radikal* . June 13, 2012. http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/haftada_iki_saatlik_secmeli_kurtce-1090968.

[60] "Roj baş! Kurdish Books Set for Class," *Hürriyet Daily News*, Oct. 13, 2012. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/roj-bas-kurdish-books-set-for-class.aspx?pageID=238&nID=32335&NewsCatID=339.

[61] Including the cities of Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Şırnak, Hakkari, Van, Ağrı and Urfa (now officially Şanlıurfa). "İşte Seçmeli Kürtçe'nin Türkiye Haritası [Here is the Map of the Elective Kurdish Course in Turkey]," *Hürriyet*. Feb. 6, 2013, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22534618.asp.

solution to the problem of the mother tongue."[62] Unfortunately, reliable statistics are not available. By 2015, there were only three Kurdish textbooks included as part of the Turkish curriculum. In 2016 a seventh grade Kurmanji textbook was added.[63]

The following map shows the range of interest in the Kurdish electives.

Numbers of Students Selecting Kurdish by Province (2013)[64]

The scope of the elective Kurdish studies project was limited and exploratory from the beginning. It appears to have gradually become more limited, yet it continues, keeping its symbolic value amid the expectation of a more complete curriculum yet to come. The significance of these textbooks lies in the openness toward Kurdish culture. While the "curriculum" is limited, the scope of the problem is enormous. By rendering much content from these textbooks in English, we hope to open the door for educators across the Middle East and beyond.

[62] "Kürtçe Dersi için Kadrolu Öğretmen Yok, ama 160 Bin Öğrenci Var [160,000 Students Want to Learn Kurdish but There are no Permanent Teachers for Kurdish Courses]," *T24*, Sept., 9, 2013. http://t24.com.tr/haber/kurtce-dersi-icin-kadrolu-ogretmen-yok-ama-160-bin-ogrenci-var,239032.

[63] The textbook is available online. https://en.calameo.com/read/0050715157ef7f7408701.

[64] Shelley K. Taylor, "The Educational Language."

The Textbooks

The elective textbooks are mostly in Kurdish. Broadly, the textbooks aim to help students augment their communicative skills in the Kurmanji or Zazaki dialect through basic speaking, reading, listening and writing exercises They include Kurdish-Turkish glossaries at the end and as with all textbooks in the Turkish curriculum (at the time of publication), the first few pages feature Turkish patriotic language pages: Turkey's national anthem; a speech to the youth by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic; and Atatürk's full-page picture.

Kurmanji Dialect, Grade 5

The text is written in the Kurmanji dialect and consists of nine chapters. The first chapter, "Our Alphabet" [*Alfabeya Me*] introduces Kurdish letters, along with script and pronunciation. Basic arithmetic is also covered. Chapter 2 is called: "I and my Family" [*Ez û Malbata Xwe*]. Students learn how to communicate and interact with people in basic Kurdish. "My School and My Environment" [*Xwendingeh û Jîngeha Min*] deals with the environment, colors and some basic skills. School activities are also presented. Chapter 4 entitled: "Body and Health" [*Laş û Tenduristî*], deals with the body, major organs, and basic first aid. The next chapter, "Seasons and Calendar" [*Demsal û Salname*], teaches students the calendar. Chapter 6, "Our Food and Beverages" [*Xwarin û Vexwarinên Me*], acquaints students with local Kurdish food, as well as basic verb conjugations. The next two chapters, "Games and Fairy Tales" [*Lîstik û Xeberoşk*], and "Leisure-time Activities" [*Çalakiyên Serbest*], introduce some traditional Kurdish games, fairy tales, riddles and nursery rhymes, and other children's activities. Chapter 9, "Traffic and Journey" [*Hatûçû-Geştûger*] is devoted to traffic rules, public transportation and tourist areas in the Kurdish-populated cities in Turkey.

Zazaki Dialect, Grade 5

Another fifth-grade textbook is published in the Zazaki dialect, Although it is a verbatim translation of the Kurmanji edition, the authors did not take into consideration phonological and other linguistic differences between the two dialects.

The classification of Zazaki (or the Zaza language) has been an issue for political discussion. Zazaki is the third largest Kurdish dialect and is spoken by approximately three million Kurds in Turkey. The majority of Zazaki-speakers in Turkey identify themselves as ethnic Kurds, but there are those who see themselves as a distinct people.[65]

[65] The Zaza dialect is also known as "Dimili." The name Zazas use for their language is "Kirdkî," (which means Kurdish). Mehmed S. Kaya, *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey: A Middle Eastern Minority in a Globalised Society* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2011), p. 4.

Kurmanji Dialect, Grade 6

Seven chapters comprise the sixth-grade textbook written in the Kurmanji dialect. The first chapter, "My School" [Xwendingeha Min], teaches about school equipment and supplies. "My Environment" [Jîngeha Min], covers daily activities and defining features of cities and rural areas. Chapter 3, "Body and Health," continues what was learned in fifth grade about human organs and ways to maintain health. Chapters 4 and 5, "Seasons and Calendar" and "Our Food and Beverages," also expand on what was learned in fifth grade in relation to Kurdish-populated cities. The sixth chapter, "Traffic and Journey," covers historical and tourist places in the Kurdish areas of Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The chapter also includes some historical figures in the Kurdish regions. The final chapter, "Leisure-time Activities," includes more traditional Kurdish games and activities for children.

Kurmanji Dialect, Grade 7

At an intermediate level written in the Kurmanji dialect, the seventh-grade textbook consists of seven chapters. "My School," expands on school rules. Chapter 2, "My Environment," deals with environmental concerns. The third chapter, "Body and Health," details a number of health issues and human anatomy. The fourth and fifth chapters, "Seasons and Calendar" and "Our Food and Beverages," include the story of Kawa the Blacksmith and the Newroz national holiday, as well as famous Kurdish foods. Chapter 6, "Traffic and Journey," focuses on public and safety. Finally, "Leisure-time Activities," presents traditional Kurdish games and recreational events. The textbook also includes a number of prominent cultural-nationalistic Kurdish figures.

Breaking the Wall: Names, Places and the Alphabet

Names of Kurdish children (e.g., Rojin, Azad, Baran, Hêlîn and Bawer) and of cities (e.g., Riha, Wan and Mûş) are written in the Kurdish alphabet with previously banned letters. With the exception of Diyarbakir, the "unofficial capital of Turkish Kurdistan," (the largest city in southeastern Turkey),[66] names of places are in Kurdish. The three letters do not exist in the Turkish alphabet and were banned until 2013.[67] According to one writer: "in the days when the ban was still in force, we had to write a textbook for the Education Ministry. We were warned against using Q, W and X."[68]

[66] Michael M. Gunter, "Re-Evaluating the Kurdish Issue," in: *Identity Conflicts: Can Violence be Regulated?*, ed. Craig Jenkins and Esther E. Gottlieb (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), p. 117.
[67] Sevda Arslan, "Language Policy in Turkey and Its Effect on the Kurdish Language" (master's thesis, Western Michigan University, August 2015), p. 48.
[68] A combination of legal and illegal acts were a hallmark of the AKP-PKK rapprochement, which ranged from talking to terrorists to using Kurdish-banned cultural items. Indeed, it contributed to its failure. Serra Hakyemez, "Turkey's Failed Peace Process with the Kurds: A Different Explanation," *Middle East Brief*, no. 111 (June 2017): pp. 6–7.

