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Cultural Identity as a Discursive Product: Multiple Voices

Towards Discursive Construction of Lazi Identity

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ABSTRACT

Ethno-linguistic diversities and the rights to enjoy and maintain indigenous languages and identities has been a central issue in the socio-political agenda of Turkey since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. The Lazi have taken their part in the discussions concerning minority rights through the discourses of a group of Lazi activists since the early 1990s.

This study aims to examine the discursive construction of Lazi identity with close attention to its various actors and the context in which the process is carried out. To this end, selected texts by the social actors who are involved in the Lazi identity building process are studied in terms of various functions of language contributing to the communicative production of discourses. The content of written and oral commentaries by various social actors who are influential in the Lazi identity building process is studied using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The study concludes that the construction of Lazi identity is an on-going process which is developed by influential social actors. The discourses of Lazi activists display a dilemma between the commitment to establish or re-establish a distinct Lazi identity with emphasis on a distinct language and culture rooted in ancient history and a determination to remain a component of the Republic of Turkey.

Keywords: cultural memory, identity building, heteroglossia, responsive reactions, discourse analysis, othering.

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1. Introduction

Languages are products of collective genius of cultures, thus carry significance that cannot be simply explained as a medium of communication. Languages are rather black boxes in which the complete record of a people's culture and history is reserved. Thus, language is presented as the flag of ethnic identity in the recent discourses on language endangerment¹. Though it is not the only agent for the maintenance of cultural identity, language is regarded as a distinctive cultural marker striving against the threat of assimilation within nation states. Fishman (2001) stated that, the link between language and ethnicity gets stronger when 'it is energized by collective grievances between apparently contrasted collectives' and it is utilised by active group members in identity building processes for the mobilization of the ethno-linguistic group (Fishman, 2001: 161).

My primary claim in this thesis is, being influenced by the discourses of the right to reclaim the seized rights, a new Lazi identity is being constructed by a group of Lazi activists by means of oral and written communication which has displayed consistency not only in tone but also in the messages aimed to be conveyed since the identity building or revitalization process was launched in early 1990s. Throughout the process, language is waved as one of the legitimate flags of the Lazi identity and thus provides an effective tool for the identity building process along with the presentation of a distinct Lazi history and culture.

In this study, I aim to analyse the on-going discursive efforts to re-generate the Lazi identity. To this end, this study is dedicated to shed light on the process through which a collective Lazi memory has been constructed over the last decade based on discourses of ethnic identity as opposed to the Turkish supra-identity.

My theoretical approach to this research question is that collective memory is socially constructed through selection of contextually relevant memories towards building or revitalization of an identity. In this, language is used as the primary resource of conflicting discourses on identity discussions. Drawing on the constructivist approach, this study by no means aims to make judgments about opposing discourses concerning the Lazi identity. Instead, it aims to portray how these discourses are

¹ 'Each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. The loss of any language is thus a loss for all humanity [...]. The extinction of each language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge. Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world.' (UNESCO's Ad Hoc Expert on Endangered Languages, 2003: 1-3)

constructed as a collective product with the contribution of various social actors and how the meaning of “Lazi identity” is influenced by these various voices over the last decade and a half.

In order to explore the processes of discursive constructions of Lazi identity in written and oral texts, it is necessary to consider the contexts in which Lazi identity has been revitalized. To this end, the thesis also provides relevant background information which enables an insight into the motivational drives that lead the Lazi activists to “protects and promote” Lazi language and culture.

2. Scope of the Study

2.1. Research Questions

My objective, then, is to examine the discursive construction of a Lazi identity that has been carried out since the 1990s. To this end, I will attempt to answer the following inquires which will provide a multi-perspective of the identity building process by examining the way social actors project each other's identity.

1. How is the Lazi identity projected by non-Lazi voices in the discussions about minority rights in Turkey?
2. How do the Lazi activists project the Lazi identity?
3. How do the Lazi activists project the "other"?

2.2. Methodology

Drawing on Fairclough and Wodak's (as cited in Wodak 2002: 1) definition of language as a 'social practice', I aim to trace the components of the discursive construction of Lazi identity throughout the various phases of the contemporary discussions about minority rights in Turkey. To this end, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will provide the methodological surface through which I will examine how oral and written commentaries –texts- related to the issue in concern 'draw upon, incorporate, re-contextualize and dialogue with other texts' (Fairclough, 2003: 17). In this respect, CDA will provide a multi-perspective of the discursive construction of Lazi identity in the texts produced by Lazi activists, and other socio-political actors that are central to the issue.

The version of CDA adopted in this study benefits from critical linguistics developed by Fowler et al. and Kress and Hodge (as cited in Fairclough 1992: 24) through the end of the 1970s. Fowler et al. (1979) explain the aim of critical linguistics as a 'critical interpretation' of the texts: 'recovering the social meanings expressed in discourse by analyzing the linguistic structures in the light of their interactional and wider social contexts' (195-196). In this respect, the texts will be analyzed in terms of lexical preferences, modality, representation and identification of the agent and the patient, implicatures and presuppositions that the discourses are built upon and, the perlocutionary effects and the illocutionary forces created.

The weakness of critical linguistics is that it gives ‘little attention’ to the ‘processes of producing and interpreting texts’ (Fairclough 1992: 28). However, as noted by Bakhtin (1986) ‘each utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication’ (91). Thus, in the present study, I aim to present the socio-political context in which the discourses are produced in order to attain a deeper understanding of the forces that encourage certain discourses in the course of Lazi identity building process. To this end, section 2.5 is dedicated to portray the contextual background while the analysis aims to provide a multiperspective to Lazi identity by examining the representation and identification of the Lazi and Lazuri by different social actors that are involved in the process.

To summarize, the version of CDA adopted in this study is an analytical tool that enables examination of language-based data that portrays the Lazi identity building process in the last one and a half decades.

Besides the content analysis of the selected texts through CDA, the socio-political context will be narrated in order to attain an insight into the contextual background of the on-going discursive construction of the Lazi identity. In that, a timeline of relevant legislative amendments and parallel initiatives towards maintenance of minority languages and cultures will be described.

2.3. Data

The data on which this study is based consists of written and oral commentaries on the one hand by Lazi activists and on the other hand by government officials and Kurdish politicians. The first phase of the analysis explores how the Lazi identity is projected by the government officials who have been in charge in the last one and a half decades and the Kurdish nationalist politicians who have been laboring towards building a Kurdish identity and a collective memory simultaneously with the Lazi activists at least in the last one and a half decades. The discourses of the government officials and Kurdish nationalist politicians are paid particular interest due to their central role in national politics and social order as two conflicting viewpoints; to be precise, government officials represent the *status quo* and Kurdish nationalist politicians present responsive reactions to the *status quo*.

In the first phase of the analysis, the two keywords “Lazi” and “Lazuri” are scanned in the texts reporting government officials and Kurdish politicians which are

published in the daily issues of a national newspaper, namely; *Radikal* since the beginning of the past decade. *Radikal* is chosen as the source of information with respect to its high circulation rate and availability on-line besides its reputation as a national newspaper distant to certain political groups.

The corpus of the second and the third phases of the analysis are limited to four Lazi journals, namely; *Ogni* (1993-1994), *Mjora* (2000), *Sima* (2000-2011) and *Skani Nena* (2009-2011). The discursive constructions of the Lazi identity and the “other” by the Lazi activists are traced in the written production in the aforementioned four journals. The four Lazi journals that are selected to be analyzed are the products of the Lazi activists who have been devoted to the revitalization of Lazi language and culture. What distinguishes these four journals from other sources of written products by the Lazi is the fact that these journals place particular emphasis on the Lazi ethno-linguistic identity. In the first issue of *Ogni* (October 1993), the Lazi activists define the journal as a product which is “completely Lazi” as they declare their mission to protect and promote the Lazi language and culture. In this sense, the journals are one aspect of the Lazi activists’ efforts among others such as language workshops, conferences, petition campaigns and law cases emphasizing their language rights. Nevertheless, the written products in the journals provide an overall picture of the revitalization process.

The Turkish originals of the texts are available in the Appendices. In order to avoid personal interpretations through translation, in the translations I attempted to render the style and the content of the original texts as they are, thus, left the incoherencies, ambiguities and grammatical inconsistencies of the original texts remained in translations.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

2.4.1. A Constructivist Approach to Collective Identity

Berger and Luckmann (1967) define *identity* as a social construct which is maintained, modified and even reshaped by social relations. With this definition, Berger and Luckmann do not only assert the imaginary quality of identity but also its dynamic character bound to the interplay of organism, individual consciousness and social structure (173). Similarly, Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]) introduces the notion of “imagined communities” by which we are guided to examine communities and thus national identities from a constructivist approach.

Likewise, the definition of a *collective* is not definite. That is, the features constituting the *sameness* among a certain group and distinguish it from “others” is context dependent. In some cases territorial definitions may provide the common ground as it is in nation-states while in some other cases, linguistic properties may provoke “we-feelings”. What determines the need for a collective identity is mainly shaped by the political discourses of the respective time. Hence, the sources of a “we-feeling” take shape towards certain purposes. In this respect, *collective memory* is selective but by no means less real. The question is, as Wertsch (2002: 11) puts forward ‘Who does the remembering?’ or in other words whose memory is constructed as a *collective memory*?

To a certain extent *collective memory* takes its reference point from what people really remember through their experiences. However, as Misztal (2003: 12) argues, to a greater extent *collective memory* refers to organized cultural practices supplying ways of understanding the world, and providing people with beliefs and opinions which guide their actions. In a nutshell, it tells what is to be remembered and what should be forgotten.

Drawing on Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory, Jan Assmann introduces the concept of “cultural memory” in his book *Cultural Memory: Writing, Remembering and Political Identity in Early Civilizations* (1992) in which he places communication into the heart of cultural memory formations (as cited in Assmann 1995: 127). In parallel, it may well be asserted that language is the medium that draws individuals from their independent subjectivity to a social sphere where collective sharing is possible. In the process of collective memory building and thus identity building processes, Liliane Weissberg (1999) suggests “language itself is [as] already a system of social conventions that makes the reconstruction of “our own” past possible (14). In her reading of Halbwachs, Weissberg (1999: 15) reminds Halbwachs’ insistence on *speech* rather than event, on the construction of any *recollection*².

² Italics my emphasis.

2.4.2. Bakhtinian “Dialogic Angle”

The Bakhtinian understanding of language is constituted of individual utterances involved in a social, cultural and historical meaning-making process. Thus, ‘each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication’ (Bakhtin 1986: 91). In addition, Bakhtin (1986) describes meaning-making as an interactive process in which each utterance emerges ‘as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere (91). In other words, ‘each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account’ (Bakhtin 1986: 91). Accordingly, the interactive and discursively constructed cultural identities can be explained with Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia since language is the site of struggle in the name of a distinctive ‘I’ opposed to the dominant and/or suppressive ‘other’. In short, the presence of ‘I’ is bound to its relation to the ‘other’.

Having presented the theoretical framework that the present study draws upon, the following section will describe the context in which the on-going discursive construction of the Lazi identity takes place.

2.5. Contextual Background

The Republic of Turkey, inheriting the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic Anatolian population from the Ottoman Empire, was established as a nation after a period of “collective struggle”³ for sovereignty against the Allied Powers⁴ in the War of Independence (1919-1923). Turkish identity was built as supra-identity to refer to the citizens of the Republic of Turkey irrespective of their ethnic, religious and linguistic differences⁵. Turkish, as the one and only official language of the Republic of

³ The discourse of ‘collective struggle against enemies during the War of Independence’ is still frequently commemorated by the people of Turkey irrespective of ethnic origin whenever a threat to unity is felt.

⁴ The British Empire, France, Italy, Japan- these Powers being described in the present Treaty as the Principal Allied Powers; Armenia, Belgium, Greece, The Hedjaz, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, The Serb-Croat-Slovene State and Czecho-Slovakia constituting, with the Principal Powers mentioned above, the Allied Powers (as stated in the text of the Treaty of Sevres).

⁵ Based on the Constitution of 1921 (Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu), the Constitution of 1924, item 88 defines Turk as follows: “Türkiye ahalisine din ve ırk farkı olmaksızın vatandaşlık itibariyle (Türk) ıtlak olunur”; (The nation of Turkey with respect of citizenship is called Turk, irrespective of religion or ethnicity).

Turkey was used to unite among the citizens of the new nation⁶. In fact, the discourse of “Turkish as a unifier” in Turkey is still used as an argument by nationalists in the discussions about the right to acquire the mother tongue. Recent discussions in Turkey about the right to acquire the mother tongue will be narrated and discussed in detail below. To this end, the thesis will present a timeline of legislative improvements in terms of human rights related to language issues and the reflections of these improvements on Lazuri- a minority language in danger of disappearing (UNESCO 2003).

In exactly the same way the time of empires has expired despite their glorious power, nation states have been challenged as human rights have occupied the world agenda. A rather direct statement is made by Philip G. Roeder (2007: 5) as he blames the nation-state crises as the single most common cause of internal wars over the last half century. As minorities are reminded of their identities and rights, discourses of a shared past, a collective identity and a common destiny gradually fade which is in return regarded as a threat to unity and solidarity of the nation.

Recent crises Turkey is going through display a similar picture as depicted above. In fact, the conflict was restricted to separatist Kurdish groups and the armed forces of the Republic of Turkey until the last decade. However, the situation now is rather complicated and controversial since Kurdish groups who do not desire to separate from Turkey and other linguistic groups, among which is the Lazi, are also voicing their demands for the assurance of wider rights to learn and use their mother tongue. Hence, the issue is rather central in the national agenda.

Before we go any further in the portrayal of the minority⁷ language issues in Turkey, let us briefly recall the international forces which have recalled the significance and value of the protection and maintenance of indigenous languages⁸. In the international arena, the recognition of minority languages as a matter of human rights and cultural heritage does not stretch back further than a decade and a half. In fact, the

⁶ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (1921, 1924, 1961, 1982). Part 1, Act 3 (2). ‘The Turkish state, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish.’

⁷ The word “minority” in this paper is used to refer to linguistic groups whose mother tongues are languages other than Turkish. This distinction is essential in Turkish context since the definition of “minority” in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey in accordance with Lausanne Treaty (Section III. on the protection of minorities, Articles 38-44) refers to non-Muslim communities namely Jews, Greeks and Armenians. The ethnic, religious and linguistic groups other than Jews, Greeks and Armenians are regarded as natural element of the Republic.

⁸ A rather extensive account of international studies and initiatives committed to protect and promote regional and minority languages are given in the preceding study by the author, Avdan (2010: 18-20).

first civil initiative – SIL International- committed to serving language communities worldwide was founded in 1934. Nevertheless, the issue had not received international attention at governmental level until 1992, when the Council of Europe adopted the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Following the Charter, foundations for endangered languages were established one after another all over Europe. In 1996, UNESCO published Atlas of Languages in Danger and on November 2, 2001 it took a further step by adopting the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity which aimed to encourage the international community ‘to protect languages, in the same way natural and cultural heritages of tangible heritage are protected’ (UNESCO, 2002). All these above mentioned and more attempts dedicated to protect and promote minority languages provided a certain level of awareness in the international arena and placed the issue in the national agenda of a significant number of countries by means of international charters. However, despite these efforts, it is still not possible to claim collective awareness and absolute commitment to the issue even within the European Union. In this sense, France epitomizes the abolition of language rights as stated in EBLUL-France’s third periodic report on the situation of regional and minority languages in France: ‘The “regional” languages do not benefit from the resources required to guarantee their survival and are subject to arbitrary power struggles and the fluctuating wills of the government and public services.’ (EBLUL-France, 2007: 6). The report further criticises France stating that ‘In practice, citizens wishing to defend and develop their languages and cultures face constant restrictions and discriminations’ (EBLUL-France, 2007: 7).⁹

Drawing back to the language issue in Turkey, it may well be observed that there is remarkable effort towards recognition of language diversity in Turkey over the past decade which displays a rather slow pace in the last few years. Below is a detailed timeline of contemporary discussions on language policies and solutions to the subject matter offered by the government. With the timeline, I aim to portray the legal background of different perspectives and discourses representing opposing ideologies in Turkish political and social structure which challenges national compromises on issues that can be linked to national unity.

The history of democracy in Turkey has been disrupted various times by military interventions not only in the form of coups d’état, as experienced first in 1960

⁹ See EBLUL-France’s report (2007) titled “Regional and minority languages and cultures in France are outlaws”.

and then in 1980, but also by implications of possible coups which the General Staff claimed in memoranda in 1971, 1997¹⁰ and 2007¹¹. Among those, the 1980 coup marks the introduction of rather severe restrictions in the lives of peoples of Turkey compared to the previous constitutions of 1921, 1924 and 1961. As far as language rights are concerned, the relevant article reads in the 1921 Constitution as; ‘The religion of Turkey is Islam. Its *official language* is Turkish’.¹² Though the definition of Turkish as the “official language” remains the same in the Constitution of 1924¹³, and in the Constitution 1961¹⁴, the Constitution of 1982 introduces rather severe restrictions to the use of languages other than Turkish in the public sphere. This is done with the deletion of the word “official” from the definition of Turkish by means of an unalterable statement in Article 3 which reads ‘The Turkish state, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish’¹⁵.