Main Themes

The Kurdish Language

Teaching the Kurdish language constitutes the raison d'être of the Kurdish elective curriculum. References to the importance of the language as a cultural symbol are spread across the curriculum.

> **Unit 1: My School**
>
> Every bird reads in its language. (ancestors' saying).[69]
>
> ***Kurdish*, Grade 6**, p. 10.

The following is a well-known nationalist poem: "Kurdish Language."[70] It includes praise for the sound of the language, melody and cultural heroes:

> **Unit 7: Games and Fairy Tales**
>
> Section 14: Time to Sing
>
> **"Kurdish Language" [*Zimanê Kurdî*]**
>
> By its ornament and its condition
> Sweet and nice is
> The Kurdish language
>
> By its beautiful melody
> Lovely and charming is
> The Kurdish language
>
> Feqiye's couplet
> Khanî's sublimity is
> The Kurdish language.
>
> Şikoyê Hesen
>
> ***Kurdish*, Grade 5,** p. 110.

The poem mentions Feqiyê Teyran (1590–1660), who is considered to be one of the great classic Kurdish poets and writers and Ahmad Khani (1651–1707) who was a Kurdish writer, poet, Sunni Muslim cleric and philosopher. These two figures contributed substantially to the revival of the Kurdish language and nationalism by reflecting Kurdish patriotism throughout their works.[71]

[69] Kurdish proverb.
[70] For melody and lyrics: Aram Tigran singing Şikoye Hesen's "Zımane Kurdi," Sept. 7, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48iJkZCqrY8.
[71] Kamal Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence: Analytical Study of Ahmadi Khnai's Tragedy of Mem u Zin* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2012), pp. 104–06.

Boundaries of Identity: Turkey, Iraq, Iran

Many Kurds consider southeastern Turkey to be only one of the four parts of a "Greater Kurdistan," which also includes parts of northern Syria (Rojava, or Western Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan) and northwestern Iran (Eastern Kurdistan). The examined Kurdish textbooks include areas that go beyond Turkey: Iraq, Iran and Western Europe (but not Syria, perhaps because of political sensitivity).

Kurdish Places of Importance in Turkey, Iraq and Iran

Unit 6: Traffic and Journey
Section 5: Time to Talk and Write
Tourist Places in Our Homeland
I will tell you names of historical cities: Diyarbakir; Silvan; Lice; Doğubeyazıt; Bitlis; Tatvan; Urfa, Cizre; Şırnak; Sirt; Mardin; Hakkari; Bahçesaray; Van; Adıyaman; Tunceli; Hizan; Duhok; Amadiya; Erbil; Sulaymaniyah; Kirkuk; Mahabad; Sanandij.
***Kurdish*, Grade 6,** p. 90.

The most important Kurdish cities in modern-day Turkey, Iraq and Iran are highlighted in the textbooks. As part of "our homeland" or "country," they are transliterated in Kurdish, with the exception of Diyarbakir, the preeminent Kurdish city in Turkey. The imagined geography, lacking an actual map, is pan-Kurdish (*welat*, translates as homeland, country, fatherland, motherland). Seventeen cities are in Turkey, with five in Iraq; only two cities, albeit important ones are located in Iran (Mahabad, the capital of the short-lived 1946 independent Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, and Sanandaj, the capital of Iran's Kurdistan province). There is no mention of any locales of Kurdish significance in Syria's Kurdish region (Rojava).

Originally, the Kurdish name of the city of Diyarbakir was Amed. Following the Arab conquests in the seventh century, the Arab Bakr tribe occupied this region, which became known as the Diyar Bakr (landholdings of the Bakr tribe). In 1937, Atatürk visited Diyarbakir. Uncertain as to the exact etymology of the city known for abundant resources of copper, he ordered it renamed "Diyarbakır," [land of copper].

A visit by two young Kurds from Sweden, Mîrxan and Rûken, is portrayed. They tour many Kurdish cities throughout Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan and also one city in Iran.[72]

Kurdish Sites in Turkey

Unit 6: Traffic and Journey
Section 7: Time to Read

[72] Kadri Yıldırım, et al., *Kurdish* (Kurmanji), Grade 7, MEB, 2015, p. 83.

Tourist Sites-1

In Diyarbakir: The walls of Diyarbakir; Tigris River; Dicle Bridge; Grand Mosque; Church of the Virgin Mary.

In Doğubeyazıt: Ishak Pasha Palace; Tomb of Ehmedê Xanî.

In Bitlis: Bitlis Castle; Madrasa of Sherefiye; Nimrod River; Mount Süphan.

In Cizre: Tigris River; Mount Judi; Tomb of Mem and Zin; Red Madrasa;Tomb of Prophet Noah.

In Silvan: Mosque of Salahuddin Ayyubi; Castle of Zembilfrosh; Hasuni Caves.[73]

Hasuni Caves, Silvan Madrasa of Sherefiye, Bitlis

***Kurdish*, Grade 6**, p. 92.

Students are able to be taught within the Turkish curriculum for the first time about Kurdish names of most important historical places in Kurdish-populated cities.

Kurdish Sites in Iraq and Iran

Unit 6: Traffic and Journey

Section 10: Time to Read

Tourist Sites-3

- 'Can you mention some other places?'

- 'Yeah, some other places are as follows: Amadiya; the Lalish Temple; Aqrah Castle; Erbil Castle; Halabja Monument; Lake Urmia; Hawraman Region.'

Kurdish, **Grade 6**, p. 94.

The textbook does not mention that these sites are located in Iran or Iraq. The Kurdish context is what matters. No dilemma or coexistence. Teacher may be elaborating in class.

[73]All names in Kurdish, except for Diyarbakir, (which is also written in Kurdish): *Li Diyarbekirê: Sûra Diyarbekirê, Çemê Dîcleyê, Pira Dehderî, Mizgefta Mezin, Dêra Meryemayê. Li Bazîdê: Qesra îshaq Paşa û Gora Ehmedê Xanî. Li Bedlîsê: Keleha Bedlîsê, Medreseya Şerefiye, Gola Nemrûdê, Sîpanê Xelatê. Li Cizîrê: Çemê Dîcleyê, Çiyayê Cûdî, Gora Mem û Zînê, Medreseya Sor û Gora Nûh Pêxember. Li Farqînê: Mizgefta Selahedînê Eyûbî, Keleha Zembîlfiroş û Şikeftên Hesûnî.*

Boundaries of Identity: The Diaspora

The Kurdish-imagined homeland goes beyond traditional Middle Eastern sites into the Kurdish diaspora, mainly in Europe. A travel section connects traveling to the question of immigration.

Unit 6: Traffic and Journey

Section 1: Time to Read

Mîrxan and Rûken

Travel by Airplane

Mîrxan and Rûken are two university students. Twenty years ago, their families left the country and have been living in the city of Stockholm, Sweden. This year, Mîrxan and Rûken decided to go to Diyarbakir. But they did not have passports. If someone wants to visit another country, they need a passport.

Kurdish, Grade 6, p. 87.

Mîrxan and Rûken represent the second generation of the Kurdish diaspora in Western Europe. Between 1.5 and two million Kurds live in Europe today, mostly in Germany, Britain, France and Switzerland. Such Kurdish emigration has aroused a renewed interest in Kurdish culture leading to the increased development of the Kurdish language, music and literature—for many years forbidden in Turkey. The Kurdish diaspora has also played a political role in publicizing the Kurdish cause. [74]

[74] Bahar Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective* (Farhnam: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), pp. 60–62; Bahar Baser, "KOMKAR: The Unheard Voice in the Kurdish Diaspora," in *Dismantling Diasporas: Rethinking the Geographies of Diasporic Identity, Connection and Development*, ed.

Kurdish Figures: Scholars and Poets

The textbooks feature important Kurdish personalities, with occasional excerpts from their works. However, little biographical information is offered for these figures. Such potentially sensitive subject matter is left to the discretion of individual teachers to expound. Following is a poem by Hisênê Emîn:

> **"Song of Letters"**
> We are students, we are reading the ABC.
> Writing is our purpose.
> All of our letters are thirty-one, ÇDE.
> The good is that in the Kurdish language. . . .
> Ooooh the Kurds, let's come all together to read.
>
> Hisênê Emîn
>
> ***Kurdish***, Grade 5, p. 25.

The biography of Hisênê Emîn (Turkish name: Hüseyin Demirer, 1919–83) is not provided. However, it is worth noting that as a child Emîn experienced the Kurdish rebellion of Sheikh Said in 1925 as well as the 1934 Resettlement Law. Emîn and his family were exiled and forced to resettle in Syria.[75] In 1951, he returned to his homeland, where he started writing for the Kurdish nationalist/cultural magazine: *Hawar*, together with the Kurdish nationalist and poet, Cegerxwîn. Following the 1960 military coup, Emîn was forced to move to Ankara, where he lived until his death in 1983.[76]

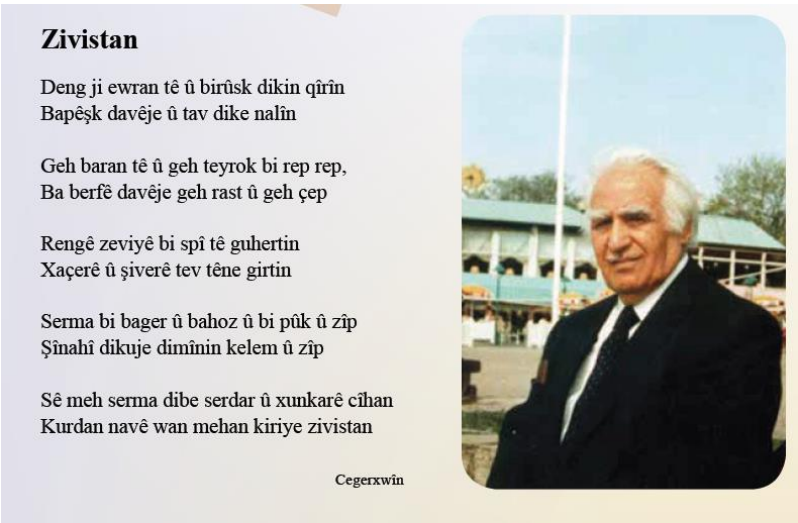
Anastasia Christou and Elizabeth Mavroudi (Farhnam: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), pp. 113–25. "The Kurdish Diaspora," in *Institut Kurde de Paris*, https://www.institutkurde.org/en/kurdorama/.

[75] Ahmet İçduygu, "The Ethnic Question in an Environment of Insecurity: the Kurds in Turkey," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 6 (1999): p. 993.

[76] "Hüseyin Demirer (Hisênê Emîn)," *Avesta*, April 23, 201. http://www.avestakitap.com/yazar.php?id=228.

The following is a poem by Cegerxwîn:

Unit 4: Seasons and Calendar



"Winter"

For three months the chill must be the master and king of the world
The Kurds named them the winter months.

Cegerxwîn

***Kurdish*, Grade 6**, p. 69.

Cegerxwîn (1903–84), the pen name for Sheikhmous Hasan means "bleeding liver" in Kurdish. As one of the most influential Kurdish writers and poets, his work played a crucial role in the preservation of the Kurdish cultural heritage, and served as an inspiration for modern Kurdish writers. It is commonplace in Kurdish literature to make reference to his ideas, thoughts and ideology about Kurdish nationalism.[77] The text does not discuss these nationalistic issues, but it is noteworthy that even such a simple poem includes the collective identity of: "The Kurds . . . ." and their connection to the land with its harsh elements.

A similar image of Cegerxwîn is provided in the seventh grade textbook. Here too, there is no information about this nationalist author. The nationalistic message of Cegerxwîn's poem, however, is enthusiastic and direct. After a vivid description of the bounty and beauty of the "Kurdish homeland," the poet concludes with an open question:

> Where is our colorful country; today it is weak and injured.
> O Cegerxwîn [bleeding liver], weep! Where is the cure?
> ***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 74.

[77] Ramazan Aras, *The Formation of Kurdishness in Turkey: Political Violence, Fear and Pain* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp.130–31.

The message seems to imply a call for action to save the "weak and injured" Kurdish homeland. In the following example, the textbook provides just the name of a leading personality, Celadet Bedir Khan. It is left to individual teachers to augment his biography.

> **Unit 1: My School**
> Section 8: Time to Read and Listen
> **Zana's School**
> The name of my school is: Celadet Bedir Khan Middle School. My school is located in the center of Cizre.
> ***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 15.

Celadet Bedir Khan (1893–1951, pronounced: *jeladet*) was a Kurdish diplomat, writer, linguist, journalist and political activist. His Kurdish nationalist activities forced him to leave Turkey in 1923. He is known to be the "doyen of the formative stage of Kurdish nationalism" that took shape following the creation of the new states of Turkey, Syria and Iraq.[78] The same textbook features a nationalist children's poem about nature by Cledaet's brother, Kamuran Alî Bedir Khan (1895–1978).[79] Kamuran worked to establish a Kurdish state following World War I and was a declared enemy of Atatürk. In later years, he became the co-founder of the Kurdish Institute in Paris.