Turkey entered the new millennium with a high commitment to the ideal of European Union membership which meant conducting improvements especially in human rights issue which has been an everlasting discussion in Turkey since the military coup in 1960 but rather intensively since the enactment of the Constitution of 1982 which has introduced an emphasis on Turkish nationalism.

The first decade of the new millennium gave rise to hope and new energy to establish a more democratic and prosperous country with three democratization packages passed successively in less than two years. In this respect, the first law package¹⁶ amending several articles of the constitution was passed on October 3, 2001. Among those was the deletion of controversial expressions in Article 9 restricting the use of languages prohibited by law in the expression and dissemination of thought and Article 10 prohibiting publications in any language prohibited by law (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, 2007).

Accordingly, the former enabled campaigning in languages other than Turkish. However, there is no political party or organisation founded by the Lazi in particular in Turkey. Thus, the amendment mainly served the demands of the Kurdish political groups and parties who had long been expressing their demands to use their mother

¹⁰ Known as e-muhtira (e-memorandum) released by the General Staff on February 28, 1997 resulted in the resignation of then prime minister Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party.

¹¹ Known as e-muhtira (e-memorandum) released by the General Staff on April 27, 2007.

¹² Italics my emphasis.

¹³ See <http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1924tek.htm>.

¹⁴ See <http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1961constitution-text.pdf>.

¹⁵ See <http://www.anayasa.gov.tr>

¹⁶ Law no 4709 Amendment October 3, 2001 to be in force starting October 17, 2001.

tongue in their campaign meetings. Though the law enables the use of languages other than Turkish in expression and dissemination of thought, it is still not possible to claim a frequent use of Kurdish. Reasons may vary from ambiguities in exercising the rights to personal and contextual preferences. These issues, however, are beyond the scope of this study and will be no more discussed in this thesis.

As for the Article 10, the situation is in fact ironical. That is to say, though the restrictions for prohibiting publications in any language prohibited by law was lifted by the deletion of this article from the Constitution in 2001, *Ogni*, *Mjori* and *Sima* are three individual periodicals published by the *Lazi*, about the *Lazi* and in *Lazuri* before 2001. Eight years prior to the amendment in the corresponding law, in 1993, the first journal in *Lazuri*; *Ogni* (1993) (hear and understand) was published with the motto ‘*Ogni, Sk’ani Nena!*’ (Hear your voice!). Being highly concerned with the fact that the number of *Lazuri* speakers are decreasing gradually due to language shift, a group of *Lazi* decided to publish a quarterly journal “which is completely *Lazi*” in order to raise awareness among the *Lazi* about their mother tongue and provide them with written material in *Lazuri* (*Ogni* October 1993: 7). Though the editors of the journal were prosecuted and accused of separatism they were acquitted by the court stating that Turkish citizens have the right to use their mother tongues and claim their identity as *Lazi* as long as they are loyal to their Turkish identity (*The Lazi, A 4000-Year History, 2007*)¹⁷. However, it could be published in only six issues.

Seven years after *Ogni*, the same cadre published *Mjora* (Sun). This time, the second issue of the journal was confiscated as it lacked copyrights. They could not afford the legal procedure and had to stop publication. Since *Ogni* and *Mjora*, the South Eastern Community Service Endowment (*Sima*) founded by the *Lazi* in 1996 has been publishing the bilingual quarterly journal *Sima* every three months. Besides the above mentioned publications, there are a number of bilingual journals published periodically by the *Lazi*. Among those are *Lazuri Nena* (*Laz Culture Association, 2009*) and *Lazeburi* (2011) both of which are in fact published by more or less the same cadre with *Ogni* (1993-1994) and *Mjora* (2000).

In fact, the publications about *Lazi* language and culture are not limited to periodicals. There are more or less twenty published books in *Lazuri* and/or about the *Lazi*. A great deal of them are collections of *Lazi* folk music, rhymes, and folk tales.

¹⁷ From the interview with the Chairman of *Lazi Culture Association* in the documentary movie *The Lazi, A History of 4000 Years* (2007).

Besides, though not many, there are documentary books portraying Lazi history and culture. The written production in Lazuri is mainly in Arhari Lazuri which is a dialect of the respective language among five Lazuri dialects¹⁸ spoken in Turkey. Though it is true that these dialects are intelligible to each other, there is an undeniable challenge for the speakers of the other four dialects to enjoy their reading. As well as the dialect obstacle, the fact that the Lazi are Turkish literate and that the majority of them are unfamiliar with the Lazuri alphabet, which is developed in 1984, brings about another challenge for the Lazi readers. In this respect, the studies for the documentation of Lazuri and Lazuri teaching resources have an important role in the promotion of the language. For this purpose, two Lazuri speakers İsmail Avcı Bucaklışı and Eylem Bostancı and a Japanese linguist Goichi Kojima published the first book on Lazuri grammar in 2003.

Apart from written publications, Lazi language and culture are also promoted by means of documentary films screened at international film festivals. To illustrate, “AnTEAcipation”, a documentary portraying the tea culture in the Black Sea Region of Turkey, was first screened at the San Francisco World Music Festival in September 2006 and then at the 2nd Green Yayla festival in July, 2007. The documentary is mainly characterized by a melancholic tone focused on the migrations from the region and the abandonment of Lazuri. Following this first documentary film¹⁹ about the Lazi language and culture, a rather exclusive documentary was shot in 2007 which was financed by the European Union²⁰ and the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism as part of a project named “Promotion of Cultural Rights in Turkey”. The documentary has been promoted at various international film festivals such as Cannes (2006 and 2008) and Berlin (2008) film festivals. Another documentary film, named “Sari Inci”²¹ (Yellow Pearl, 2004) was screened at the 6th Mountain Film Festival in March 2011.

Following the first package, the second democratization package entered into force on April 9, 2002. With the amendments on article 5 restrictions to the establishment of an association ‘to protect, develop or expand languages or cultures other than the Turkish language or culture or to claim that there are minorities based on racial, religious, sectarian, cultural or linguistic differences’ was repealed (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, 2007: 6).

¹⁸ Arhari, Xopuri, Çxaluri, Atinuri, and Art'aşenuri

¹⁹ “AnTEAcipation” is not the first film shot about the Lazi language and culture but the first film screened in this respect.

²⁰ European Commission project number TR 0401.06. (See http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/fiche_projet/document/TR%200401.06%20Cultural%20Rights.pdf)

²¹ Directed and produced by Mustafa Sari.

Obviously, the aforementioned amendments supplied a legal ground for the efforts to protect and promote Lazuri. However, Lazi intellectuals had long been devoted to the revitalization of their language and thus had been actively involved in the promotion of Lazuri. In this respect, South Eastern Community Service Endowment founded in 1996 can provide a relevant example. Another initiative working in the same parallel was Lazebura, a Lazi Association active in Germany. Nevertheless, beyond any doubt, the legal adjustments accelerated the efforts of the Lazi. In this sense, the Lazi could finally have an association bearing the name of their ethnicity “Laz” in its title on March 2, 2008. The association was founded with a motto ‘Cumapoba irden, nenaçkuni dimencelen’ (Brotherhood is growing, our voice is getting stronger) written in Lazuri on the official documents. In this sense, the foundation of the Lazi Culture Association may well be marked as a turning point on the language issue in Turkey since, for first time in the history of the Republic of Turkey, Lazuri was used in an official paper.

Since its foundation, the Lazi Culture Association has been actively working on the revitalization of the language by means of publications, conferences, and press releases. To exemplify, the association has been publishing a bilingual quarterly journal (*Skani Nena*) devoted to illustrating and exalting Lazi history and culture. In 2010, two individual conferences were held by the association aiming to draw attention to Lazuri both in public and in academic spheres. The first of these was held on February 2010, International Mother Language Day with the contribution of academics specialized in Caucasian studies. Following that, on March 27, 2010, the association held another symposium “Kafkas Halkları Birbirini Tanıyor: Dillerimiz Hallerimiz” (Caucasian people are getting to know each other: Our languages our situations) with a purpose to embrace other Caucasian languages in their efforts towards the promotion of mother tongue²².

Going back to the legislative improvements related to the language issue, the third democratization package passed in August 2002 during the Coalition Government can be considered as a remarkable step towards the recognition of regional and minority languages. With this package, the restrictions on learning different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens were lifted (Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information, August 3, 2002). Accordingly, the amendments enabled government controlled private initiatives to open language schools

²² Retrieved on February 15, 2010 from <http://www.lazkulturdernegi.org.tr>.

teaching regional and minority languages spoken in Turkey²³. On July 19 and 30, 2003, the government took a further step towards democratization of the country and relaxed the procedure for ‘the opening of courses in different languages and dialects used traditionally by Turkish citizens in their daily lives’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretariat General for EU Affairs, 2007: 14).

The right to acquire proper knowledge of the mother tongue has been in the centre of the discussions about human rights and minority rights issues since late 1990s. Though, the discussions are far from embracing all the linguistic groups in Turkey since the issue is mainly held in terms of the demands of Kurdish people and Kurdish language, there are efforts to raise awareness of the fact that Lazuri is a language in danger of dying with approximately 150,000 speakers around the world (UNESCO, 2010 Atlas of the World’s Languages, relying on estimations in 2001). On the strength of the amendment dated August 3, 2002 the first Kurdish language school was opened in Urfa in 2003 which was followed by a large number of others all over Turkey receiving support from politicians, intellectuals and local authorities. Some of these even had to close down due to lack of interest²⁴. On the other hand, being motivated by the legal permission, there has been small initiatives committed to teach Lazuri. The first of these was in fact run as a Lazuri workshop at Özgür University²⁵ during the 2001-2002 academic period to be repeated in 2006. However, these attempts were limited to small working groups or Lazuri teaching websites until November 2010 when the first Lazuri language course²⁶ was opened with a scheduled programme and syllabus. Though the Lazuri course is supported by major media channels such as CNNTurk, the Turkish nationalistic discourse condemning the efforts to teach Lazuri as separatist leanings is also heard²⁷.

As mentioned previously, one of the major obstacles to learning and teaching Lazuri is the lack of language learning resources and limited documentation of the language. Though the Lazuri alphabet was first established around 1935 by a Lazi

²³ Law 2923, Act title ‘Foreign Language Education and Teaching’ was changed as ‘Learning Different languages and Dialects used by Turkish Citizens.

²⁴ Upon a news in *Zaman* (a national Newspaper) dated July 19, 2004. News titled “Öğrenci bulamayan Kürtçe kursları devlete yöneldi: Bizi sübvansede edin” (Kurdish language schools closed due to lack of interest demand aid from the government). See <http://www.zaman.com.tr/ara.do?method=search>.

²⁵ Özgür University is a civil initiative committed to public education. It does not have a official Higher Education Institution status (see www.ozguruniversite.org).

²⁶ AKA-DER Kadiköy <http://akaderkulturmerkezi.blogspot.com/>.

²⁷ See <http://video.ntvmsnbc.com/#banu-guvenle-arti-3-aralik-2010.html>.

teacher and poet Iskender Tsitasi²⁸, who published books and periodicals written in Lazuri until 1938, Lazuri has largely remained a spoken language until late 20th century. It is only after 1984, when the Lazuri alphabet (Lazuri Alboni) was re-established by a Lazi named Fahri Kahraman²⁹ and published in various Lazi journals and blogs, that written production in Lazuri became more common. Namely *Ogni* and Lazuri Dictionary (Bucaklışı, İ. A.; Uzunhasanoğlu, H., 2006) were among those publications written in the Lazuri alphabet.

For the documentation of the language, the Lazi Culture Association demanded higher education study programs to be opened at state universities in Turkey³⁰. Higher education in Turkey is governed by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) which is a governmental body. The Council has initiated studies to found new language departments. Priority was given to Kurdish, Arabic, and Syriac language and culture studies upon a request by Mardin Artuklu University as an Institution of Living Languages was founded in September 2009. The institution offers undergraduate³¹ and graduate degrees in the above mentioned fields of study. Though departments of Georgian, Circassian, and Caucasian languages are also in the Council's agenda (Kotan, April 5, 2010), no further initiative has been taken particularly concerning Lazuri.

The legislative arrangements made on August 3, 2002 included an amendment on Article 8 of Act number 3984 enabling the broadcasts in languages and dialects that the citizens of the Republic of Turkey traditionally use in their everyday lives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretariat General for EU Affairs, 2007: 14). Though the Law was enacted in 2002, the regulations did not enter into force until November 13, 2009 when the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation constituted the related regulations enabling the broadcasts in languages other than Turkish³².

²⁸ Iskender Tsitasi was written as Iskender Witaşı in the preceding study by the author (Avdan 2010: 31). The discrepancy is due to the difference between the Georgian alphabet and the Lazuri alphabet used in Turkey.

²⁹ Fahri Kahraman has compiled the Lazuri alphabet together with German Wolfgang Feurstein and name their work as "Lazoglu Alboni", (Lazoglu alphabet).

³⁰ Four main demands of the Lazi: 1. The original names of places which were Turkishized after the foundation of the Republican Turkey; 2. Lazuri courses at public schools; 3. Departments at universities in Laz language and culture; 4. State-run broadcasting in Lazuri ('Democratic "Opening" and the Lazi', Lazi Culture Association; September 18, 2009).

³¹ The opening of an undergraduate programme was approved by YÖK on 26 January, 2011. (see <http://www.artuklu.edu.tr/Duyurular.asp?Id=321>). The Institution has been offering graduate studies since September 2009.

³² Regulations concerning radio and television broadcasting in languages and dialects traditionally used by citizens of the Republic of Turkey, dated November 13, 2009, No. 27405, based on the Law 3984

Beyond any doubt, Kurdish political discourses publicized at national and international arena provided one of the major forces encouraging the legislative arrangements to relax the use of minority languages in public sphere. Not surprisingly, Kurds received priority and TRT 6, the first state-run TV channel to be broadcast all day long in Kurdish, was launched on January 1, 2009. Following TRT 6, on March 21, 2009 TRT Avaz with programs in Azeri, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen and on April 4, 2010 TRT Arabic started their broadcasts.

Obviously, the government's priority order is determined by the extent to which the respective minority group is influential in national and international politics and the number of people speaking that language. Needless to say, Lazi activists feel offended with the government's handling of the issue on a priority basis. In this sense, the Lazi have launched a campaign through their blogs, websites, and periodicals to express their discontent about the process and their demands for a state-run TV channel to be broadcasting in Lazuri. Moreover, they have conveyed their demand by means of two sets of petition dated June 28, 2004 (petition number 13050) and May 24, 2005 (petition number 11522) to Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT). However, their petition was declined by TRT by implication and the Lazi's appeal is recently in legal process.

Following Kurdish, Arabic, Azeri, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen broadcasts on state-run TV channels, on December 23, 2010 Radio and Television Supreme Council announced the sanction allowing private enterprise TV channels and radio stations to broadcast in languages and dialects other than Turkish. All fourteen applications in this context were to broadcast in Kurdish and in dialects of Kurdish namely; Zazaki and Kurmanci³³.

Prior to the above mentioned fourteen TV channels and radio stations, in December 2009, Yasam Radio launched broadcasts in various languages, namely; Lazuri, Kurmanci, Kımancı, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic and Circassian. Recently, the radio station is broadcasting a weekly programme in Lazuri. However, the first radio broadcast partly in Lazuri was made on 6 September, 1996 on Cevre Radyo 105.7 on a Lazuri named programme "Tanura".

Article 4. Decisions of the Radio and Television Supreme Council are available online at <http://www.rtuk.org.tr>.

³³ RTÜK decision number A.01.1.RTÜ.0.01.00-621/1745 Retrieved on February 2, 2011 from http://www.rtuk.org.tr/sayfalar/IcerikGoster.aspx?icerik_id=d30a8cfc-7e53-4d23-b580-eb0718936e99.

Freedom of individuals to give any name of their choosing has been another controversial issue in today's Turkey. In fact, since the sixth democratization package came into force on July 19, 2003 (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, 2007: 14) there is no legal restriction on the use of names of preference. With the amendment on the Law Census No. 1587, the expression on Article 16 which reads 'names which are considered inappropriate to our national culture, moral values, customs, and traditions or names which would disturb public opinion cannot be given to the children' was deleted.

On the strength of this amendment, the Lazis started to name their new-born children with Lazi names. However, there is no statistical data displaying the frequency of the use of Lazi names after the relaxations in the Law. Though, there are still complaints about arbitrary bureaucratic hurdles preventing Turkish citizens from exercising their rights, the respective rights are secured by law and can at least be claimed in court. To illustrate, a Lazi attorney had a Lazi name added to her full name upon a rule of court in 2005³⁴.

Last but not the least, place names is another issue recently discussed in Turkey in terms of minority language rights. For a better understanding of the discourses related to place names, let us present a brief account of the historical background of the issue.

The history of the changes in place names stretches back to late Ottoman era which is marked with the rise of Turkish Nationalism in the Ottoman History. With the establishment of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908 (*İkinci Meşrutiyet*), the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) being motivated with Turkish Nationalist ideology declared Turkish as the one and only official language of the Empire to be used in correspondence and deliberations (Tuyana, 1952: 209). Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire was constantly losing its lands in the Balkans and thus thousands of Turks stranded in the lands lost were forced to immigrate to Anatolia and Thrace.