There is no photograph of Kamuran in the textbook. Celadet Bedir Khan is shown on the exercise pages, with no caption.

***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 15.

[78] Christine Allison, "Representations of Yezidism and Zoroastrianism in the Kurdish newspapers Hawar and Roja Nû," in *From Daena to Din: Religion, Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt: Festschrift für Philip Kreyenbroek zum 60*, ed. Christine Allison, Anke Joisten-Pruschke and Antje Wendtland (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), pp. 285–86.
[79] "Happiness" [*Kêfxweşî*], Kadri Yıldırım, et al., *Kurdish* (Kurmanji), Grade 7, MEB, 2015, p. 62; ibid., p. 94; "School" [*Dibistan*], Kadri Yıldırım, et al., *Kurdish* (Kurmanji), Grade 6, MEB, 2014, p. 34.

Osman Sabri's portrait is shown along with some of his poems.

Unit 2: My Environment
Section 15: Time to Read
"The Plan of the Mice" [***Tevdîra Mişkan***]

Osman Sabri
***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 35.

"The Plan of the Mice" is a famous nursery rhyme by Osman Sabri. Typically, the textbook does not provide biographical information on Sabri (1905–92), who was a Kurdish poet, writer and journalist. He was imprisoned in the Turkish city of Denizli in 1928 after he and his family were involved in the Islamic Revivalist Sheikh Said Rebellion. After his release from prison, Sabri moved to Syria where he became acquainted with many Kurdish intellectuals. Because of his nationalist activities, he is seen as "a symbol of Kurdish national freedom."[80] Hence, the inclusion of a large image is meaningful. Another poem by Sabri, "Highlands" [*Zozan*] is included in the sixth grade textbook.[81]

[80] David L. Phillips, *The Kurdish Spring: A New Map of the Middle East* (Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2015), pp. 38–39.
[81] Kadri Yıldırım, et al., *Kurdish* (Kurmanji), Grade 6, MEB, 2014, p. 30.

There is only a minimal presentation of filmmaker Yılmaz Güney.

Section 11: Time to Read

Month: May 12, 2012

Kurdish, **Grade 5**, p. 81.

Another image shows Yılmaz Güney (1937–84) a Turkish film director, screenwriter, novelist and actor with Zaza-Kurdish ancestry depicted on the Kurdish calendar. World famous, Yilmaz was imprisoned because of his political views. He directed his internationally acclaimed film *Yol* (The Way) from prison; he broke out in 1981and edited the film in Switzerland. The Turkish government revoked his citizenship in 1983 and he died of cancer the following year in Paris.[82] The film was much more critical of Kurdish society than of Turkey at large. The textbook offers no biographical information on Yilmaz.

[82] Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 114.

Unit 5: Seasons and Calendar

Section 13: Time to Play

May 2012

***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 82.

Also featured on the Kurdish calendar is a picture of Ahmet Kaya (1957–2000), a singer and songwriter of Kurdish descent. On February 10, 1999, during a televised annual music awards ceremony, he was named "Musician of the Year" in Turkey. In his acceptance speech, Kaya spoke out about his Kurdish background and the desire to produce music in his native Kurdish as naturally as he did in Turkish. He also said that he had recorded a song in Kurdish and intended to produce a video to accompany it. Following the speech, he encountered massive opposition within Turkish society, including among fellow celebrities. Kaya fled to Paris later that year because of various charges arising from his political views. He was sentenced in absentia the following year to three years and nine months in prison. He never returned to Turkey and died the same year of a heart attack in Paris.[83]

[83] Rasim O. Kutahyali, "How did Turkish media 'lynch' Kurdish singer?" *The Al-Monitor Board*, Nov. 4, 2013. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/turkish-media-criticizes-kurdish-singer.html.

Unit 1: My School

Section 15: Time to Read and Listen

Great Scholar Ahmad Khani

Ahmad Khani is very famous in Kurdish literature. He was born in Doğubeyazıt in1651. Khani knew Arabic, Persian and Turkish, but he wrote his works in Kurdish. Ahmad Khani wrote four important volumes: *The Spring of Children* [dictionary], *The Path of Faith*, *Mem and Zin*, and *Diwan*. . . . In *The Path of Faith*, he wanted Kurdish students to learn religious subjects in their own language. *Mem and Zin* is an epic of love. Khani's [other] poems are compiled in his *Diwan*. These four works are very valuable [contributions to] Kurdish literature.

***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 19.

This seventh grade textbook provides additional information on the role of Ahmad Khani. There are questions to encourage curious students to do more research. Khani (1651–1707) is considered a great Kurdish patriot, who in his famous epic poem *Mem and Zin* (Mem û Zînê), conceptualized the idea of "Kurdish nation" as distinct from the ruling nations of Arabs, Turks and Persians during his time. In his writings, Khani protested the lack of unity among Kurdish principalities and their inability to unite under the rule of one king or emperor.[84] Note that the above excerpt does not refer to his calls for unity and independence, but emphasizes national identity.

[84] Jaffer Sheyholislami, *Kurdish Identity, Discourse, and New Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 52–53.

Unit 7: Leisure-time Activities

Section 5: Time to Read

Proverbs

Turbeya Ehmedê Xanî, Bazîd

Tomb of Ahmad Khani, Doğubeyazıt (Turkey)

Until you repeat and exercise your assignment and lessons
You can never be famous and well-known in the world.

Ehmedê Xanî

Our Abundant Blessing is as the Nile, but we are the Tigris and Euphrates.

Malaye Jaziri

Kurdish, **Grade 6**, p. 103.

Malaye Jaziri (1570-1640) was a famous Kurdish poet and mystic. He was one of the originators of the first classic school of Kurmanji poetry in the independent Kurdish principality of Botan; the poet's last name derives from its capital, Jazira. "Jazīrī's poetry is also deeply rooted in romantic patriotism. . . . Kurdistan's name appears frequently and is always connected with great pride."[85]

[85] Farhad Shakely (Uppsala University), "Classic and Modern Kurdish Poetry," *Kerkuk-Kurdistan*, Dec. 14, 2002. https://web.archive.org/web/20051217230133/http://www.kerkuk-kurdistan.com/kulturek.asp?ser=4&cep=3&nnimre=310.

Unit 7: Leisure-time Activities
Section 8: Time to Play

Singers sing in the concert hall.
***Kurdish*, Grade 6**, p. 105.

Şiwan Perwer (b. 1955) an iconic Kurdish singer, fled from Turkey in 1976, at a time when the Turkish state did not allow the Kurdish language to be used publicly. While in exile, the "voice of freedom," as Perwer calls himself on his website, became a living symbol of Kurdish resistance. When Turkey introduced a state-run television station broadcasting in Kurdish in 2009, Perwer welcomed the reforms and talked about a possible return to Turkey during a meeting with Bülent Arınç, at the time, Turkey's deputy prime minister. After an invitation by then Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, in November 2013, the famous musician returned to Turkey to perform a concert in Diyarbakir.[86]

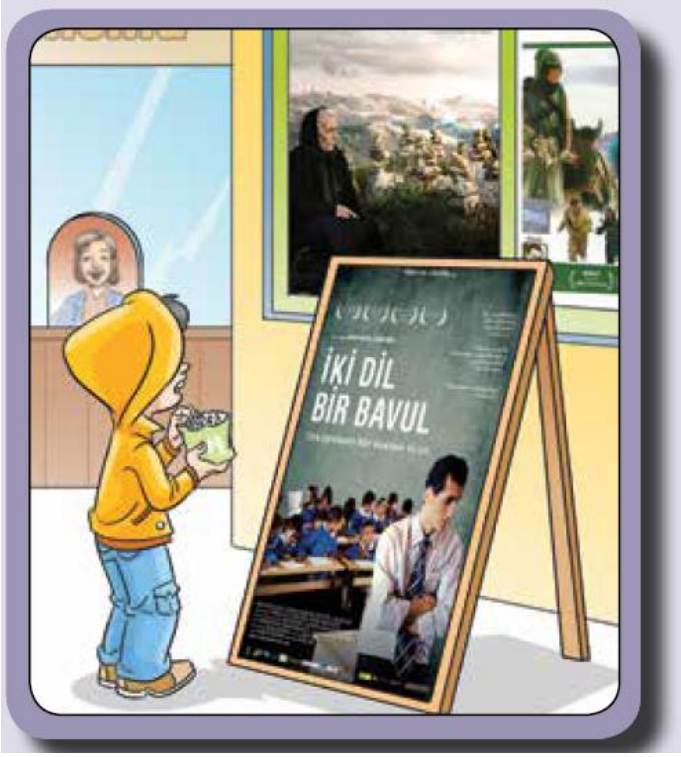
A Hint about the Turks

This elective curriculum is generally devoid of any reference to the Turks or the Turkish language (except for the mandatory opening pages and glossary at the end). One small exception is the following image of a boy examining a film poster with the Turkish title: *Two Languages One Suitcase* (İki Dil Bir Bavul). The poster refers to Orhan Eskiköy ve Özgür Doğan's 2008

[86] "Iconic Kurdish Musician Returns to Turkey after 38 years of Exile to Sing for Peace," *Hurriyet Daily News*, Nov. 16, 2013.
http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/iconic-kurdish-musician-returns-to-turkey-after-38-years-of-exile-to-sing-for-peace.aspx?pageID=238&nID=58026&NewsCatID=338

internationally acclaimed documentary: *On the Way to School*. The film follows an inexperienced Turkish teacher with no Kurdish background, as he teaches in a remote Kurdish village for a year. Although neither teacher nor students speak the other's language, there is an implicit message of coexistence and peace—hidden in the film's title but generally missing from both the Turkish and elective Kurdish curricula. Both tend to ignore the ethnic "Other" within the country. And while the film and its contents are not discussed in the text, the image may serve to stimulate conversation in class, at the teacher's discretion.

Unit 7: Leisure-time Activities



Kurdish, Grade 6, p. 99.

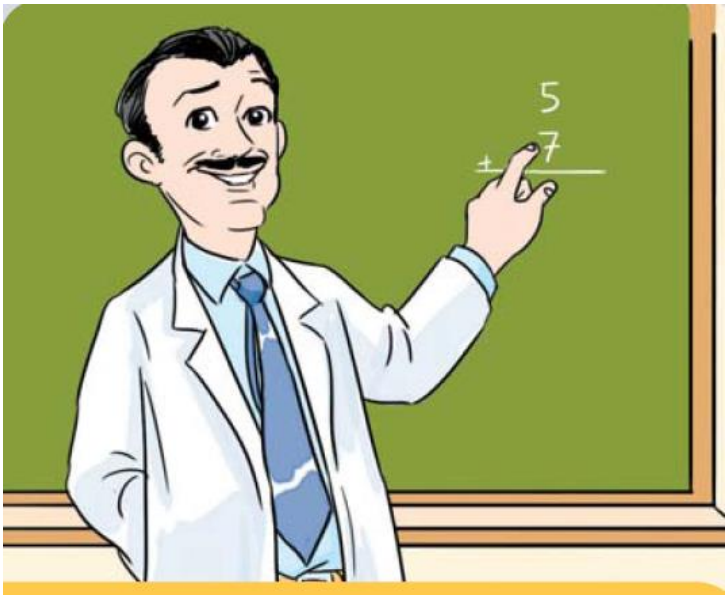
Ethnic and Gender Representations

The following examples show images and figures used in the book. Unlike most other Turkish textbooks, there are depictions of people with supposedly typical Kurdish appearance along with traditional attire. With regard to gender, men are depicted in traditional male roles such as a baker or construction worker or in one case a man is identified as a doctor while a woman as a nurse.

Unit 2: I and My Family

Sections 17, 19: Time to Talk

My uncle is a barber.



I am a teacher.

My father is a physician.

I am a nurse.

***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, pp. 38–39.

Unit 7: Leisure-time Activities

Section 3: Time to Read and Speak

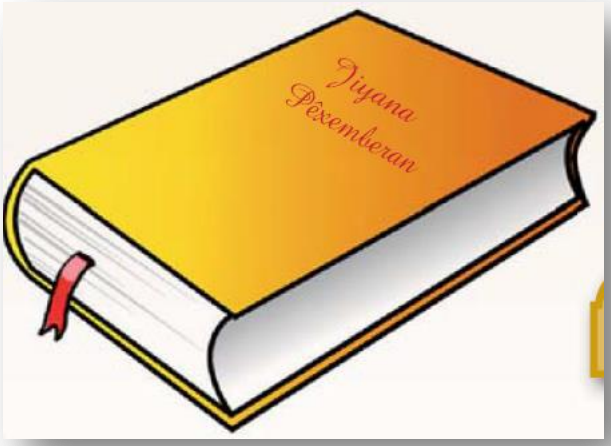
Ristem: I helped the needy people.

***Kurdish*, Grade 6**, p. 102.

Islam, Gender and Kurdishness

The rapprochement between the Kurds and the Turks, more precisely between the AKP and PKK, was not unrelated to the Islamist inclinations of the Turkish government in the recent era. While the Kurdish textbooks largely ignore the Turkish "Other" and the common heritage of the two cultures, Islam is acknowledged in this elective curriculum.

> **Unit 3: My School and My Environment**
> Section 2: Time to Read and Speak
> **Our Lessons**
> In the Kurdish lesson, I am learning my [mother] tongue. . . .
> In religion lesson, I am learning the lives of the prophets.