For the settlement of the immigrants from the Balkans a law was passed on May 13, 1913. In accordance with the respective Settlement Law, the immigrants were settled either in different sites of Anatolia to live together with the natives of those places or in areas particularly established for the immigrants. According to Article 38 of the Law, the places where immigrants would be settled in large numbers would be given

³⁴ The respective person (Paluri Arzu Kal) is the author of the first cook book, *Popni/ Laz Yemekleri* written in Lazuri (2006). Şişli Civil Court, judgement no: T.C.K.N. 10943541300).

convenient names. The respective article provided the legal ground for the renaming of a great deal of places in Anatolia (Celik, 2010: 411).

As a product of “linguistic engineering” (Lewis, 2002: 2) held by the Turkish Nationalists³⁵ in power, old names of places which were originally Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Greek, Lazuri or any other language spoken in Anatolia were replaced by Turkish names and the new settlements were all named with Turkish names.

The second flow of changes in place names took place during the Democrat Party Government, on May 11, 1959 with an amendment on Law 5442. A commission (Yer Adları Değiştirme İhtisas Kurulu/ Place Names Replacement Committee) established by the Ministry of Internal Affairs was assigned to suggest “convenient” names for places in the Republic of Turkey. The committee’s overenthusiastic studies resulted in renaming of more than 28.000 places in twenty-one years (Tuncel, 2000: 25). Most of the changes took place in south east and north east Turkey, the later corresponding to the Lazi region. Surprisingly enough, though the changes were made in the name of Turkification, the committee has changed the names of a number of places which were originally Turkish³⁶. The committee executed its mission until it was abolished in 1978 on the grounds that the committee had started to rename even the places whose names have historical and cultural value (Tuncel, 2000: 27).

The intensive Turkification process affected the *Lazi* settlements particularly in the Black Sea Region as much as the rest of the country. There are evidences that the *Lazi*’s presence in their present habitat in the south eastern Black Sea coastline compromising today’s districts Samsun (Amisus), Ordu (Cotyora), Giresun (Cerasus), Trabzon (Trapezus Trebizond,) and Batumi (Bathys) stretches back to 6th century BC³⁷. In this respect, it may well be argued that the *Lazuri* names of the *Lazi* settlements did not only have importance in terms of minority cultural and linguistic rights but also had value as a world historical heritage.

Surprisingly enough, recent discussions about place names were triggered by the President Abdullah Gül during his visit to an eastern town Bitlis in 2010. Gül referred to Bitlis' Güroymak district by its original Armenian name, “Norşin.” In fact, “Norşin” is mistakenly considered Kurdish even by the Kurds living in the district.

³⁵ For an extensive account of the rise of Turkish Nationalism on the Ottoman Empire see Avdan (2010).

³⁶ Türkali changed as Dikendere, Türkan changed as Güleçoba, Türkeşen changed as Yiğitkonağı, Türkkaravenk changed as Aşağı Budak, Türksöğütlü changed as Söğütlü, Türkbakacak changed as Eskibakacak, Türkçaybaşı changed as Çaybaşı. For an extensive list see <http://www.odatv.com>.

³⁷ For an extensive account of Lazi history see Avdan (2010: 21-24)

Today it is possible to see bilingual signboards in east and south eastern Turkey. Namely, Güroymak/ Norşin, Körtepe/ Kortepe, Çiçekliyurt/ İngîcî, Develi/ Develî, Kabahıdır/ Quaaxıdır, Yeşildallı/ Hewarê xas, Talaytepe/ Gırbelik, Çölgüzeli/ Gozeliyeçolê, Cücük/ Cucuk, Pirinçlik/ Qırxali, Gömmetaş/ Sirim, Topraktaş/ Heste Qa Bahrê, Kolludere/ Qud (*Radikal*, November 25, 2009).

Lazi activists are involved in the discussions related to place names as they reclaim the old names of the places in the Black Sea Region. The claim was mentioned only in the declaration of the Lazi Culture Association on its official website and various Lazi blogs. However, there has not been a formal request for the reversal of place names to the present date.

On the other hand, devoted efforts to raise public awareness of the value of Lazuri in terms of cultural identity are made mainly by a small group of Lazi intellectuals. Among those, İsmail Bucaklışı and İrfan Aleksiva compiled a dictionary describing the Lazi topography comprising the south eastern Black Sea coastline³⁸. Besides, in all sorts of publications by the Lazi during the last two decades, place names are written either in Lazuri or both in Lazuri and Turkish.

Drawing on the above summarised theoretical framework, and the contextual background, the following section will present a content analysis through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of, on the one hand, relevant written and oral commentaries by the Lazi activists that have been publicized since 1993, when the first bilingual Lazi journal *Ogni* was published, and on the other hand, related texts by the government officials and politicians in Turkey, all of whom are effective actors in minority discussions.

³⁸ Aleksiva, İ. & Bucaklışı, İ. A. (2009). Svaxoxo – Dictionary of Lazi Place Names. İstanbul: Lazi Culture Association Publications.

3. The Analysis

The representation of the Lazi is a construction that is carried out through responsive interactions in press with the involvement of different social actors such as politicians, government officials, and the Lazi themselves. In order to portray the discursive Lazi identity building process, the following section will present a three-phased Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of selected texts in terms of the construction of representational and identificational meaning of Lazi. The first phase will explore how the Lazi are projected by non-Lazi voices. The second phase will examine how the Lazi activists project the Lazi identity and their identity building process. The last phase will focus on how the Lazi activists project the “other”.

3.1. How is the Lazi identity projected by non-Lazi voices in the discussions about minority rights in Turkey?

The representation of the Lazi is a construction that is carried out through responsive interactions in press with the involvement of different social actors such as politicians, government officials, and the Lazi themselves.

In order to explore the representation of the Lazi in non-Lazi discourses, below I will present a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of selected texts depicting the discussions about minority rights in Turkey. At this point I find it essential to note that the discussions about minority rights in Turkey are mainly held in terms of Kurdish nationalists’ claims. Hence, the government and Kurdish nationalists emerge as the leading actors in the discussions about minority rights.

3.1.1. How is the Lazi identity projected by government officials?

When the archive of *Radikal* covering a period starting in 2000 is scanned, it is observed that the Lazi are noticed in four different occasions in the utterances of government officials. The first of these notices is made by the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan during a political visit to New Zealand. In his utterance, Erdoğan describes the ethnic diversities in Turkey with respect to religious bounds. In that, Erdoğan represents the Turks, the Kurds, the Circassians, and the Lazi as individual identities which are united by religion, by which he means İslam. Hence, the Prime Minister presents his

approach to diversities and unity among Turkey on the basis of a common religion which is consistent with his Islamic political ideology. The mention of the Lazi in this context is thus in virtue of their reputation as conservative Muslims. Note the following extract:

‘There are various identities in Turkey like Turkish, Kurdish, Circassian and Lazi. The element that unifies these is religion.’ (*Radikal* January 9, 2006)³⁹

Similarly, on January 7, 2006, in describing the organisation of the Special War Department Board, Secretary General of National Security Council Sabri Yirmibeşoğlu mentions the Lazi as a component of the mosaic of Turkey represented by the Board. Similar to Erdoğan’s definition of the diversities in Turkey, Yirmibeşoğlu refers to the same ethnic groups; the Turks, the Kurds, the Lazi, and the Circassian, as the components of the “mosaic of Turkey”⁴⁰.

However, in 2008, Prime Minister Erdoğan displays a different approach to ethno-linguistic diversities. The following utterance which Erdoğan makes as a response to discussions about education in Kurdish, is not only the last mention of the Lazi by the government officials as reported in *Radikal* but also a relevant evidence of the Prime Minister’s point of view concerning minority language rights.

‘If we give the right to be educated in Kurdish, the Circassians, and the Lazi would also demand [education in their languages].’ (Mağden, *Radikal*, January 29, 2008)⁴¹

In the above quotation, the Lazi and similarly the Cirassians are *othered*, thus *eliminated* by the speaker as he distinguishes “we” as the authority holder. Two distinct definitions can be offered to “we”: First, “we” might be represented as the agent who possesses the power of “giving rights” to its implied subsidiaries: Kurds, Circassians, and Lazi. Otherwise it might be interpreted as “we-Turks”, which would introduce a rather radical approach not only to the discussions about education in the mother tongue but also the legislative definition of “Turk” referring to all the citizens of the Republic of Turkey irrespective of their ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences (Constitution Ch.4, Art. 66). In this context, the former definition appears rather rational since a single sentence does not provide enough data to reach such a radical conclusion. Nevertheless, both interpretations identify the representation of “we” as opposed to “them” which creates out-groups as distinguished from the self. In other words,

³⁹ See Appendix A. 4.

⁴⁰ See Appendix A. 5.

⁴¹ See Appendix A. 6.

Erdoğan's utterance contributes to the production of the "other" which is identified with the Lazi as well as the Circassians and the Kurds while on the other hand it implies his determinacy to preserve the *status quo*.

Through the end of the past decade, the governing political party AKP (Justice and Development Party) has launched the so-called "Kurdish Expansion" which was renamed as "Democratic Expansion" after a certain time after criticism that the scope of the expansion was limited to the Kurds. In October 2009, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (a subsidiary office of the Prime Ministry) announced the Presidency's democratic expansion agenda. According to the respective agenda, the Presidency would publish Kurdish translations of the Kuran and other religious books. The presidency also announces that 'similar studies can be held in Lazuri, Georgian, Bosnian, and Albanian upon demand' (*Radikal*, October 18, 2009)⁴². In that, though ranked in secondary importance, the Lazi are included in the Presidency's focus group on the basis of religion as they are identified with other Muslim ethnic groups in Turkey.

Apart from the above noted occasions, the Lazi are not mentioned by the government officials. The situation is consistent with the *status quo* in which ethno-linguistic diversities of Turkey are represented as components of a homogeneous whole defined under the supra-identity "Turk". Thus, it can be concluded that, to a certain extent the Lazi identity is ignored by the government officials through silence.

3.1.2. How is the Lazi identity projected by Kurdish nationalist politicians?

Chronologically the earliest mention of the Lazi in the discussions about minority rights is dated October 24, 2002. The text in concern is reporting a media speech by DEHAP (People's Democracy Party)⁴³ party leader and a Kurdish deputy Mehmet Abbasoğlu. The relevant extract from the news reads as follows:

'DEHAP Chairman Mehmet Abbasoğlu asserts that other cultures living in Turkey are ignored due to the restrictions on political campaigning. He noted that in Şırnak 4 party members were arrested due to a campaign cassette recorded in Kurdish, **Lazuri**⁴⁴ and Zazaki, and in some

⁴² See Appendix A. 7.

⁴³ DEHAP was a Kurdish nationalist political party which was accused of separatist activities associated with PKK and banned on March 13, 2003 by Constitutional Court. (see www.anayasa.gov.tr, also available in English)

⁴⁴ Bold my emphasis.

towns and districts investigations are conducted concerning the same topic to their organisations. (*Radikal*, October 24, 2002)⁴⁵

In the above expression, Kurdish, Lazuri and Zazaki are represented as a cluster topicalized equally by the speaker. The speaker mentions these three languages right after he states his argument that “other [than Turkish] cultures are ignored in Turkey”. In this, the Lazi are identified with Kurdish and Zazaki as the victimized cultures due to the restrictions on political campaigning. Moreover, if not incidental, by mentioning Lazuri second in sequence, between the two Kurdish dialects, Abbasoğlu implies that Lazuri is given equal attention by his party.

Likewise, Nawruz celebrations held by DEHAP in Diyarbakır in 2004 were advertised with the slogan that ‘This Nawruz will be distinctive’ (*Radikal*, March 20, 2004)⁴⁶ which is followed by the announcement of Lazuri songs that would be sung during the celebrations. Though Nawruz is not a Lazi custom, DEHAP implies embeddedness among Kurds and Lazi with the inclusion of the Lazi in their traditional spring festival and hence implies the beginning of a cooperation between the Kurds and the Lazi.

Fairclough (2003: 17) examines the background of what is “said” in a text in relation to what is “unsaid”. In this respect, the explicit notice of the Lazi in the Kurdish political party’s discourses in 2010 can be interpreted as the compensation of what had been left “unsaid”. The implied message that ‘we are not a political party merely supporting Kurdish rights, we are for all minority groups’ would be explicitly expressed by DEHAP’s successor Peace and Democratic Party (BDP) in 2010. The Chairman of BDP Selahattin Demirtas declares a self-repair manifesto claiming that ‘BDP is Turkey’s party’ and that they are determined to ‘correct the definition that it is a Kurdish party’ (*Radikal*, February 07, 2010). In this, Demirtas states the existence of a presupposition that the party is concerned with Kurdish people’s rights and he further implies that such a presupposition is caused by BDP’s poor introduction of itself. In his self-repair speech, Demirtas includes Lazuri in their interest group and identifies with the Lazi by demanding radio and TV broadcasts on their behalf.

‘BDP couldn’t introduce itself. We are going to correct the definition that it [BDP] is a Kurdish party. We are the political party for Kurds, Turks, Alaouites, workers, poor and all other oppressed. [...] We also want freedom for Turkish. We do not want education in the mother tongue only for Kurds. We even want freedom for Turkish. Turkish also faces a great

⁴⁵ See Appendix A.1

⁴⁶ See Appendix A.2.

suppression and deterioration. If we do not overcome the atmosphere created by the capitalist popular culture, not only Turkish but also all other languages will face a threat. Our approach is that all languages are valuable, thus we demand radio and TV broadcasts in Circassian, **Lazuri**.⁴⁷ (*Radikal*, February 7, 2010)⁴⁸

The last few months of 2010 are marked with fierce discussions about the Kurdish political party BDP's petition to found self-governing regions in Turkey. In his explanation of the governing modal they demand, BDP's chairman Demirtas enunciates a Lazi self-governing region as well as a Kurdish self-governing region. Though he also states the impossibility of founding self-governing regions on an ethnic basis, he identifies the Lazi with the Kurds presupposing that the Lazi are demanding their sovereignty.

'Demirtas asserts that, the regional sovereignty cannot be built on the basis of ethnicity; 'Kurdish self-governing region, Lazi self-governing region, or, it cannot be built on ethnic basis.' (*Radikal*, September 14, 2010)⁴⁹

Apart from the above mentioned four occasions, no further notice of the Lazi is observed in the commentaries by the Kurdish nationalist politicians as reported in *Radikal* in the last one and a half decades. The Lazi are either represented as a victimized ethnic minority identified with the Kurds or not represented at all.

If we turn our attention back to the first half of the past decade, we encounter another notice of the Lazi; this time in a minority report presented in October 2004 by the Prime Ministry, Consultant Commission for Human Rights. Though the report is prepared and presented by a research group assigned by the government, the assertions made in the report are not consistent with the *status quo* but instead critical to the government's attitude towards the minorities. In fact, the report gave rise to fierce criticisms by the government. While the Prime Minister Erdoğan and the Ministry of Interior Affairs rejected the report (*Radikal* news dated October 3 and 7, 2004. Retrieved on April 14, 2011 from www.radikal.com.tr), a member of the commission made an official complaint about the report to the local court accusing the chairman of the commission, Prof. Baskin Oran⁵⁰, of "treason" (*Sabah* Retrieved on April 13, 2011 from http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/ozel/azinlik194/dosya_194.html). It is therefore, the respective text that is analysed in this section.

⁴⁷ Bold my emphasis.

⁴⁸ See Appendix A. 8.

⁴⁹ See Appendix A. 9.

⁵⁰ Prof. Baskin Oran is deputy of Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) which is known as a Kurdish nationalist political party.

In the report the Lazi are represented as a “minority group” in Turkey which preserves its minority rights according to the Lausanne Peace Treaty. At this point it is essential to make a distinction between the constitutive connotations of “minority” which provide the basis for the discourses of Turkish nationalists who reject discussing topics related to ethnic diversities in Turkey as “minority rights”. To clarify, according to the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the constitutional definition of “minorities” refers to the non-Muslim Greek, Jewish, and Armenian groups whose rights are secured with this treaty. Because non-Muslim Greek, Jewish, and Armenian groups are named in the treaty, the definition of minority is interpreted as an implication that the term is limited to the above mentioned three ethnic-religious groups. Besides, the definition of “Turk” in the constitution as ‘[E]veryone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk’ (Article 66) provides a legislative reference to those who practice Turkish nationalist discourses.

Returning to the respective report, it is observed that the commission introduces a rather exclusive interpretation of “minority” defined in the Lausanne Treaty of Peace. In that, Kurds, Lazi, and Circassians are identified as minorities and represented as a cluster. The author identifies the three ethnic groups and their languages as equal agents by connecting them with commas and the conjunction “and”. Besides, an implied directive message is conveyed in an informative tone by means of the modal “may” which is strengthened with the expression “çatır çatır” contributing to “may well”, “certainly”.

‘Kurds, Lazi, and Circassians, relying on the respective article of the Lausanne Treaty of Peace, may well speak Kurdish, Lazuri and Circassian and make radio and TV broadcasts.’ (*Radikal*, October 25, 2004)⁵¹

Further in the same newspaper article reporting the above mentioned minority report quotes as follows;

‘Turks and Kurds’ efforts to emerge as the co-founder of the country is against the European Union process.’ (*Radikal*, October 25, 2004)⁵²

According to the news text, the report mentions four ethnic groups; namely Turks, Kurds, Lazi and Circassians. In the above quotation, Turks and Kurds are identified as agents of presupposed efforts to emerge as co-founders of the country.

⁵¹ See Appendix A. 3.

⁵² See Appendix A. 3.

Consequently, the other two ethnic groups, Lazi and Circassians are implied to be excluded by the Turks and Kurds in terms of ownership of the country.

Though discussions concerning minority rights have been occupying Turkish political and cultural agenda rather intensively over the last decade, the representation of the Lazi is limited to less than a bunch of commentaries most of which represent the Lazi as one of the “others” and implies the Lazi to be a possible future actor of minority discussions. To a great extent, the Lazi preserve their position in the cluster of ethnic groups mentioned in the commentaries by the politicians about minority discussions. Besides, the Lazi are identified with the Circassians as the two ethnic groups that are represented in parallel dimensions. In the discourses of government officials and Kurdish nationalist politicians neither direct nor indirect reference is made to the Lazi perspective on the discussion. Instead, Turkish and Kurdish politicians make judgements about the Lazi and make assertions and claims on behalf of the Lazi. Henceforth, it may well be concluded that the Lazi are silenced in the discourses of government officials and Kurdish nationalist politicians.

The political atmosphere in Turkey in the past decade is mainly characterized by discussions about minority rights and in this context about language rights. The present governing party AKP and the Kurdish political parties HADEP and BDP have been represent the dominant actors in the on-going discussions. Bakhtin (1986: 93) notes that ‘each utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication’. Likewise, throughout the discussions in concern, opposing discourses are built not only as a response to what is said but also as compensation and as a completion of what is unsaid. Thus, the construction of Lazi identity in non-Lazi political discourses is an on-going process which is influenced by controversies between the two dominant political actors- *status quo* and Kurdish nationalists- in Turkey.

Representation of the Lazi in the texts by non-Lazi voices in Turkey corresponds to one phase of the discursive construction of Lazi identity. Other and rather devoted efforts have been pursued by a group of Lazi activists since 1990s towards the ideal of revitalizing the Lazi identity. The following section examines the discursive construction of Lazi identity with respect to the texts by Lazi activists.

3.2. How do the Lazi activists project the Lazi identity?

This part of the thesis is dedicated to explore the discursive construction of Lazi identity in the texts written by Lazi activists since 1993 when the Lazi identity building process was launched by a group of Lazi as they started to publish the Lazi journal *Ogni*. Relevant to its purpose, the texts to be analysed are selected from the Lazi journals *Ogni* (1993-1994), *Mjora* (2000), *Sima* (2000-2011) and *Skani Nena* (2009-2011). At this point, I would like to note that the initiators and the publishing cadres of the three Lazi journals- *Ogni*, *Mjora* and *Skani Nena*- are more or less on a par. Therefore, the analysis reflects the perspective of a limited group of Lazi and thus has no intention of offering a generalized understanding of Lazi identity among the Lazi. Nevertheless, the influential power of the respective group cannot be underestimated since they constitute the Lazi activists who have been designing and performing the Lazi identity building process by means of national publications and petition campaigns⁵³ they have been running as the administrative staff of the Lazi Culture Association. Besides, in order to present a different perspective to the understanding of Lazi identity, I will also focus on texts that are selected from *Sima* which has been published by a separate cadre with an exception of a couple of authors who took part in the publication of *Ogni* and *Mjora*⁵⁴. Before going any further into the exploration of the discursive strategies, let us present a content distribution of *Ogni*, *Mjora*, *Sima* and *Skani Nena* which gives a broad idea about the topic focus of the journals.

3.2.1. Content distribution in the four Lazi journals; *Ogni*, *Mjora*, *Sima* and *Skani Nena*

Table 1: Content Distribution in *Ogni*

| | Ogni 1 | Ogni 2 | Ogni 3 | Ogni 4 | Ogni 5 | Ogni 6 | Total | % |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------|------------|
| Historical roots | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | 8 | 6 |
| Identity awareness | 8 | 13 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 35 | 27 |
| Caucassia (history and affiliation) | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 23 | 17.5 |
| Laz Language (Lazuri) | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 17 | 13 |
| Lazi characters in the history | - | - | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 5.5 |
| Culture | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 24 | 18.5 |
| Other | - | 4 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 12.5 |
| Total number of individual texts | | | | | | | 130 | 100 |

⁵³ See Appendix B for the petition to Turkish Radio-Television Corporation (TRT) for a state-run national broadcast in Lazuri.

⁵⁴ Ali İhsan Aksamaz and İsmail İslamoğlu.

Out of 130 texts in all of six issues of *Ogni* 11 of them are written in Lazuri. The texts are categorized in terms of their content in the scope of this study. It is observed that ~27% of the texts deal with identity and related issues such as cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identity. ~17.5% of the texts is dedicated to prove Caucasian bounds and display high commitment to the problems of “Caucasian brothers” while another ~18.5% attempts to document Lazi cultural products such as Lazi music, fairy tales, epic stories, and riddles. ~6% of the texts are dedicated to prove ancient roots of the Lazi on the Anatolian and Caucasian topography. Besides, ~13% of the texts deals with the importance of the mother tongue and attempt to provide information about Lazuri grammar. If the argumentative texts discussing the importance of the mother tongue are left aside, the majority of the scholarly texts about Lazuri grammar and phonetics are translations from articles by various scholars. There are also biographical texts constituting ~5.5% of the whole set of 130 texts. These texts are in the form of tributes to some Lazi characters in history. The rest ~12.5% of the texts deal with various topics from economics to world politics which are not applicable to the purpose of this study.

Table 2: Content Distribution in *Mjora*

| | Mjora 1 | Mjora 2 | Total | % |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|------------|
| Historical roots | - | 1 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Identity awareness | 5 | 5 | 10 | 24.5 |
| Caucasian (history and affiliation) | - | 1 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Laz Language (Lazuri) | 4 | 2 | 6 | 14.5 |
| Lazi characters in the history | 1 | 4 | 5 | 12 |
| Culture | 3 | 6 | 9 | 22 |
| Other | 7 | 2 | 9 | 22 |
| | | | 41 | 100 |

Out of 41 texts in the two issues of *Mjora*, 10 of them are written in Lazuri. When compared to the percentage of Lazuri texts in six issues of *Ogni* (~8.5%) it can be asserted that the cadre made a rather salient use of language as an identity marker by publishing ~24.5% of the journals in Lazuri. Similarly, another ~24.5% is dedicated to texts dealing with the identity issue in addition to 6 individual texts, constituting ~14.5%, about various aspects of Laz language. Texts aimed at describing Lazi culture occupy ~22% while ~12% biographical texts are dedicated to describe some Lazi characters that the authors believe had an influential role in history. In the two issues of *Mjora*, there is only one text (~2.5%) dealing with Caucasian bonds of the Lazi.

Table 3: Content Distribution in *Sima*

| | Sima 1 | Sima 2 | Sima 3 | Sima 6 | Sima 8 | Total | % |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------|------------|
| Historical roots | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Identity awareness | 2 | - | - | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4.5 |
| Caucassia (history and affiliation) | - | - | 3 | - | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| Laz Language (Lazuri) | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | 4 | 10 | 9.25 |
| Lazi characters in the history | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 8.25 |
| Culture | 6 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 16 | 46 | 42 |
| Other | 5 | 8 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 34 | 31 |
| Total number of individual texts | | | | | | 109 | 100 |

Sima displays a rather different picture from the other three journals in terms of content distribution. Almost half of the texts (~42%) are dedicated to describe Lazi culture and cultural products without direct emphasis on a distinct ethnic identity. A remarkable amount of texts (34 texts constituting ~31%) deal with topics which are not directly related to the Lazi ethnic community; instead, they have a rather regional focus. In fact, only ~4.5% of the texts deal with Lazi identity concerns in addition to texts (~4%) about Caucassia and Caucassian culture. There are 10 texts (~9.25%) dedicated to linguistic information about Lazuri written in a rather neutral tone eliminating identity discourses. Besides, a remarkable number of biographical texts (9 texts corresponding to ~8.25%) are dedicated to the description of some “successful” individuals in the Lazi community. Finally, ~12% of the texts are written both in Lazuri and Turkish. The bilingual texts are either poems or other types of literary products. Here, it essential to remember that *Sima* has been published by a separate group of Lazi in Izmit where Lazi Diaspora was settled during The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878.⁵⁵

Table 4: Content Distribution in *Skani Nena*

| | Skani Nena 1 | Skani Nena 2 | Skani Nena 3 | Skani Nena 4 | Total | % |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Historical roots | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 10 | 6 |
| Identity awareness | 3 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 25 | 14.5 |
| Caucassia (history and affiliation) | - | - | 2 | - | 2 | 1 |
| Laz Language (Lazuri) | 5 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 21 | 12.5 |
| Lazi characters in the history | 6 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 24 | 14 |
| Culture | 16 | 24 | 17 | 13 | 70 | 41 |
| Other | 4 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 19 | 11 |
| | | | | | 171 | 100 |

⁵⁵ For more information about the Lazi Diaspora and their settlement in Western Anatolia see Avdan 2010 (34-35)

Similar to *Sima*, the content of *Skani Nena* issues is dominated by text dedicated to describe and promote Lazi culture. However, what is noteworthy is the fact that the majority of the texts about cultural issues are written in Lazuri (92 texts constituting ~54%). The dominance of Lazuri in the texts displays the attempt to raise identity awareness by reinforcing intra-ethnic relations based on the notion of language as an identity marker. The texts aiming to raise identity awareness constitute ~14.5% of the total while nearly the same amount of texts are written to praise some Lazi characters who have contributed to the development of Lazi literature and Laz written language. Similar to the other three journals there are texts dealing with the Laz language (~12.5%) in *Skani Nena* as well. The rather salient emphasis on Lazuri and its distinct characteristics supports Fairclough's and Wadok's (as cited in Wadok 1997: 1) definition of language as a 'social practice'. Besides, ~6% of the texts are dedicated to Lazi history with an emphasis on ancient roots in Anatolia and Caucasia while only ~1% has the focus on Caucasian bonds. The remaining ~11% texts are dealing with various topics which are not only Lazi oriented.

As Anderson (2006 [1983]: 204) puts it, 'identity which cannot be "remembered" must be "narrated"'. In order to explore the discursive construction of a Lazi identity, the next section will examine the Lazi activists' narration of "Lazi".

3.2.2. Discursive construction of a "Lazi" identity defined by the Lazi activists

After providing a brief content description of the four journals, let us now take a closer look at the discursive strategies used in the respective texts.

The first issue of *Ogni* was published in October 1993 with a prologue⁵⁶ stating the purpose and discourse of the cadre publishing the journal. The prologue opens with an emphasis on "freedom" as the author(s) quotes from Faust II; "To stand on free land with a free people". Parallel to the quotation, the word "freedom" is repeated seven times in the very first sentence of the text. Moreover, the word "freedom" is used twenty-one times in the whole one-page text. The text states freedom as a goal to be achieved through struggle as the word "struggle" is used 14 times in connection with the word "freedom". While the first four paragraphs are purely about freedom and

⁵⁶ "Cikarken" [The foreword], *Ogni* Issue 1, October 1993: 2.

struggle for freedom, starting from paragraph five, the topic of struggle for freedom is handled in the Lazi context.

Let us begin exploring the discursive construction of a “Lazi” identity by highlighting the major themes upon which the Lazi are represented by Lazi activists. As mentioned above, the lexical relation between the frequent use of the two words “freedom” and “struggle” in the very first text published as the prologue in the first issue of *Ogni*⁵⁷ exhibits *victimization* as one aspect of the representation of Lazi identity. The contextual use of the word “struggle” implies certain external obstacles to the attainment of “freedom” and hence denotes *victimization* of the Lazi. The theme of *victimized* Lazi is further developed in various expressions in the text as the author(s) presuppose(s) certain obstacles to minority rights and implies fear of not being able to enjoy the Lazi identity⁵⁸. Note the following extract:

‘LAZI’s right to exist, right to **regain** and protect their identity with a modern structure, right to live **free** and **fearlessly** is also waiting to be attained. [...] LAZI as a component of the Anatolian mosaic are now obliged to ask the reasons why they **have been compelled to resist chauvinist and denying glares**, why they **have been deprived of their indispensable and non-negotiable rights to freely speak their mother tongue** and to use their name that they have inherited from their ancestors, ...’⁵⁹ (*Ogni*, October 1993: 2)⁶⁰

The author(s) represent(s) the Lazi as a community which “has [have] been compelled to resist chauvinist and denying glares” and which “has [have] been deprived of their *indispensable* and *non-negotiable* rights to freely speak their mother tongue and to use the name (Lazi) they inherited from their ancestors”. Moreover, the scope of *victimization* is strengthened as the rights that the Lazi are presupposed to be deprived of are defined with the adjectives “indispensable” and “non-negotiable”. Besides, the representation of Lazi as patient who is exposed to oppression contributes to the victimized image that is intended to be created by the respective author(s). Consequently, the author(s) implies an asymmetry between the Lazi and the impersonalized agent of presupposed mistreatment.

Geoffrey Cubitt (2007) notes that individual stories ‘are blended together into broader “figures of remembrance” that come to be widely accepted as expressive of particular collective experience’ (235). Likewise, the Lazi activists narrate their

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ See Appendix C. 1.

⁵⁹ Bold my emphasis.

⁶⁰ See Appendix C. 1.

personal stories as stereotypes of a collective past which would reinforce a sense of “we” – a collective victim.

The voice (Sarigina Bešli⁶¹) in the following text in the same issue of *Ogni*⁶² narrates his personal struggle towards ethnic identity awareness by representing being Lazi equivalent to “being a minority” and thus “being open to oppression”. The lexical relations he establishes between his identity declaration and representation of that identity contributes to the development of the theme of *victimized* Lazi. Parallel to the prologue mentioned above, exclusion, humiliation, and fear are attributed to being a minority. Eventually, the context is identified as the narrator continues by asserting the lack of Turkish language skills as another aspect of being a *victimized* minority group. The state of “not being able to speak your mother tongue” is implied to be synonymous with “not being yourself”. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of “not being able to speak Turkish well” with “not being able to speak your mother tongue”, implies Turkish as an opposing alternative to self. Note the following extract:

‘... the sentence that I define myself is “Ma a Lazi vore” [**I am Lazi indeed**]. What does this sentence mean now, what does it witness? Above all, it tells about being “minority”. Being a minority, in other words **being open to oppression**⁶³, **not being able to find supporters, not being intelligible, to be regarded as odd, being laughed at, to fear**, not being able to speak Turkish well, not being able to speak your mother tongue, to cut it short, not being yourself!⁶⁴ (*Ogni*, October 1993: 3).⁶⁵

In fact, further in the text, the author confirms the representation of Turkish as an obstacle to not being able to learn Lazuri as he narrates his mother’s prohibition of speaking Lazuri in order not to disrupt their Turkish. The author narrates this personal account in order to maintain the victimization theme by explaining his mother’s warning as a sign of “assimilation the Lazi are exposed to”. Wertsch (2002: 21) explains metaphorical extensions of assertions about individuals as the “strong version of memory” which is based on assumptions about parallels between individual and collective processes. The text that the following extract belongs to implies such a parallel between the narrator’s identity crisis and a collective identity problem

⁶¹ Mehmedali Barış Bešli; the current chairman of the Lazi Culture Association, the co-founder and owner of *Ogni*, *Mjora and Skani Nena*, co-founder and vocal of the Lazi rock band Zuğaşi Berepe.

⁶² *Ogni*, October 1993, Issue 1

⁶³ The author invents an adjective “ezilebilir” by combining the verb “oppress” with the adjective suffix “-able”.

⁶⁴ Bold my emphasis.

⁶⁵ See Appendix C. 2.

presupposed for the Lazi community. This problem is defined as assimilation while the Lazi are represented as passive objects.

‘As we left home to our hometown my mother used to warn me; “*Do not speak Lazuri. Your Turkish will deteriorate.*” here is a sign. The colour of the **assimilation that the Lazi are exposed to** becomes apparent here.’⁶⁶ (*Ogni*, October 1993: 3)⁶⁷.

An *Ogni* lawsuit process is narrated within the contextual background presented previously in this thesis⁶⁸. The second issue of *Ogni* (January 1994) was published following the notification of the lawsuit. The issue was published with a press release which informs the reader about the lawsuit and discusses the democratic structure of Turkey. The adjudication against the publishers of *Ogni* is associated with an attempt to destroy the Lazi in a generic sense by means of a metaphorical representation of the Lazi as flowers which are implied to be under a threat of destruction. Note the following extract:

‘Turkey is like a flower garden. The Lazi are also a part of this flower bouquet. Every people living on Earth is as beautiful as flowers. “Do not tear off the flowers!” (*Ogni*, January 1994).⁶⁹

In the third issue of *Ogni* (March-April 1994), a Lazi expatriate Bedia Leba (also uses the name Selma Kociva) writes an opinion essay on the significance of the mother tongue. The text is written in an informative tone presenting the assertions of the author as non-negotiable and inevitable facts. The state of being deprived of the mother tongue is dealt with in a generic sense and both the agent and the patient are impersonalized. In this way, the author avoids direct accusation while on the other hand she lists her assertions in an informative tone which are followed by directives assigning “all the people living in Turkey and constituting the Anatolian mosaic” to take action against the “on-going homogenisation politics” she presupposes.