The Lives of the Prophets
***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 44.

The authors chose an illustration of a *Lives of the Prophets*[87] collection and not the more heavyweight Qur'an, Qur'anic exegesis, a biography of Prophet Muhammad or a Hadith collection. There are several Stories-of-the-Prophets collections, which depict the biographies of Biblical and a few pre-Islamic Arab prophets mentioned in the Qur'an.

There are those who argue that the Kurds have earned a reputation of being gender sensitive and egalitarian compared to other Middle Eastern and Central Asian societies.[88] The current elective

[87] *Lives of the Prophets*; [Kurdish, *Jiyana Pêxemberan*].
[88] Ofra Bengio argues that the advancement of Kurdish women constitutes a "double revolution" that shows both feminist and nationalist agendas can be complementary. Ofra Bengio, "Game Changers: Kurdish Women in Peace and War," *The Middle East Journal* 70, no. 1 (Winter 2016): pp. 30–46; Düzgün maintains that Kurdish female fighters transgress patriarchal gender hierarchies and subvert traditional gender roles. Mera L. Düzgün, "Jineology: The Kurdish Women's Movement," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): pp. 284–7; More skeptical voices argue that equality in the struggle remains male-centric. Metin Yüksel, "The Encounter of Kurdish

curriculum is mostly gender sensitive and secular, with various degrees of "modesty. The attire of teacher and students in the following image is modest.

Unit 1: My School

Section 1: It is Time to Read and Listen

***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 11.

Women with Nationalism in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 5 (September 2006): pp. 777–802; Yet others argue that this is a good beginning. Handan Çağlayan, "From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess: Gender Constructions in Ideological-Political Discourses of the Kurdish Movement in Post-1980 Turkey," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (2012):

http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657; Finally, Turkish and Kurdish feminists believe that neither equality nor peace are possible unless national identities are dramatically transformed. Nadje Al-Ali and Latif Tas, "'War is like a Blanket . . .': Feminist Convergences in Kurdish and Turkish Women's Rights Activism for Peace," *Journal of Middle East Women's* Studies, (2017):

http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/23894/;

The situation in Iraqi Kurdistan appears to be altogether different: Berivan A Yasin, et al., "Female Genital Mutilation among Iraqi Kurdish Women: A Cross-Sectional Study from Erbil City," *BMC Public Health* 13, no. 809 (2013):

http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/809.

A length of the teacher's modern skirt below is "universally flattering and appropriate."[89]

My mother is a teacher
***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 38.

Female and male students engage with one another about their teeth.

***Kurdish*, Grade 6**, p. 44

.

[89]"How to choose the right skirt length," Trancy Varga Group, http://www.tracyvargagroup.com/how-to-choose-the-right-skirt-length/.

In the following image, female and male students sit side by side:

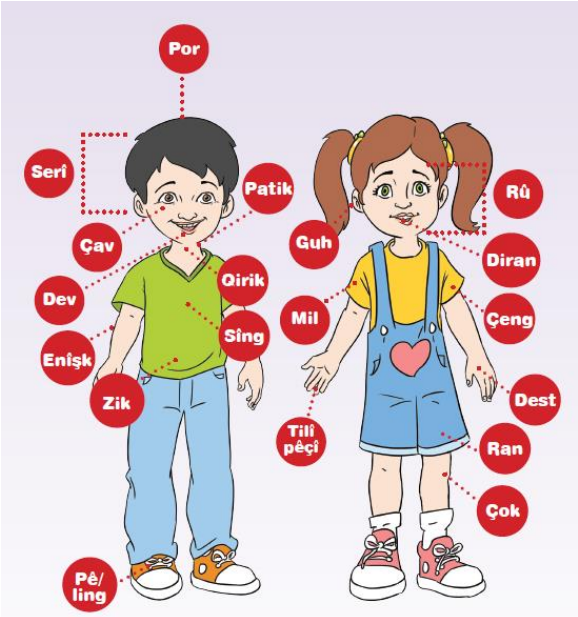
***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 41.

Anatomy illustration of a boy and girl in casual dress.

Unit 4: Body and Health

Section 1: Time to Read

Our Body



***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 57.

Courtesy and the Environment

Unit 1: My School

Section 1: Time to Read and Listen

School Rules

Baran: I don't use my friends' equipment without their permission.
Rêzan: I listen to my friends when they talk.
Fatîme: I do not interrupt my teacher when he teaches.
Bawer: And I obey all the school rules.

***Kurdish*, Grade 6**, p. 11.

Unit 1: My School

Section 1: It is Time to Read and Listen

Leyla: I am saying that we should carefully listen to the teacher during the class.

***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 11.

Unit 2: My Environment

Section 1: Time to Read and Listen

Environmentalism

Roni: We have to protect and take care of the trees in our environment.
Heja: We should not contaminate our environment, should not throw the litter on the ground, [and] should put it in the rubbish bin. We should warn the people who pollute the environment so that our environment will be clean.
Dilgeş: I think that we should not pollute the water in rivers and lakes.

Serdar: We should not waste water and electricity in our home and in our school.
Rojbin: We should turn off redundant lamps and should use only the amount of water we need.
Bawer: To be environmentally conscious, first and foremost we should love humans, animals and plants.
***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 27.

Folklore, Newroz, Yezidis

Typical Kurdish folk dance is presented as part of school group activities including those related to music, library, environment or the theater.

Unit 3: My School and My Environment
Section 5: Time to Listen and Read
Group Activities

I love to dance, that is why I joined the folklore group.
***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 47.

The Kurdish national holiday, Newroz or New Year, is emphasized. The holiday bolsters the collective identity of the Kurds. Jumping over the fire is considered an important tradition of that festival.

Unit 5: Seasons and Calendar

Section 22: Time to Read

Newroz Festival

Women and men, girls and boys, the elderly and children put on their beautiful and colorful clothes and go out. Everyone enjoys dancing around the Newroz fire.

***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 88.

The interesting point is that the textbook also mentions Kaniya Spî (White Spring). Kaniya Spî is one of the two sacred springs in Yezidism, which is a Kurdish ethno-religious community, representing an ancient religion that is linked to Zoroastrianism. As non-Muslims, Yezidis often suffer explicit persecution, most recently after the emergence of ISIS in Iraq and the Levant.[90] In Kaniya Spî, the Yezidis baptize their children.[91]

> Newroz is the celebration of a new year and of spring. It is celebrated every year on March 21. . . . Everyone dances around the fire of Newroz . . . . Baran and his friend are also going on a trip to Kaniya Spî [White Spring].
>
> ***Kurdish*, Grade 5**, p. 88.