The above summarized discursive style can be observed in the introduction paragraph of the text where the author, relying on presupposed conditions, asserts that “it is an inconceivable situation that this existing cultural wealth is being disrupted”. The text does not provide further information about how the existing cultural wealth is being disrupted. The author displays high affinity as he informs the reader about “disruption” of the existing cultural wealth by means of a set of modal adverbs. Note the following extract:

⁶⁶ Bold my emphasis.

⁶⁷ See Appendix C. 2.

⁶⁸ c.f. 6

⁶⁹ See Appendix D. 1.

‘Apart from Turkish as the official language, there are a great deal of languages in our country used as mother tongue. Lazuri, Georgian, Circassian, Kurdish, Arabic, Armenian, Romaic, Hebrew, Syrian, etc. Our country has a multicultural society where various cultures and languages meet. **It is an inconceivable situation that** this existing cultural wealth is being disrupted. This ongoing situation gives us an idea about the democratic structure in Turkey. **The fact that** these languages are not given the required importance is one of the barriers to the democratization process of our country. Since we are supposed to have a democratic country such practices against human rights makes man lose all his hopes.’⁷⁰ (*Ogni*, March-April 1994: 3).⁷¹

Another discursive style worth noticing in the text is the discrepancy between mood on the one hand and illocutionary forces and perlocutionary acts on the other. That is, the author uses declaratives and informatives while the illocutionary force might be expressive or assertive. Likewise, directions are implied in informative or assertive expressions. To exemplify, in the last sentence of the above quoted extract, the author expresses her hopelessness in an assertive expression and hence the situation becomes less personal and more relevant to public concern. In that, the loss of hope is presented as an unavoidable consequence for “all” in these circumstances, hence, presenting the situation as a collective loss. Furthermore, impersonalisation is supported with the choice of the object in the same sentence. Let us replace the passive object of the sentence, “man” with first person singular representing the author herself:

‘Since we are supposed to have a democratic country such practices against human rights makes man lose all his hopes.’⁷²

becomes

‘Since we are supposed to have a democratic country such practices against human rights makes *me* lose all *my* hopes.’

While the victim is identified as the narrator in the modified sentence, the first sentence implies that the victim can be anyone, in fact everyone living in this country. Hence, the author appeals to pathos by awakening empathy in the reader.

The same discursive strategy can be observed further in the same text. The theme of *victimized* people is maintained as the author asserts her argument that ‘[C]ertain sections of the society **are not given the possibility** to improve their mother tongue; they **are being deprived of** this most significant tool which is the basis of cultural life’ in an assertive tone. The victim is identified as “certain sections of the

⁷⁰ Bold my emphasis.

⁷¹ See Appendix E.

⁷² *ibid.*

society”⁷³ by which the genericness of the representation of the victim is taken to a high level of abstraction and thus leads to ambiguities in interpretation. The above quotation is followed by a statement where the victim is identified as “human”. The Turkish equivalent “insan” is used as a concept word contributing to the impersonalization and hence generalization of the attack. In other words, by stating that ‘[T]he human who **is deprived of his mother tongue is in the position of losing** an important part of self’⁷⁴, the author implies an attack on the human being. Above all, “certain sections of the society” and the “human” are represented as powerless objects of agentless aggravation by means of passive expressions.⁷⁵

As Howard Giles and Patricia Johnson (1981) assert, ‘the reinforcement or the creation of a cultural network around language transforms an unconscious language group into a self-conscious “identity group” (199). Likewise, the representation of Lazi language as the victim of assimilation and oppression and declaration of a historical task to protect and promote Lazuri is a common discursive strategy used in the texts. In this respect the following extract provides a relevant example.

‘Our mother tongue, the language of our heart that we have learnt from our mothers, from our grannies; the heritage from our ancestors that we are responsible for transferring to our children, to our grandchildren ... is under the threat of disappearing.’ (Foreword to *Skani Nena* May 2010)⁷⁶

The selected text from the following issue of *Ogni* (May-June 1994) is about Lazi literature. The construction of the theme of *victimized* Lazi is maintained in this text mainly by means of implicatures and presuppositions. To exemplify, the following quotation implies that the people of the region [the Lazi] are waiting to “reunite” with their hidden language and literature that they have been deprived of⁷⁷. Furthermore, the power of oral language is praised as opposed to “all **the** repression” that the author presupposes. Though the text does not provide any specification about the repression, the use of the definite article represents it as an inevitable fact known at least by the interlocutors. Besides, parallel to the texts mentioned above, the Lazi are represented as passive objects of the actions taken by an unidentified agent. Note the extract below:

‘While in Europe, humanism and Renaissance were blossoming as they pulled down the Middle Ages, these philosophies gave rise to new movements in literature as well. It is such an

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Bold my emphasis.

⁷⁶ See Appendix J.

⁷⁷ See Appendix F. 1.

intense grief that, the Lazi-the native people of Anatolia and Caucassia which were the cradle of civilizations in history- **had been kept ignorant about these improvements in Europe**’. (*Ogni*, May-June 1994: 11-14)⁷⁸

The same issue of *Ogni* dedicates an article addressing Georgian intellectuals (See Appendix F.2). The text is a declaration of resistance against a presupposed ‘enforcement that they [the Lazi] are “Georgians”’. The respective text explicitly defines the agent of “injustice” as Georgia and Georgian official ideology⁷⁹. While in the context of Turkey, the agent of “repression” is implied, in the Georgian context a clear position of agency is constructed for Georgians as opposed to “Mingrelian-Lazi brothers” of the Lazi activists in Turkey.

The fifth and sixth issues of *Ogni* maintain the theme of *victimization* by representing the Lazi as a “neglected” and “oppressed” minority group “whose existence has been denied” (See Appendices C.1, C.2, D.1, D.2, E.3, F.1, F.2, G, J, M, N). The definitive expressions used in these issues resemble the previous extracts quoted in this study. The following two extracts provide relevant examples:

‘It is apparent that, **the LAZI are a minority community** within the Anatolian mosaic and just like other minorities **their language and culture are neglected** throughout the 70-year-long Republican history.’ (*Ogni*, July-August 1994: 2)⁸⁰

‘**The Lazi whose existence have been denied** so far, and who has faced the threat of disappearing ...’ (*Ogni*, September-October 1994)⁸¹

Besides, the introductory phrase “It is apparent that” grounds the assertion on a presupposition and thus closes the argument to negotiation.

The sixth and last issue of *Ogni* was published in September 1994. Following *Ogni*, in 2000 another Lazi journal, *Mjora*, was published in two volumes by almost the same cadre with *Ogni*⁸². The foreword to the first issue of *Mjora* displays consistency with the discourse of “the Lazi as a victimized community” as the author(s) declares their motives to publish this second Lazi journal in the following extract.

‘In this case of Turkey, Laz language is one of the living languages in the rich cultures of Anatolia. Although the official conception of minority is restricted to some non-Muslim communities, everybody knows that different languages are spoken in this geographical region. However, expressing this fact **is oppressed** and there are irrational and even ridiculous arguments developed on the explanation of these differences.’⁸³ (*Mjora* January 2000: 5.)⁸⁴

⁷⁸ See Appendix F. 1.

⁷⁹ See Appendix F. 2.

⁸⁰ See Appendix G.

⁸¹ See Appendix H. 2.

⁸² Among those are Mehmedali Barış Beşli (the owner of the three Lazi journals –*Ogni*, *Mjora* and *Skani Nena* and the current chairman of the Lazi Culture Association), Ali İhsan Aksamaz, Ali İslamoğlu, İsmail Avcı Bucaklışi (co-author of the first Lazuri dictionary and Lazuri grammar book).

⁸³ Bold my emphasis.

What is rather interesting here is that the foreword is written both in Turkish and English. By doing so, the Lazi activists might have wanted to attract the attention of foreign scholars or minority rights activists. This text can be ascribed special importance since the authors would attempt to convey a precise message about their viewpoint to their foreign target reader by means of this short text.

Another short text in *Mjora* (January 2000) announces the publication of a Lazuri dictionary in a rather argumentative tone addressing some unidentified “others”. In that, the author presupposes the existence of “those who claim that there is no such language as Lazuri” and presents the dictionary as a “gift” to them⁸⁵ in an ironical expression. The Lazi activists present *Lazuri as a symbol of ethnicity* and hence a unique Lazi identity which is complete with a unique language.

The authors of *Sima* prefer a rather indirect way of discussing victimization of Lazuri in Turkey. A text published in the sixth issue of *Sima* (October 2003: 14) discusses the language issue in terms of Mingrelian in Georgia and Lazuri in Turkey. The author asserts *victimization* of Lazuri by identifying Lazuri with Mingrelian in terms of the treatment they are exposed to in these two countries. Though the author confirms the referee’s statement, he does not only avoid any possible accusation by pointing out the referee as the source of the argument but also benefits from the credibility of the referee and the academic occasion in London where he made the statement. Below is the extract in focus:

‘Nugzar Dzhodzhuva draws the attention to “language policies” and makes this very important statement: “...Caucasologica Europaea held in London in June 1990. One of the papers presented there dealt with Mingrelian and Lazuri. One of the points discussed in the paper was that just like the sister language Lazuri’s situation, Mingrelian has been ignored in Georgia ...”’ (*Sima* October 2003: 14)⁸⁶

The last example that I would like to give in this context is from the first issue of *Skani Nena* (January 2009). The journal publishes selected extracts from previously held interviews and speeches by members of their cadre. Among those includes a statement by Ahmet Kırım, one of the co-founders of *Ogni*, which reads; ‘... we could not be effective and determined enough in determining and displaying the assimilation the Lazi in Turkey are exposed to.’ The quotation reveals that the Lazi activists are consistent in their discourse which represents the Lazi as a victimized minority group.

⁸⁴ See Appendix N. 1.

⁸⁵ See Appendix N. 3.

⁸⁶ See Appendix L.

Nevertheless, the discourse of victimized Lazi is not the only aspect of the discursive construction of a Lazi identity defined by the Lazi activists. Representation of *the Lazi as decedents of a society rooted in ancient history of Anatolia and Caucasia* is another aspect of this identity building process which in fact presents *victimization* in a wider picture as the victim is transformed from a relatively small regional society into an important component of world history since ancient times. In this way, the Lazi and their existence is ascribed a value of universal heritage.

Drawing on Jan Assmann's (1995: 132) statement that "cultivation" of cultural memory 'serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image', below I attempt to highlight the use of discourses of a *rooted history* in constructing a Lazi identity meditated by the Lazi activists. Referring back to the content distribution of the four journals, it can be observed that the respective Lazi activists ascribe a remarkable importance to the description of Lazi history. In this respect, in the first Lazi journal *Ogni* 8 articles are dedicated purely to Lazi ancient history (See Table 1). While *Mjora* (Table 2) and *Sima*⁸⁷ (Table 3) devote one article in each journal, *Skani Nena* (Table 4) publishes ten articles particularly focusing on ancient roots of the Lazi. These articles are usually direct translations of texts which are retrieved from reliable sources such as Encyclopaedia Britannica (*Ogni* January 1994: 12) and are presented with a short introduction by the Lazi author(s). This is done primarily to attain credibility by relying on the credibility of reliable sources and hence to avoid denials.

It may well be asserted that this discourse of rootedness functions in two ways. On the one hand, towards the construction of a glorified Lazi identity, the authors attempt to raise self-confidence among the Lazi community and prestige in Turkey. On the other hand, it provides the motive to encourage the Lazi to protect and promote their language and culture. Let us examine these two approaches by referring to the texts in the scope of this study.

For the former function, the authors do not only narrate selected incidents in Lazi history but also attribute admirable aspects of the ancient Colchis Kingdom to the Lazi. Though the Lazi represent one branch of the Colchis descendants, in the writings of the Lazi activists they are entirely identified with the ancient kingdom. By doing so, the Lazi activists are constructing what Collingwood defines as an '*ideal-past*— a past

⁸⁷ It is essential to note that due to restrictions on availability, five out of eight issues of *Sima* are examined in this study.

that has been organized through the workings of a constructive analytical imagination’ (as cited in Cubitt 2007: 34).

Towards the discursive construction of an ‘ideal past’ and hence an ‘ideal identity’, on the one hand, the reader is provided with a series of texts about Colchis Kingdom (*Ogni* January 1994: 43-44; *Mjora* January 2000: 6 and *Sima* June 2009: 48), Byzantium and Persian Wars (*Ogni* March-April 1994: 12-15) and, the myth of the Golden Fleece (*Ogni* October 1993: 23-28), while on the other hand, *the discourses of rootedness* is repeated in connection with the theme of a victimized minority community. This later connotation contributes to the motivational force to encourage the Lazi to protect and promote their language and culture. The following extracts exemplify how a Lazi identity is idealised based on an existential presupposition that the origins of the Lazi stretch back over 4000 years ago.

‘In the beginning of 2008, the Laz came together to do something that had not been achieved before. They established an association **in order to preserve their 4000 years old cultural heritage and language**.’⁸⁸ (*Skani Nena* March 2009: 4)⁸⁹

‘Skani Nena started its publication life in order to assist **our struggle to save our 4000 years old language and culture**.’⁹⁰ (There were expressions. In *Skani Nena* July 2009)⁹¹

In that, the Lazi activists attempt to raise self-awareness among the Lazi community by “reminding” their Lazi ancestors’ ability to survive threats from Byzantine, Persian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires. The discourse of the “Lazi rooted in ancient history” establishes the basis for the “heroic mission” that the Lazi activists would further assign to the Lazi community. Note the following extract:

‘And now our mother tongue Lazuri is under the threat of disappearing. **This ancient language that has been spoken on this land since Kolxeti** will be spoken by less and less people and as a matter of fact it will vanish in a few generations if it is not protected by the Lazi.’⁹² (*Skani Nena* May 2010)⁹³

While directing the Lazi towards a “historical mission” (See Appendices C.3, H.1, J), the journals create a sense of regeneration, a new start by means of articles connoting these meanings. To exemplify, “New generation Argonots are in Colchis”

⁸⁸ Bold my emphasis.

⁸⁹ See Appendix I. 1.

⁹⁰ Bold my emphasis.

⁹¹ The text that the extract is quoted from is originally written in English.

⁹² Bold my emphasis.

⁹³ See Appendix J.

(*Ogni* March-April 1994: 24), “Rebirth of Colchide” (*Ogni* January 1994: 6-8) and “A new start with Mjora” (*Mjora* January 2000: 16).

Furthermore, the metaphor of “Anatolian mosaic” is a frequently used expression in the texts in all four journals. A parallel conclusion can be observed in a great deal of the texts which describe the Lazi as a component of the “Anatolian mosaic” (See Appendices C.1 & 4, D.1, E, F.1, G, J, K). The representation of the Lazi as a component of the “Anatolian mosaic” can be interpreted as a reaction against the exclusion and unjust treatment that the Lazi are presupposed to struggle. The following extracts from various articles provide relevant examples to depict the parallelism mentioned above. In these conclusion paragraphs, not only the message conveyed but also the expressions used overlap to a great extent.

‘With this perspective, OGNI, by means of publications, will be the common voice of the peoples living in Anatolia and Caucasia and the bridge of brotherhood for the peoples of the region while it will contribute to global culture by researching, promoting, protecting and rebuilding the language, history, literature, folklore, music, sociology, ethnography, archaeology, geography and the other sciences, cultures, arts of **Lazi as a component of the Anatolian mosaic.**’ (*Ogni* October 1994: 2)⁹⁴

‘Beyond any doubt, some sort of democratic rights are not bestowed. Resistance that would be performed on legitimate platforms against the on-going homogenisation politics is significant. Resistance against these practices is not an attitude that is expected only from the Lazi. All the people in living in Turkey and constituting **the Anatolian mosaic** have to show the same sensitivity.’ (*Ogni* March-April 1994: 3)⁹⁵

‘In the 2000s, being able to possess our cultural wealth and heritages will be the most salient necessity to be able to exist as a human in **the mosaic of Turkey**’ (*Ogni*, May-June 1994: 14)⁹⁶

The origins of the Lazi are not only traced in early history but also in Caucasia. Out of 451 texts in the four respective journals, there are 30 individual texts particularly focused on Caucassian people (~7%). These texts identify the Lazi with Caucasian people and are dedicated to represent bonds between the Lazi in Turkey and Mingrelians in Caucasia above all else and also other minority communities in Caucasia. To this end, the Lazi activists construct the discursive representation of the Lazi’s not only ethnic, cultural and linguistic bonds with South Caucasian people, but also their shared destiny as “suppressed” and “denied” minorities in the text depicting Caucasian people’s sufferings. Certain texts such as “The Lazi who are exiled to Kazakhstan” (*Ogni* January 1993: 12-14), “Sister Cultures: Georgian riddles” (*Ogni* May-June 1994: 37), “I am Mingrelian” (*Ogni* Septembr-October 1994), “Two worlds:

⁹⁴ See Appendix C. 1.

⁹⁵ See Appendix E.

⁹⁶ See Appendix F. 1.

Sarp & Sarpi” (*Sima* July 2001: 8), “A Mingrelian Newspaper” (*Skani Nena* December 2009: 95) can be given as examples to a great amount of similar texts.

On the other hand, the Lazi activists present their “mission” as being inclusive as they express their devotion to protect and promote all Caucasian languages and cultures besides Lazi language and culture. The foreword to the first issue of *Ogni* (October 1993: 2) presents a relevant example displaying identification of the Lazi with Caucasian people.