Newroz is not only a national holiday and a folk event, but also represents an ancient symbol of resistance and uprising against oppressors. The following example exemplifies this. Despite the sensitivity of the topic, the textbook embraces the martial background of the Kurdish national

[90] Idan Barir, "The Yezidis: Traumatic Memory and Betrayal," *Expert Analysis*, Tel Aviv University, Sept. 18, 2014, https://english.tau.ac.il/print/impact/yezidis.

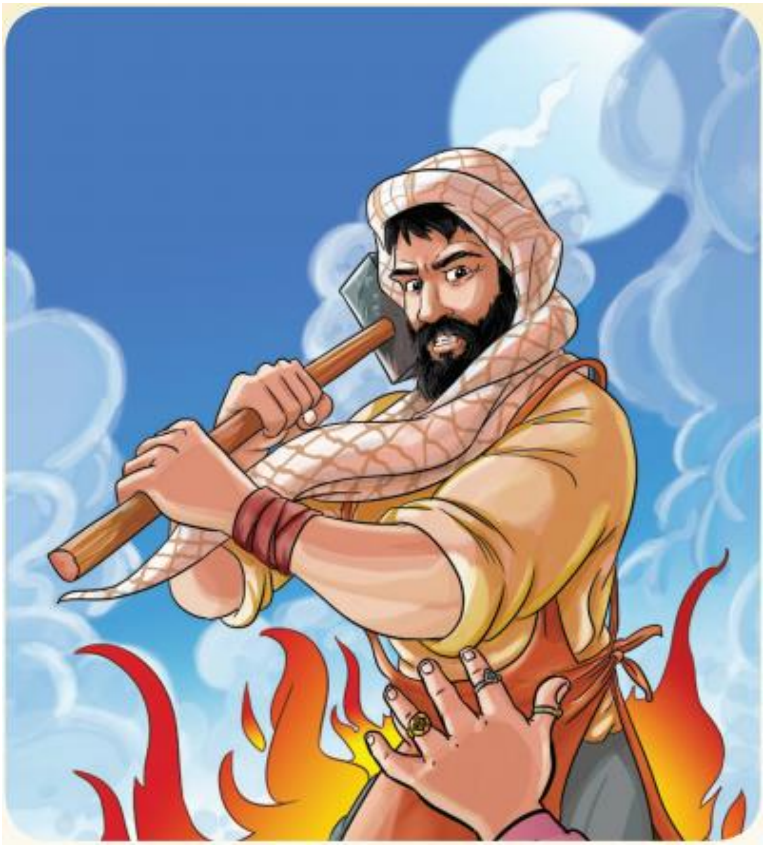
[91] For further information on the Yezidis, see Birgül Açikyildiz, *The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2010): pp. 175–80.

holiday and describes the story of the heroic rebellion involving Kawa the Blacksmith. The wickedness of the murderous tyrant of the tale is unambiguous and complete. The significance of this is apparent, especially since the Kawa uprising story is often used as a rallying cry against Turkish authorities in times of conflict, a fact being played out as this textbook was published. "Our homeland was under the rule of a brutal intruder." The story also buttresses the idea that the Kurdish identity is old and unique and has existed as part of a distinct nation for at least two thousand years.

Unit 4: Seasons and Calendar

Section 5: Time to Listen and Read

Kawa the Blacksmith and Newroz



Two thousand years ago, our homeland was under the rule of a brutal intruder. The homeland was in a bad and troublesome state. This invader was an ugly and scary ruler. One day, he caught an abnormal disease. As a result of the disease, two snakes appeared on his shoulders and refused to eat anything except human brains. Every day, two youths were slaughtered and their brains were given to the snakes.

People realized that their clever youths were slaughtered day by day and the numbers of boys were diminishing in the homeland. Each day, a mother and a father suffered great hardship, and a sister lost her brother. Among the fathers of these youths, there was a man named Kawa. He was a very brave blacksmith. All of his children were slaughtered and were offered as food to the snakes on the shoulders of the ruler. He only had one son remaining. One day, they came back to take Kawa's last son and give his brain to the snakes. When Kawa the Blacksmith saw that they were taking his last son from him, he lost his temper, and without restraint called out like a lion, saying to the people:

'Don't fear! Death is better than captivity.'

> [The people] all attacked together. In doing so, they ended the tyrant's brutality. From then on, a new day had begun. This day was March 21 and was named Newroz. Since that day, Newroz has represented two festivals: the festival for the beginning of spring and festival of emancipation.
> ***Kurdish*, Grade 7**, p. 59.

Newroz is celebrated in much of the Middle East and Central Asia. (The myth of Kawa or Kaveh the Blacksmith is widespread beyond Kurdish circles, particularly in Iran). In its Kurdish context, the holiday has represented to many the deliverance from tyranny; it fuels support for the Kurdish cause. In Turkey, the holiday has been celebrated almost exclusively by the Kurds, one reason it has been an issue in the past. While one aspect of the holiday represents the Kurdish legend of the day the Kurds overthrew a tyrant, it is simultaneously the beginning of the New Year and at the same time the Kurdish National Day. As such, Newroz is regarded to be the most significant festival in Kurdish culture and it has played a significant role in mobilizing those attempting to create a distinct Kurdish identity in Turkey. Soon after the holiday had become a symbol of Kurdish awakening in the late 1980s, Newroz celebrations were eased in Turkey with only occasional bans.[92] There is only the barest mention in the general Turkish curriculum of this holiday celebrated by a people comprising more than 15 percent of the Turkish population.

[92] Konrad Hirschler, "Defining the Nation: Kurdish Historiography in Turkey in the 1990s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2001): p. 154. "The Stupidity of Banning Newroz," *Hurriyet Daily News*, March 21, 2012, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-stupidity-of-banning-newroz-.aspx?pageID=238&nid=16465.

Conclusion

The Kurdish textbooks appear at first glance to be simple and straightforward, no more than very little elective training in a minority population's mother tongue. They are not. Both implicitly and explicitly the books include much material that strengthens conscious Kurdish identity. Arguably, elements of "nation building"[93] and pan-Kurdish identification (*Kurdayetî*)[94] are also featured. The enormous demand for the program as it began, in geography and participation is telling. Nevertheless, the scope of this curriculum has remained minimalistic and its effects are not likely to meet Kurdish cultural needs. In that sense; it is too little, too late. Yet, a conversation about this curriculum is worthwhile because the question of Kurdish education in Turkey remains unanswered.

Encompassing grades 5–7, students begin learning the alphabet of their mother tongue, basic sentences for communicating with family members and the school environment, learning about the body, health, Kurdish food, area tourism and the calendar. Pointedly, the tourist section handles nationalist-historic places in Kurdish-populated areas in Turkey, Iran and Iraq (but not Syria). Two meaningful aspects of Kurdish identity also featured in the sixth grade textbook are the connection to Yezidism and the Kurdish diaspora. Based on the presentations in the texts, it is more reasonable to think of Kurdish identity being strengthened by these electives, rather than minimalized.