‘..., OGNI, by means of publications, will be **the common voice of the peoples living in Anatolia and Caucasia** and the bridge of brotherhood for the peoples of the region while it will contribute to global culture ...’⁹⁷ (*Ogni* October 1993: 2)⁹⁸

The discourse of Caucasian bonds is maintained in various texts in the respective four journals. For instance, in the extract quoted below, the Lazi and Mingrelian are represented as two halves of a whole separated by national borders.

‘When today’s borders were defined, the people of the region were split into two, like the two halves of an apple, and one half remained in the current borders of Georgia while the other half remained in Turkey. (*Ogni* May-June 1994:14)⁹⁹

Similarly, another text reminds the ethnic relations between the Lazi and Mingrelians and directs the Lazi to establish closer relations with the Mingrelian in an expressive tone stating the author’s wish from the Lazi community. Note the following extract:

‘Sarpi Gate has been opened. I want them [the Lazi] to establish close relationships with the Mingrelian-Lazi brothers coming through the gate, and see the colourfulness of our culture.’ (*Ogni* October 1993: 9)¹⁰⁰

The directives that instruct the Lazi to “establish relationships with the Caucasian people” and “to protect and promote their language and culture” contribute to another salient theme in the texts- ‘the historical mission of the Lazi’. This is either done by means of imperatives or modality in expressions. Let us first focus on imperatives with an example from the foreword to the first issue of *Skani Nena*. In the extract below, the directives are given first by means of an imperative expressing a demand and then as a suggestion. By doing so, the addressee is directed towards a desired behaviour by creating a sense of voluntary involvement of the addressee upon a demand for help and a suggestion for a collective definition of identity.

⁹⁷ Bold my emphasis.

⁹⁸ See Appendix C. 1.

⁹⁹ See Appendix F. 1.

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix C. 1.

‘Help us to tell the Turkish and the world population about who the Laz are, or not are. **Let’s shout out loud** that Laz, who are tried to be narrowed down into basic ‘Temel’¹⁰¹ character, take their spirit from the geography they live, are hardworking, productive, creative, and people with high sense of humour.’¹⁰² (*Skani Nena* March 2009: 4)

Furthermore, The Lazi activists attempt to encourage the Lazi’s involvement in identity (re)building process by ascribing historical importance to the task. In this way, the Lazi who are involved in the revitalization process are represented as heroes of the Lazi community. Besides naming the efforts as a “historical mission” (See appendices C.1, H, J), ~10% of the total number of texts in the four journals are dedicated to glorify certain Lazi characters who are represented as “cultural labourers” (*Skani Nena* March 2009: 39). The representation of certain Lazi characters as “cultural labourers” (*ibid*), “doctor of Lazuri” (*Skani Nena* March 2009: 39), “great master of *horon*”¹⁰³ (*Mjora* January 2000: 11) aims to raise admiration of the Lazi people by attributing them heroic deeds.

On June 25, 2005 a popular folk musician and environmental activist Kazım Koyuncu died of lung cancer. He became a prominent symbol for “victims of Chernobil disaster” which is believed to be the major cause of cancer incidences in the Black Sea Region in Turkey. Together with Mehmedali Barış Beşli whose name has been mentioned several times in this thesis as the current chairman of the Lazi Culture Association and, as the founder and owner of *Ogni*, *Mjora* and *Skan Nena*, Koyuncu founded the first Lazi rock band *Zuğası Berepe* (The Children of the Sea) to sing in Lazuri, Armenian, Homshetsi, Georgian, and Megrelian. After his death, he is represented as a Lazi hero whose “heroic mission” of protecting and promoting of Lazuri was taken over to be fulfilled by his Lazi activist friends. Consequently, Kazım Koyuncu is represented as a heroic figure and a role model for the Lazi to be followed. (E.g.: *Skan Nena* July 2009: 45, 47, 55, 66)

The assignment of the Lazi with the “historical task” of protecting their language and culture is done through various means of modality. Directives by means of modal auxiliary verbs are common in this sense. The use of modal auxiliary “must” in the following extracts is the expression of the authors’ attitude towards the proposition indicating the high degree of ‘affinity’ according to Hodge and Kress (1988: 123). The directive tone achieved by means of deontic modality in the expressions

¹⁰¹ Temel is the major character in Lazi jokes which are similar to the stories about the Irish in Britain, Norwegians in Sweden.

¹⁰² The text is originally written in English and retrieved without any modification.

¹⁰³ A dance style specific to the Black Sea people in Turkey.

presents the desired behaviour as an obligatory task to be fulfilled. Or in other words, it is the indication of a high ‘degree of moral desirability of the state of affairs expressed in the utterance’ (Frawley et. al, 2006: 4)

‘[The Lazi] **must** re-establish and strengthen their bonds with Caucasia and become the carrier of the ideal of facilitating their cultural relations with Caucasia.’¹⁰⁴ (*Ogni* October 1993: 2)¹⁰⁵

‘In order to gain things for our benefit in this new era, first we **must** feel responsibility.’¹⁰⁶ (*Ogni* October 1993: 3)¹⁰⁷

Modal adverbs are other means of modality exercised in the texts in concern. The sets of modal adverbs used in the texts display the high affinity of the authors as they assert their argument as factual statements which leave no room for discussion. This type of assertive discourse can be observed in the following two extracts.

‘**Beyond any doubt**, some sort of democratic rights are not bestowed.’¹⁰⁸ (*Ogni* March- April 1994: 3)¹⁰⁹

Sure enough the history will be revealed and the people of the region will reunite with their language and literature.¹¹⁰ (*Ogni* May-June 1994: 11)¹¹¹

Furthermore, the authors attempt to encourage and direct the Lazi towards the mission by providing them with “if” and “if not” situations. The use of first conditional with future possibility indicates predictions about the consequences of a certain condition. Besides, as Hodge and Kress (1988: 126) state, the hypothetical form of *if... then ...* is an indicator of ontological distance. That is to say, by creating first conditional real possibility situations, the Lazi activists assert their predictions and leave the choice to the Lazi community whether to become rescuers of their culture or to be responsible for its death. Thus, the conditional statements are used on the one hand as a threat, and on the other hand as a reward. The first of the following extracts can be read as a threat while the later predicts the possibility of success which is bound to the addressee’s contribution to the mission.

‘**If** we do **not** protect and let it disappear, Lazi culture in Akçakoca **will** also fade away.’¹¹² (*Ogni* January 1994: 41)¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ Bold my emphasis.

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix C. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Bold my emphasis.

¹⁰⁷ See Appendix C. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Bold my emphasis.

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix E.

¹¹⁰ Bold my emphasis.

¹¹¹ See Appendix F. 1.

¹¹² Bold my emphasis.

¹¹³ See Appendix D. 2.

‘As the slogan of Skani Nena emphasises; Your Language –Your Voice, **if** you own up to it our voice will be out louder and the chance of survival for our language and culture **will** be stronger.’¹¹⁴ (*Ogni* January 1994: 41)¹¹⁵

Besides, there are some occasions where opinion expressions displaying low affinity of the producer of the utterance such as ‘I think’, ‘I believe’ are used. However, the authors rather prefer to imply certainty in their assertions by means of modal auxiliary verbs (‘must’, ‘should’, ‘obliged to’), sets of modal adverbs (‘certainly’, ‘beyond any doubt’, ‘sure enough’) as exemplified above.

As a last point to be highlighted in terms of modality, the choice of present progressive and future progressive can also be regarded as a persuasion strategy used in the texts as an attempt to direct the addressee- the Lazi community- towards certain desired behaviour. Drawing on Halliday, Fairclough (1992: 159) suggests tense as another feature of modality. Present tenses as an indicator of proximity and verifiability (Hodde and Kress, 1988: 126) is used as a persuasion strategy in the respective texts by presenting the asserted conditions as truth conditions which are presently available for verification. In this respect, the first extract below declares the possibility of attainment of ‘Lazi’s right to exist, right to regain and protect their identity with a modern structure, right to live free and fearlessly’ in order to encourage the Lazi to take action to attain these rights. Likewise, the second extract informs the reader about an undesirable present situation indicating that the truth condition can be verified. Besides, the choice of the progressive indicates continuity of the situation which can either be furthered or terminated.

‘LAZI’s right to exist, right to regain and protect their identity with a modern structure, right to live free and fearlessly **is** also **waiting** to be attained (*Ogni* October 1993: 2)¹¹⁶

‘[C]ertain sections of the society **are not given the possibility** to improve their mother tongue; they **are being deprived of** this most significant tool which is the basis of cultural life” (*Ogni* March-April 1994: 31)¹¹⁷

On the other hand, as William Frawley (1992: 356) puts it, future ‘*looks ahead* in time from the stable present moment; [...] future conveys meanings of inception, prediction, intention, imminence, potential, volition, and supposition’. In this respect, the following two extracts displays hope, expectation, goal-orientedness, and commitment to the ideal which in return may function as a source of motivation for the addressee – the Lazi community in this case.

¹¹⁴ The text is originally written in English and retrieved without any modification. Bold my emphasis.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix D. 2.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix C. 1.

¹¹⁷ See Appendix E.

‘Sure enough the history will be revealed and the people of the region will reunite with their language and literature.’ (*Ogni* May-June 1994: 11)¹¹⁸

‘This struggle will be proceeding by all means no matter what it takes.’ (*Skani Nena* May 2010)¹¹⁹

Last but not the least, a great deal of the texts constituting ~33% of the whole number of texts published in the four journals are dedicated to the description of Lazi culture and various aspects of Lazi culture. These texts do not repeat the discourses of “Lazi as a victimized ethnic minority”, “Lazi with an ancient rooted history”, “Lazi with Caucasian ethnic bounds”, or “Lazi, with a mission to protect and promote Lazi language and culture”. Instead, certain aspects of Lazi culture such as hawk-sparrow taming, horon¹²⁰, tulum¹²¹, kiwi, maize, and tea cultivation and, Lazi cuisine are depicted as an attempt to prove distinctiveness and uniqueness of Lazi culture. The same strategy is used in the texts dealing with linguistic features of Lazuri (21 individual texts corresponding to ~12% of the whole number of texts) and argues various features of Lazuri that distinguishes it from other South-Caucasian languages namely Georgian, and even Mingrelian. The texts serving to the promotion of Lazuri are composed of translations of academic publications by linguists¹²², texts written by İsmail Avcı Bucalişi who is also the co-author of the first Lazuri Grammar Book (2003) and Lazuri Dictionary (2007) incorporation with a Japanese linguist Gôishi Kojima, and also texts aiming to inform the reader about the Lazuri alphabet¹²³ and place names¹²⁴.

In the light of the findings in this part of the analysis it can be concluded that the discursive construction of a Lazi identity has been maintained since the early 1990s by the Lazi activists upon four main discourses projecting the Lazi as; 1) a victimized minority group; 2) an Anatolian and Caucasian community with a rooted history; 3) a component of Caucasian ethnicity and 4) a community carrying a historical mission to protect and promote its language and culture. Besides discursive construction, the Lazi are represented as a distinct community with its unique language, culture and characteristics by identifying the Lazi’s differences from the “others”. The definition of the “other”, in other words, the definition of “who the Lazi are not” is also exercised in

¹¹⁸ See Appendix F. 1.

¹¹⁹ See Appendix J.

¹²⁰ A dance style specific to the Black Sea people in Turkey.

¹²¹ A bagpipe type of musical instrument traditional in the Black Sea Region in Turkey.

¹²² E.g: Sylvia Kurtcher, *Skani Nena* May 2010: 5-14; Gôishi Kojima, *Mjora* April 2000: 63-68; etc.

¹²³ See *Ogni* October 1993: 31; *Mjora* January 2000; *Sima* June 2009: 18.; etc.

¹²⁴ See *Mjora* January 2000: 68-69 and April 2000: 46, *Skani Nena* December 2009: 21; *Sima* January 2009: 19; etc.

accordance to the definition of the “self”. In the following section I will thus examine the representation of the “other” in the respective texts by the Lazi activists.

3.3. How do the Lazi activists project the “other”?

Cultural identity building is a dual process through which the “self” is defined in accordance to the definition of the “other”. Furthermore, ‘[identities] are often forged through opposition to the identities of significant others’ (Smith, 1992: 75). In the light of this assertion, in this section I will focus on the identification and representation of the “other” in the Lazi activists’ discourses throughout the process of Lazi identity building. To this end, I will examine selected texts in which the Lazi activists identify the “other” and communicate their representation of the “other”. I hypothesize that, as far as the Lazi case is concerned, definition of the other may function on the one hand as a discriminator in arguing who the Lazi are not, while on the other hand as an identification of the opposing actor in the Lazi identity building process. For the former, the extract below provides a relevant example as it displays the effort to define Lazi identity by distinguishing the Lazi from certain others and to claim a distinct identity by stating who the Lazi are not.

‘The Black Sea people define their identity as Lazi. However, for the people living in the region the Lazi are the people living in the east. [...] The basic difference between the Lazi and the Romic people living in the Black Sea region is the fact that they speak different languages and the regions they live in can be distinguished precisely.[...] The Lazi also constitute a distinct group from the Hemshin people who are also living in the same region. The Lazi’s major difference from the Georgians and Svans in the same language family is the fact that the Lazi left Caucasia nearly two thousand years ago and have lived in contact with other cultures in a different cultural area. For this reason, the Lazi belong to the Caucasia in terms of language, but they belong to Eastern Black Sea [region] as far as their culture is concerned. This differentiation can be observed in the differences between the Lazi and the other part of the same ethnic group left in Caucasia - Mingrelians- with whom they were separated at a relatively later time, in the 8th century.’¹²⁵ (Sima June 2009: 11)¹²⁶

The content of the text is constructed upon the presupposition of certain confusions about Lazi identity. Thus, the author asserts differences between the Black Sea people, Romic people, Hemshin people, Georgians, Svans, and Mingrelians on the one hand, and the Lazi on the other. By this way, not only the discourse of the Lazi’s uniqueness is maintained but also the text is produced as a “response” (Baktin 1986: 91) to prior arguments presupposed to be known. Thus, it may well be stated that this is a “jointly produced discourse” as labelled by Per Linell (1995: 576).

¹²⁵ Bold my emphasis.

¹²⁶ See Appendix M.

Similar to the above noted extract, *responsive reactions* (Bakhtin 1986: 91-93) protesting and/or ‘correcting’ prior assertions can be observed in various texts by the Lazi activists. One of their concerns is the accusations of ‘separatism’ which are in fact directed to Kurds who demand their language rights. Since the Lazi activists are in the position of demanding their language rights and governmental support to maintain Lazuri, they totalize the accusation to all minorities demanding language rights and get involved in the discussions on the defence. Let us now present two controversial assertions which might have encouraged responsive reactions.

Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) held a series of workshops in December 2010 upon which the party declared a framework towards “democratic sovereignty” (Hurriyet, December 20, 2010). The workshops and the framework have occupied the national agenda and led to severe discussions in the political sphere. Language was one of the main six objectives in the framework. The framework states the objective of founding a Kurdish self-governing region in which Kurdish is defined as the official language together with Turkish. The framework also declares that all public service should be given in Kurdish in this self-governing Kurdish region. (Hurriyet, December 20, 2010).

On the following day after the framework was publicized, the Directorate of the General Staff posted a press release on its official website expressing a discontent about the recent discussions on the language of the country. In the press release, the General Staff is defined as the legitimate guard of ‘unitary-state’ and ‘nationalism’ which are identified as the essence of democracy in Turkey. The press release reads as follows:

1. Great Leader Ataturk’s greatest work and gift to Turkish nation, Republic of Turkey which is based on the sovereignty of people, has reached our time as a democratic and legal system based on the philosophy of “unitary-state” and “nationalism”.
2. The unalterable third article of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey is; “the republic of Turkey is a whole with its government, country and nation. Its language is Turkish.”
3. The primary rule of being a nation is unity in language, culture and ideal. The results of lacking unity in language are apparent in various painful examples in history.
4. Nowadays, it is a point of concern that there have been discussions about “*our* language” in the public agenda which may draw the basic philosophy of the foundation of our republic to a radical change.¹²⁷
5. Turkish General Staff; as stated in our Constitution has always been and will always side with the protection of the Nation-state, unitary and secular state in order to protect democracy, the Republic, solidarity and unity of the nation and the indivisibility of the country. (Turkish General Staff, December 17, 2010. Retrieved on March 28, 2011 from www.tsk.tr/)¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Italics my emphasis.

¹²⁸ See Appendix O.

Presupposed prior sufferings are recalled in order to provide a reference point to persuade the addressee about a future threat. The assertion is completely based on an assumption since the reminder does not name any particular chaos caused by lack of language unity.

In fact, the General Staff's involvement in social and political issues has caused a remarkable reaction by influential actors in politics and the press. Among those, a group of columnists and academics made an official complaint about the General Staff defining its involvement as a military intervention and a threat to democracy in Turkey (*Radikal*, December 20, 2010). Likewise, Viceminister Hayati Yazici criticized the general Staff's attempt to interfere with the language discussions (*Radikal*, December 18, 2010).