As further evidence of the identity-strengthening process instilled through the textbooks, children's names in the books are exclusively Kurdish. With only one exception, no Turks or other ethnicities are represented. Images depict typical Kurdish features. Leisure-time activities, here and in all textbooks, feature typical Kurdish children's games. The textbooks are also devoid of negative images of "Others," including those nationalities and ethnicities in the region with which Kurdish groups have been engaged in bloody struggles.

Alphabet teaching is accompanied with a poem by Hisênê Emîn, who endured much suffering for his nationalist convictions. His nursery poem featured is harmless, yet enhances Kurdish identity. With both famous figures and places, there is much room for teachers to elaborate on sensitive issues.

The same chapter also covers other great figures in Kurdish history—famous Kurdish authors, poets, filmmakers and warriors—all generate nationalistic urges in Kurdish minds. Across this brief curriculum, the textbooks include communication skills for leisure time activities.

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[93] Ertan Erol, "Kurdish Mother Tongue Education Policy of PKK Terrorist Organization," *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi/The Journal of International Social Research* 10, no. 53 (2017): pp. 193–204.
[94] William Gourlay, "Kurdayetî: Pan-Kurdish Solidarity and Cross-Border Links in Times of War and Trauma, *Middle East Critique* 27, no. 1 (2018): pp. 25–42.

The heroic legendary figure Kawa the Blacksmith and the national holiday, Newroz, are studied. Newroz, the spring festival is celebrated across West Asia, notably in Iran. In the Kurdish heritage and context, and in this textbook, the festival of Newroz conveys an everlasting revolutionary message: the deliverance of the Kurds from a cruel tyrant via an uprising.

The seventh grade textbook especially focuses on Kurdish heroic figures. A simple search of their names on the web will lead students to stories of struggles and wars between Turks and Kurds.[95]

All textbooks include a Kurdish-Turkish glossary, and as with other books in the Turkish curriculum, include Turkish patriotic themes to preface each volume. Other than these mandatory elements, such as the Turkish national anthem, the Kurdish textbooks feature few if any connections to Turkey or the Turks. These are not Kurdish as second-language textbooks, with Turkish explanations, nor are they Kurdish for Kurdish-speaking Turks. Rather, they teach the Kurdish language and culture belonging to their long-desired nation of greater Kurdistan. While these texts form only an elective segment of Turkish education, they reflect a mirror image of that general curriculum: Kurds and Kurdish are ignored in the Turkish curriculum; Turks and Turkish are ignored in the Kurdish one.

Our IMPACT-se UNESCO derived methodology is mainly designed to analyze national curricula within the perspective of depicting "Others"—mainly rival nations. The current study combines the analysis of the important paradigm of the Other within the context of the beginnings of a minority curriculum.

Our first criterion is that of RESPECT, promoting tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life. Given that these elective Kurdish courses belong to the Turkish curriculum, the examined textbooks are bursting with respect for the Kurdish "Other." Turks, as a culture, are not featured at all, except for the obligatory nationalist preface to the textbooks. Arguably, since the students are immersed in the general Turkish curriculum, this modest haven for Kurdish language and culture naturally focuses on its mission—teaching Kurdish issues. The general curriculum, for its part, largely ignores—even denies—the Kurdish question.

Other standards are reasonably well met. There is NO HATE, i.e., these textbooks are free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples. A Kurdish INDIVIDUAL OTHER is represented. Though traditional roles are featured, GENDER is not a major issue as depicted in

[95]The Name Bedir Khan, for example, will lead one to a large family of leader and fighters throughout Kurdish history. Mehmed Uzuzn, "Bedir Khan," Encyclopedia Iranica, (1989), http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bedir-khan-badr-khan-d.

the textbooks. Elements of this elective curriculum encourage SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION. LGBTQ issues are not dealt with in the texts.

Regarding PEACEMAKING and UNBIASED INFORMATION, the latter stipulates that a curriculum "should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples." The textbooks under examination focus on Kurdish language and culture and avoid directly addressing the Turkish-Kurdish dilemma. And since such a dilemma is not presented, PEACEMAKING, too, is absent. These textbooks do not impart "capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and the promotion of peace." Rather, in the mythological story of Kawa the Blacksmith, the metaphor for Kurdish uprising is hard to ignore. There is no Turk presented as an INDIVIDUAL OTHER, no vision of COOPERATION or RESPECT, though one must acknowledge that students enrolled in the Kurdish electives are simultaneously studying all about Turkey in the remainder of the Turkish curriculum.

These experimental textbooks open the door to a pan-Kurdish worldview, although in a mild and friendly way. There is nothing against Turkey or the Turks. Moreover, this elective curriculum forms only a tiny part of the large nationalistic or Imam Hatip Turkish curricula to which all students are exposed on a daily basis. As such, it is extremely humble in scope and effectiveness. Introduced at a comparatively older age than students normally begin studying their native language, it is limited, elective and modest and cannot be expected to introduce dramatic change. Indeed, these textbooks cannot reasonably be considered a solution to the issue of minority education since their application is decidedly cautious and limited.

The textbooks represent the beginnings of a Kurdish curriculum; a first of its kind in the history of Turkish education. For it to be a step in the right direction serious dialogue is needed.

Methodology

IMPACT-se's research utilizes a content analysis research method to examine the textbooks according to the following criteria, which is a condensed version of UNESCO's standards for peace and tolerance in school education: [96]

1. **RESPECT**: The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.[97]
2. **INDIVIDUAL OTHER**: The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the "Other" as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.[98]
3. **NO HATE**: The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.[99]
4. **PEACEMAKING**: The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.[100]
5. **UNBIASED INFORMATION**: Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.[101]

[96] The methodology was initiated by Yohanan Manor. This is an updated version of the standards prepared by Eldad J. Pardo, Jean-Claude Nidam and Shimon Shetreet (May 2014). http://www.impact-se.org/methodology/

[97] As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

[98] The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See Ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.

[99] Based on Ibid., Articles III.6, IV.7 and VII.39; and on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 18.2.

[100] Based on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 9; and on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 5.

[101] Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

6. **GENDER**: The curriculum should foster equality and mutual respect between women and men. It should refrain from stereotyped gender roles.[102]
7. **SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION**: The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.[103]

[102] The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.
[103] Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing "systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance," see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.

Researched Kurdish Textbooks

The following textbooks were monitored for the research in this study. Please feel free to contact IMPACT-se for access to textbooks contained in our research (http://www.impact-se.org/about-us/contact-us/). The titles both here and referenced in the text have been translated into English to aid the reader.

Kadri Yıldırım, et al., *Kurdish* (Kurmanji), Grade 5, MEB, 2014.

Kadri Yıldırım, et al., *Kurdish* (Zazaki), Grade 5, MEB, 2014.

Kadri Yıldırım. et al., *Kurdish* (Kurmanji), Grade 6, MEB, 2014.

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