Only a few days after the General Staff's press release, the chairman of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Devlet Bahçeli was involved in the discussions by means of a press release in which the Nationalist Movement is defined as the guardian of Turkey's national unity. In his written declaration, Bahçeli expresses the Nationalist Movement's devotion to 'resist against the efforts based on language, religions and ethnicity in order to *seperate and desolve unity by causing choas in Turkey*'¹²⁹ (*Radikal*, December 21, 2010)¹³⁰. Parallel to the last item of the General Staff's press release, Bahçeli concludes his argument by implying a threat to those who are located as the binary opposites of the [Turkish] nationalist in his words; 'History has not yet made its final decision. The Great Turkish Nation and the Nationalist Movement, which loves its land and nation without expecting anything in return, has not said its final word yet.' (*Radikal*, December 21, 2010)¹³¹. Since the Nationalist Movement is identified with the love of land and nation without expecting anything in return, the implied rivals are represented as a threat to national unity.

The involvement of the Directorate of the General Staff and the chairman of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) in the discussions about minority language rights has an essential role in the chain of discourses related to language rights in Turkey since, as Bakhtin (1986: 91) notes, 'it is impossible to determine its position without correlating it with other positions'. Though, the Lazi are not mentioned by these two social actors, and the implied addressee is the Kurdish nationalists, their

¹²⁹ Italics my emphasis.

¹³⁰ See Appendix P.

¹³¹ See Appendix P.

expressions can be considered as a summary of the discourses displaying the resistance against the exercise of language rights in Turkey. Thus, their controversial assertions encourage responsive reactions which provide the minority groups, particularly the Lazi as the focus of this study, with a “*definite* position” (Bakhtin 1986: 91).

Consequently, the Lazi activists are not only devoted to distinguishing the Lazi from various ethnic communities which are presupposed to be confused with the Lazi, but they also attempt to identify Lazuri as a minority or regional language and the Lazi as “not separatists” (See Appendix C.4) The extract below can thus be regarded as the Lazi activists’ responsive reaction to the then on-going discussions about language rights and argument of ‘separatism’. Besides, the author of the following text implies his discontent about Kurdish being in the centre of the discussions about minority and regional languages. Thus, the text emerges as a response to prior discourses which introduce minority and regional languages as a cause of separatism and some other discourses considering language issues in terms of Kurdish. Note the extract below:

Today, when languages like Lazuri which “have (relatively) fewer speakers” or which are called “regional languages” are brought to the agenda some people are trying to introduce “these languages” as a cause of “separatism”. On the other hand, some others are holding discussions about “education in mother tongue” or “mother tongue teaching” in terms of the “Kurdish language”. However, “these languages” are neither causes of “separatism” as they are being introduced nor is “Kurdish” the only language “spoken by (relatively) fewer people” or the only “regional language” spoken in Turkey. (*Sima* October 2003: 16)¹³²

The Lazi activists’ attempt to respond to prior discourses of separatism can be observed in various other texts. This is done by defining the Lazi identity as a component of the Republic of Turkey affiliated with citizenship which is gained through sacrifices and struggles during the National War of Independence. Note the following extract:

‘The Lazi, just like other subjects of the Ottoman, have made sacrifices and worked hard in the foundation of the Republic.’ (*Sima* Spring 2001: 11)¹³³

Besides, the author also implies exclusion and denial of the Lazi’s existence by reminding the Lazi’s role in a highly sensitive national experience compared to the other components of the collective. With this reminder, the author appeals to logos and presents an undeniable and verifiable truth – the Lazi’s contribution to national war- in order to be recognized as a distinct community while at the same time identifying the Lazi with all the components of the Republic of Turkey in terms of a shared national

¹³² See Appendix L.

¹³³ See Appendix K.

ideal. With a similar defensive tone, a leading character among the Lazi activists, Ahmet Kırım, responds to a presupposed denial or inquiry about the Lazi's status in Turkey by stating that 'We [the Lazi] are citizens of the Republic of Turkey, *we are Lazi, we were Lazi and will remain Lazi...*' (Appendix C.4).

On the other hand, comparing the Lazi's contribution to the national independence war with the other components of the collective also represents those components as competitors. Turner (as cited in Turner and Giles Eds. 1981: 69) hypothesizes that 'intergroup competition produces a syndrome of interrelated effects tending to strengthen social relationships within groups'. Relying on this hypothesis, it can be asserted that the Lazi activists aim to strengthen intragroup alliance by representing the 'other(s)' as competitors. The following extract provides a relevant example in this sense:

Because the Lazi and their literature are much older than the Turks [Turkish existence] in Anatolia and Caucasia. (*Ogni* May-June 1994: 13)¹³⁴

A Mingrelian from Abkhazia writes an open letter to his fellow-Mingrelians in 1992 declaring his Mingrelian ethnicity and protesting the assimilation and suppression carried out in Georgia. A translation of this letter is published first in *Ogni* (September-October 1994: 17) and later in *Mjora* (January 2000: 22) with a brief commentary following the text. The commentary reads; 'To us, it would not make any difference in appearance¹³⁵ if the word Mingrelian was replaced with Lazi and Georgian with Turk'. In that, the Lazi are identified with the suppressed, tortured, and assimilated Mingrelians while the Turks are identified with the Georgians and thus represented as the agent of the mistreatment. Consequently, the Turks are represented as the "other" opposing the victimized "us- the Lazi" compared to the Mingrelian-Georgian context. The reason why the Lazi activists identify the 'other' through implication rather than a direct accusation can be explained with the avoidance strategy observed in several other texts mentioned previously in this thesis (c.f. 32, 35). On the other hand, it can also be explained as a mode of persuasion through which the author aims to attain credibility in his argument by presenting victimization of the Lazi synonymous with the Mingrelian case which is recognised at an international academic conference. Below is George Hewitt's (1993: 307) introduction to the letter as quoted in *Mjora* January 2000: 22).

¹³⁴ See Appendix F.1.

¹³⁵ Since the author does not make any further comments, what he means by "şekli" (translated as "in appearance") does not allow exact translation. Instead a direct translation is preferred.

‘The author, Nugzar Dzhodzhuia, is a Mingrelian from Abkhazia. In 1989 he went on Abkhazian television to declare that he could not accept the view which since circa 1930 has been ‘official’ throughout Georgia to the effect that Mingrelians are correctly classified as ‘Georgians’. His reward for stating this personal opinion was to **be beaten up and sacked from his job; his home was frequently visited by armed individuals who wished to ‘persuade’ him publicly to renounce his views, and his mother was obliged to denounce him in the local Georgian-language press...** Despite all he went through, he wrote an open letter to his fellow-Mingrelians in 1992. However this letter wouldn’t be published in Georgia. He concludes his letter reporting that at the 5th European Caucassian Conference in June 1990, a report was presented emphasizing the difficult situation Mingrelian and Lazuri are in. He also adds his wishes “not to do anything for which our descendants in the future will have to answer.”’¹³⁶ (*Mjora* January 2000)¹³⁷

On the other hand, the imposition of Turkish identity is mentioned in various other texts. For instance, in a text dealing with identity and minority issue in *Ogni* (July-August 1994: 2), the author expresses his discontent about the imposition of Turkishness in an informative sentence. The expression thus presents a response to a presupposed prior utterance in which the author aims to highlight the assimilation that the Lazi are exposed to.

‘... their [the Lazi’s] language and culture are neglected throughout the 70-year-long Republican history. What is more, it was taken further and **the Lazi are considered as a Turkish tribe speaking an unintelligible Turkish.**’ (*Ogni* July-August 1994)¹³⁸

In another text (*Ogni* October 1993: 3), both the Turks and the Kurds are represented as the agents of a dual assimilation while the Lazi are represented as the excluded ethnic group. It is also noteworthy that the second person narration of the trouble situation appeals to pathos by identifying the addressee as the patient of imposition.

‘... **“if you are not Kurdish then you are Turkish”.** The republican era had imposed Turkishness, now the ideology that I felt myself closer to was also imposing Turkishness. And still you cannot be yourself, because you are ignored.’ (*Ogni* October 1993: 3)¹³⁹

Last but not least, the reason for the immigrant Lazi’s identity crisis is explained with their presupposed efforts to become modern and fashionable while wearing fashionable clothes is associated with Turkish identity. In the extract below, the author asserts his comments about the immigrant Lazi’s identity crisis in a rather critical tone by describing the Lazi as “in-between” characters who are mimicking the ‘other-Turks’.

¹³⁶ Bold my emphasis.

¹³⁷ See Appendix N.2. Though it is not cited in *Mjora*, the paragraph is a block quotation from Hewitt’s (1993: 40) article titled ‘Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership’. In *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, Issue. 3, pp. 267–323.

¹³⁸ See Appendix G.

¹³⁹ See Appendix C. 2.

Neither Turkish nor Lazuri. Neither Turk nor Lazi. A people pressed between two cultures, by no means familiar with its identity and suffering from identity crises. These people are Lazi in Istanbul. They are Turkish in Atina (Pazar), Vizze or Xoppe. When he thinks of his lack of identity, he is confused, then he is 'depressed'. Even if he dresses in fashionable clothes, his accent reveals him. They say; "you are Lazi". They tell a Lazi joke and laugh. He is secretly offended even if being Lazi is something embarrassing. He cannot reveal his identity in any way. (*Ogni* October 1993: 4)¹⁴⁰

Since the existence of an imagined "I" and/or "we" is only possible when the existence of some "other(s)" is presupposed, examining how the "other" is projected provides an insight in exploring the discursive construction of "self". In this respect, the representational and identificational meaning of the "other" as the Turks and the Kurds as the oppressor and assimilator other paves the ground for the representation and identification of the Lazi as the oppressed and assimilated minority. In search of a unique identity, cultural, historical, and linguistic tools are mobilized effectively to distinguish the Lazi from the "other" Caucasian communities. On the other hand, the Lazi are identified with the Caucasian minority communities in terms of their victimized status.

¹⁴⁰ See Appendix C. 3.

4. Conclusion

In Gombrich's (1986) reading of Aby Warburg's notion of cultural memory, there lies an undeniable interrelation between "expression" and "memory". Warburg marks "expression" as a major aspect of civilization which emerges from the memories of ancestral reactions (as cited in Gombrich, 1986: 243). Language as a means of expression not only stores memories of a people but also conveys them to the future. During this process, memories are subject to modifications to a certain extent due to contextual change. Besides, it is possible that individual memories become collective memories¹⁴¹ as they might be considered as symbolic resources of a community. At this point, memories, both individual and collective, might play a significant role in building cultural identity.

As far as the Lazi context is concerned, the definition of a "Lazi identity" has been rebuilt continuously throughout its history. Since it is beyond the scope of this thesis, we have no intention to narrate the major changes the Lazi community was exposed to until it was integrated into the Republic of Turkey as its constitutive aspect.¹⁴² With this, they have adopted Turkish supra-identity above their Lazi ethnic identity.

Turkish identity building has long been launched,¹⁴³ and at the bottom line Turks were the implied co-founder of the Republic of Turkey as they gave their name to the country and their language is adopted as the official language of the country. In this respect, the value attributed to the Turkish language played a crucial role in Turkish national identity building process. I have discussed the Turkish national identity building process and republican language policies serving this purpose to a wider extent in the preceding study (see Avdan 2010). This complementary study has focused on the regeneration of the Lazi identity through discourses.

Through the analysis of the four Lazi journals, it is observed that the efforts for the revitalization of Lazi identity was launched by a group of Lazi intellectuals located

¹⁴¹ '[...] the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories' (Halbwachs 1992: 40).

¹⁴² For a historical account of the Lazi see Avdan (2010: 21-35)

¹⁴³ Young Turks (*Jön Türkler*) led by Ibrahim Şinasi (1824-1871), Ziya Paşa (1825-1880), Ali Suavi (1838-1878), Ahmet Mithad (1844-1912), Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), Emmanuel Carasso (1862-1934), Marcel Samuel Raphael Cohen (1883– 1961), Ömer Seyfeddin (1884-1920), and many other reformist writers, poets and journalist initiated Turkish Nationalism as a reaction to the Arabic and Persian dominance in language. The emphasis on Turkishness in the discourses of Young Turks provided the basis of the national identity building efforts by awaking self-awareness among Turks (Avdan 2010: 4-5).

in Germany in the mid-1980s and later succeeded by the publishers of *Ogni* in Istanbul. Possibly driven by homesick sentiments and the feeling of being an outsider in the midst of different cultures and language communities, these Lazi expatriates initiated a search for their ethnic identity which would also bring them together and enable them establish a rather powerful “we-feeling”. In fact, in the following extract from the foreword to the first issue of *Skani Nena* (March 2009), the Lazi activists express the sentiments that encouraged them to work towards revitalization of the Lazi language and culture.

‘When one day abroad, homesickness laid hold of them, in the smoke and fog of the city, they asked themselves this question: “Şku mi voret? – Who are we?” and they gave the answer aloud, “We are Lazi”. Since we are abroad, since we cannot go back to our villages where we were born and grew up, then we can do our best to enjoy and sustain our language and culture here. It was such an atmosphere, in which the need to come together emerged. We rolled up our sleeves at once. The idea of founding a corporation to protect and maintain Lazuri and Lazi culture was brought to the agenda. In early 2008, the first association in Turkey which has the word ‘Lazi’ in its name came to being: the Lazi Culture Association.’ (Foreword to *Skani Nena* March 2009)¹⁴⁴

Halbwaches (as cited in Misztal 2003) summarizes the sentiments that drive individuals into a search of belonging to a group as follows;

‘... I continue to be subject to the influence of society even when I have walked away from it: it is enough that I carry within me, in my spirit, all that allows me to classify myself with reference to its members, to reimmerse myself in their milieu and their own particular time, and feel myself very much a part of the group.’ (54)

Based on field work conducted in the North-eastern coastline of Anatolia between 1997 and 1999, anthropologist Ildikó Bellé Hann and Chris Hann (2001) assert a discrepancy between the discourses practiced by second or third generation migrants in Istanbul and the people who live permanently in the Lazi homelands during the respective time period the research was conducted. Their observation is as follows:

‘These on-going debates are, for the most part, waged by second- or third- generation migrants in Istanbul who speak little or no Lazuri, and whose visits to the homeland are short and sporadic. Theirs is the expression of a new identity rooted in knowledge of difference as perceived in the big cities. It’s hard for these activists to connect with the concerns and identities felt by the people who live permanently in Lazistan, even if they have close relatives there. The majority of the people in the Lazi counties are completely unaware of this activity in the Diaspora.’ (Hann & Hann 2001: 207)

Although Hann & Hann’s general assertion might be considered hasty, their observations between 1997 and 1999 support the observation that the revitalization efforts are limited to a certain group of Lazi activists who have been proving their

¹⁴⁴ See Appendix I. 2.

commitment since the early 1990s by means of various activities among which are the written products that provide a certain amount of data for the present study.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the textual corpus has provided an insight into the discursive construction of the Lazi identity during the last one and a half decades with the contribution of various social actors including the Lazi, the Turks, and the Kurds in Turkey. As Fishman (1999: 447) asserts, the discursive construction of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ is intensified especially in the case of conflicts, or in the face of threatening force. Thus, CDA as a “problem-oriented” methodology (Teun A. Van Dijk 2002: 97) has provided a convenient tool towards understanding the construction of the Lazi identity as opposed to the “imposed” Turkish supra-identity. Analysing texts by the above mentioned social actors enabled a clear picture of the responsive construction of discourses identifying and representing the social actors which have an effect on framing the Lazi identity. Furthermore, the study has shown that the definition of “Lazi identity” is relative to the viewpoints of the social actors who contribute to this identity building process. Consequently, the study proved that identity building is not a self-doing alienated from the outer world but instead a contextual process that echoes various and often conflicting voices which encourage rather sharp and controversial discourses in representing the “self” and the “other”.

To clarify, the analyses of the commentaries by the government officials conform to dominant ideologies based on Turkishness and hence serve the maintenance of the *status quo*. This is mainly done through silence rather than words. When the articles and columns in *Radikal* are studied, it is observed that the Lazi are rarely mentioned in the commentaries by the government officials though the Lazi are known to be effective in the corridors of Ankara. Even when the Lazi are noticed, they are represented either as a component of the Anatolian mosaic or as one of the “others” without any further identification. The emergence of the government officials as “we-the power holders” and their representation of the passive “them” as the Lazi, the Circassians, and the Kurds contributes to the production of the “other” which consequently disbands the collective and creates out-groups.

On the other hand, in the commentaries by Kurdish nationalist politicians, the Lazi are identified with the Kurds as “victimized ethnic minorities” if they are ever noticed. However, similar to the government officials, the Lazi are either ignored or represented without any reference to their viewpoints. Instead, the Kurdish nationalist politicians make declarations and demands on behalf of the Lazi.

It is observed that the discourses of the government officials and the Kurdish politicians othering and ignoring the Lazi, above all, triggers self-realization incentives which take shape in the texts describing Lazi language, culture, and history. As far as the portion of the texts dealing with the Lazi language, culture, and history (~50%) in the four Lazi journals are concerned, the efforts towards self-realization emerges as an essential aspect of the discursive construction of the Lazi identity. Furthermore, the discourse of a victimized ethnic community emerges as a product of the feeling of being othered and ignored. The discourse of Lazi as a victimized minority group not only aims to strengthen the inter-group relationships, “we” feeling, based on a collective suffering but also appeals to pathos by persuading the readers to take action against “assimilation”. In that, the Lazi activists direct the Lazi towards a “historical mission” to protect and promote the Lazi language on the one hand, while on the other hand they attempt to make their voice heard in the international arena by means of texts written in English in which they declare their vision and mission through precise expressions. Besides, biographical texts glorifying some Lazi characters contribute to the creation of folk heroes which are utilized as motivational tools to direct the Lazi community to fulfil the mission assigned by the Lazi activists. In fact, the mission is presented as an assignment given by Lazi history, Lazi ancestors, and future generations while the Lazi activists represent themselves as messengers.

It is also observed that the fact that Lazuri is a language in danger of disappearing (UNESCO 2003) provides an effective force in the devoted efforts of the Lazi activists to raise identity awareness among the Lazi community. In other words, as Fishman (quoted by Giles and Johnson, 1981: 205) suggests, language is used as the ultimate symbol of ethnicity. The continuous loss of ethnicity is presented as the loss of identity and disappearance altogether.

Besides the construction or re-construction of Lazi identity as a distinct ethno-linguistic identity, the prominent emphasis on the Lazi being an inseparable component of the Caucasian and Anatolian mosaic displays consistency to remain in larger collectives. While the Caucasian bonds are represented in terms of ethnic and linguistic relations, the Anatolian bonds are represented in terms of common national ideals and struggles. In this respect, the Lazi’s contribution to the National War of Independence is commemorated while an explicit emphasis is placed on distinguishing the efforts for the revitalization of the Lazi language from “separatist” deeds.

Hence, it is concluded that the discourses of the Lazi activists present a dilemma between the commitment to establish or re-establish Lazi identity with an emphasis on a distinct language and culture rooted in the ancient history and the determination to remain a component of the Republic of Turkey. Furthermore, the dilemma is triggered in the course of the production of the chain of communication about minority identities in Turkey as the Lazi activists attempt to distinguish not only from the Turkish *status quo* but also the contra-*status quo* that is mainly represented by Kurdish nationalists.

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Appendix A: *Radikal*

1. *Abbasoğlu: Seçmenim Türkçe bilmiyor (Radikal, October 24, 2002)*

‘DEHAP Genel Başkanı Mehmet Abbasoğlu, propaganda yasakları ile Türkiye’de yaşayan diğer kültürlerin görmezden gelindiğini bildirdi. Kürtçe, Lazca ve Zazaca seslendirilen seçim kaseti yüzünden Şırnak’ta 4 partinin tutuklandığını, bazı il ve ilçe örgütlerine de konu ile ilgili soruşturma açıldığını [bildirdi].’

Abbasoğlu: My voters do not know Turkish

[DEHAP Chairman Mehmet Abbasoğlu asserts that other cultures living in Turkey are ignored due to the restrictions on propaganda. He noted that in Şırnak 4 party members were arrested due to a propaganda cassette recorded in Kurdish, Lazuri and Zazaki, and in some towns and districts investigations are conducted concerning the same topic to their organisations.]

2. *Bu Nevruz farklı olacak (Radikal, March 20, 2004)*

‘Diyarbakır Nevruz kutlamalarında Lazca da şarkı söylenecek’ DEHAP

This Nawroz will be distinctive

[DEHAP plans to have Lazuri songs sang in this year’s Nawroz celebrations.] (Radikal, March 20, 2004)

3. *‘Türk üst kimliği ülkeyi bölüyor’: Başbakanlık İnsan Hakları Danışma Kurulu’nun ‘Azınlık Raporu’ (Radikal, October 25, 2004)*

‘Kürtler, Lazlar veya Çerkezler, Lozan’ın bu maddesine dayanarak, çatır çatır Kürtçe, Lazca, Çerkezce konuşabilir, radyo, televizyon yayını yapabilir.’

‘Kültürel hak zaten, Kürt veya Laz, herkesin kendi dilini konuşması, yayınlaması, resmi dili Türkçe olarak korumak şartıyla isterse kendi okulunu açmasıdır.’

‘Türklerin veya Kürtlerin asli kurucu olarak ortaya çıkma çabası AB sürecine de aykırıdır.’

‘Turkish supra-identity separates the nation’: ‘Minority Report’ of The Prime Ministry Consultant Comission for Human Rights

[Kurds, Lazi and Circassians, relying on the respective article of the Laussane Treaty of Peace, may well speak Kurdish’ Lazuri and Circassian and make radio and TV broadcasts.

Cultural right essentially means, Kurdish or Lazi, everybody speaks his own language, publishes in that language and opens his own schools as long as Turkish is kept as the official language.

Turks and Kurds’ efforts to emerge as the co-founder of the country is against the European Union process.]

4. **(Prime Minister Erdoğan as quoted in *Radikal*, December 7, 2005)**

‘Türkiye’de Türk, Kürt, Çerkez, Laz gibi çok kimlik var. Bunları bağlayan unsure dindir.’

[There are various identities in Turkey like Turkish, Kurdish, Circassian and Lazi. The element that unifies these is religion.]

5. **Özel Harp Dairesi Duyurur- Yıldırım Türker (Radikal, January 9, 2006)**

‘Sabri Yirmibeşoğlu, “Bu teşkilat [Özel Harp Dairesi] Türkiye’nin mozağini oluşturuyor. İçinde Türk de ürt de Laz da çerkez de var.” dedi.’

[Sabri Yirmibeşoğlu said “this organization constitutes the mosaic of Turkey. There is Turk, Kurt, Lazi and Circassian in it.”]

6. **Korkunun Bekçileri -Perihan Mağden (Radikal, January 29, 2008)**

Başbakan Erdoğan hani "Kürtçe eğitim hakkı verirsek; Çerkezler, Lazlar, Gürcüler de ister," diye TARİHİ bir laf etmişti.

The guardians of horror – Perihan Magden

‘Remember that Prime Minister Erdogan said “If we give the right to be educated in Kurdish, the Circassians and the Lazi would also demand [education in their languages].’

7. **Diyanet Kürt açılımı için yol haritasını hazırladı (Radikal, November 18, 2009)**

ANKARA - Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı kendi ölçeğinde Kürt açılımı çalışmalarına hız verdi. Başta Kuranı Kerim olmak üzere dini kitapları Kürtçe bastırılacak. Talep gelmesi halinde Lazca, Gürcüce, Boşnakça ve Arnavutça da da benzer çalışmalar yapılabilecek.

Presidency of Religious Affairs had prepared its road map to Kurdish Expansion

ANKARA- the Presidency of Religious affairs has accelerated its Kurdish expansion studies. Religious books, first and foremost Koran will be translated into Kurdish. Similar studies can be held in Lazuri, Georgian, Bosnian and Albanian upon demand.

8. **'BDP Türkiye partisidir, Kürt partisi tanımını kıracağız' BDP'nin Genel Başkanı Selahattin Demirtaş (Radikal, February 7, 2010)**

DTP'nin ‘kendisini anlatamadığını’ söyledi. “Kürt partisi tanımını kıracağız, Kürtler, Türklerin, Alevilerin, emekçilerin, yoksulların ve diğer ezilenlerin de partisiyiz.

[...]

Türkçe için de özgürlük istiyoruz: Anadilde eğitimi sadece Kürtler için istemiyoruz. Hatta biz Türkçe için de özgürlük istiyoruz. Türkçe çok ağır bir baskı, yozlaşma tehdidi altında. Kapitalist popüler kültürün yarattığı havayı kıramazsak sadece Türkçe değil bütün diller tehdit altında olacak. Her dil çok değerlidir anlayışıyla, Çerkezce, Lazca radyo ve televizyonların kurulmasını istiyoruz.

‘BDP is Turkey’s party, we are going to correct the definition that it is a Kurdish party.’ Chairman of BDP, Selahattin Demirtas.

‘BDP couldn’t introduce itself. We are going to correct the definition that it [BDP] is a Kurdish party. We are the political party for Kurds, Turks, Alaouites, workers, poor and all other oppressed.

[...]

we also want freedom for Turkish. We do not want education in mother tongue only for Kurds. We even want freedom for Turkish. Turkish also faces a great suppression and deterioration. if we do not overcome the atmosphere created by the capitalist popular culture' not only Turkish but also all other languages will face threat. Our approach is that all languages are valuable, thus we want radio and TV broadcasts in Circassian, Lazuri.'

9. **'Anayasada demokratik özerklik ifadesinde ısrarcı değiliz' BDP Genel Başkanı Selahattin Demirtaş (Radikal, September 14, 2010)**

Bölge Meclislerinde resmi dilin Türkçe olmasını, ancak yanında ikinci dil de kullanılmasını istediklerini belirten Selahattin demirtaş, "Yani Kürtler, bölge meclisinde istiyorlarsa örneğin bazı bölgelerde Zazaca, bazı bölgelerde Kurmanci örneğin Hatay'da Arapça'yı örneğin Karadeniz'de bazı bölgelerde Lazca'yı, Gürcüce'yi varsa ihtiyaç kimin talebi neyse az veya çok olur, ikinci dil olarak o dilde eğitim yapılabilirsin, o dilde kamu hizmeti sunulabilirsin" diye konuştu.

[...]

Türkiye'deki özerk bölgelerin etnisiteye dayalı özerk bölgeler olamayacağını beliten Selahattin Demirtaş, "Kürt özerk bölgesi, Laz özerk bölgesi yada etnisiteye dayalı olarak yapılamaz. Mümkün değil. Türkiye'deki kimlikler demografik olarak çok iç içe geçmiştir. Dolayısıyla her özerk bir bölge etnisiteye ve coğrafyaya dayalı olmaktan çok demokrasiye dayalı olmalıdır ve demokratik öze sahip olmalıdır. Esas budur. Etnisiteye dayalı olursa en büyük Kürt özerk bölgesi İstanbul'da olur" dedi.

'We are not insisting on the expression "democratic sovereignty" in the constitution' BDP Chairman Selahattin Demirtas

'Demirtas states that they want Turkish to be the official language but a second language can be used in the Regional Assembly; 'I mean, if the Kurd want, they could be able to use for example Zazaki in some regions, Kurmanci in another region, for example Arabic in Hatay, for example in Black Sea in some parts Lazuri, in another Georgian if there is need more or less, education could be given in that language as the second language, public service could be given in that language.'

[...]

Demirtas asserts that, the regional sovereignty cannot be built on the basis of ethnicity; 'Kurdish self-governing region, Lazi self-governing region, or, it cannot be built on ethnic basis. It is not possible. Identities in Turkey are demographically intertwined. Therefore, the foundation of each self-governing unit should be based on democracy and should have a democratic essence rather than being based on ethnicity and geography. This is the essence. If it would be based on ethnicity, the greatest Kurdish self-governing region would be in Istanbul'.

Appendix B: Petition for a state-run Lazı TV channel

TRT GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ'NE

ANKARA

Konu : Lazca Yayın Talebi

Kurumunuzun 25 Ocak 2004 tarihli “Türk Vatandaşlarının Günlük Yaşamlarında Geleneksel Olarak Kullandıkları Farklı Dil ve Lehçelerde Yapılacak Radyo ve Televizyon Yayınları Hakkında Yönetmelik”e dayalı olarak yayına başladığı diller arasında, daha önce kurumunuz tarafından yapılan açıklamaların tersine, Lazcaya yer verilmemiştir. Bu durum hukuka ve anayasanın eşitlik ve ayrımcılık yasağı ilkesine aykırılık teşkil etmektedir. Bu durumun biran önce düzeltilmesi ve bu haksızlığın giderilmesi için kurumunuza müracaatta bulunmak zorunluluk olmuştur.

Mağduriyetimizin ve söz konusu adaletsizliğin giderilmesi için kurumunuzun kanuni süreleri dikkate alarak Lazca yayına başlamasını saygılarımızla arz ve talep ederiz.¹⁴⁵

...../...../2004

Ad soyad
ADRES

Ad soyad
İmza

Translation by the author:

GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF THE TURKISH RADIO-TELEVISION CORPORATION

ANKARA

Subject: Request for a broadcast in Lazuri

As opposed to the previews declarations made by your corporation, Lazuri is not one of those languages in which your cooperation launched broadcasts as per Law amendment dated January 25, 2004 enabling “the broadcasts in languages and dialects that the citizens of the Republic of Turkey traditionally use in their everyday lives”. This situation displays a contradiction to law and the principle of equity in the constitution. We felt the necessity to apply your corporation to request a solution for the injustice.

For the compensation of the unjust treatment we have been exposed to, we request a broadcast in Lazuri to start within the legal time limits.

Date

Name /Surname
Address

Name/Surname
Signature

¹⁴⁵ Retrieved on March 4, 2010 from www.lazuri.com.

Appendix C: *Ogni* (October 1993)

1. Quotation from “Çıkarken” [The foreword (p. 2)]

‘LAZ’ların da varolmak, kimliklerini yeniden ve çağdaş bir içerik ile kazanmak ve korumak, özgür ve korkusuzca yaşamak hakları vazgeçilmez bir doğal hak olarak kazanılmayı beklemektedir.’

[LAZI’s right to exist, right to regain and protect their identity with a modern structure, right to live free and fearlessly is also waiting to be attained.]

‘Şoven ve inkârcı bakışa karşı durmak, insanın vazgeçilemez ve devredilemez haklarından olan ana dilini özgürce kullanmak, türkülerini söylemek ve atarlından kalan isim ile çağrılmak haklarından yoksun bırakılmış bir halk olarak LAZ’lar Anadolu mozağının parçası olarak artık bunun nedenlerini sormak ve kazanılmayı bekleyen bu haklar için örgütlü ve birleşik bir mücadeleyi meşru zeminde başlatmak zorundadırlar.’

[LAZI as a component of the Anatolian mosaic are now obliged to ask the reasons why they have been forced to resist chauvinist and denying glares, why they have been deprived of their indispensable and non-negotiable rights to freely speak their mother tongue and to use their name that they have inherited from their ancestors, and they are obliged to launch their organised and cooperate combat on a legitimate basis to claim these rights that have been waiting to be regained.]

‘[Lazlar] Kafkaslar ile kültürel bağlarını yeniden kurmak ve güçlendirmek, kültürel alışverişi hızlandırmak idealinin taşıyıcısı olmak zorundadır.’

[[The Lazi] must re-establish and strengthen its bonds with Caucasia and become the carrier of the ideal of facilitating its cultural relations with Caucasia.]

‘Bu perspektif ile OGNİ Anadolu mozağının parçası olan LAZ’ların dili, tarihi, edebiyatı, folklorü, müziği, sosyolojisi, etnografyası, arkeolojisi, coğrafyası ve diğer; bilim, kültür, sanatta, araştırma, tanıtma ve yeniden inşa için yayın faaliyetiyle evrensel kültüre katkıda bulunurken diğer yandan Kafkas ve Anadolu’da yaşayan halkların ortak sesi, bölge halklarının kardeşlik köprüsü olacaktır.’

[With this perspective, OGNİ, by means of publications, will be the common voice of the peoples living in Anatolia and Caucasia and the bridge of brotherhood for the peoples of the region while it will contribute to global culture by researching, promoting, protecting and rebuilding the language, history, literature, folklore, music, sociology, ethnography, archaeology, geography and the other sciences, cultures, arts of Lazi as a component of the Anatolian mosaic.]

2. Quotation from “Kendinde /Kendin Olma Bilinci Uzerine Dusunceler: Lazlik Bilincinin Uyanmasına Icten Bir Bakis” [Reflections on Self-consciousness/Self-awareness: An Intimate Approach to the Awakening of Lazi-consciousness. (Sarigina Besli¹⁴⁶, 1993: 3)]

‘Kendime yeniden soruyorum: “Sen nesin?” Buna tam anlamıyla bir cevap veremiyorum. Ama cogunlukla kendimi tanımladığım cumle “Ma a Lazi vore” oluyor.’ Simdi bu cumle ne anlama geliyor, neye tanıklık ediyor? Her seyden önce ”azinlik” olmayı anlatıyor. Azinlik olmak, yani ezilebilir olmak, taraftar bulamamak, anlasilamamak, yadrganmak, gulunmek, korkmak, Turkce’yi iyi konusamamk, anadilini iyi konusamamk, uzatmayalim, velhasili kelam kendin olamamak!’

[I ask myself once again: “What are you?” I cannot answer this really. But the sentence that I define myself is “Ma a Lazi vore” [I am Lazi]¹⁴⁷. What does this sentence mean now, what does it witness? Above all, it tells about being “minority”. Being minority, in other words being open to oppression¹⁴⁸, not being able to find supporters, not being intelligible, to be regarded as odd, being laughed at, to fear, not being able to speak Turkish well, not being able to speak your mother tongue, to cut it short, not being yourself!]

¹⁴⁶ Mehmedali Baris Besli

¹⁴⁷ This expression has an emphasized meaning.

¹⁴⁸ The author invents an adjective “ezilebilir” by combining the verb “oppress” with the adjective suffix “-able”.

‘Evden cikarken annemden bir uyarı gelirdi “Lazca konusmayın, Turkceniz bozuluyor”. Iste bir ipucu. Lazlar’in yasadigi asimilasyonun rengi burada aciga cikiyor. Resmi ideoloji bu asimilasyon surecini öyle usturlu bir sekilde basarmis ki, annelerimiz bu asimilasyona bir sekilde hizmet etmisler.’

[As we left home to our hometown my mother used to warn me; “*Do not speak Lazuri. Your Turkish will deteriorate.*” here is a sign. The colour of the assimilation that the Lazi are exposed to becomes apparent here. The official ideology has succeeded this assimilation process in such a subtle way that, our mothers have somehow served this assimilation.]

‘Cesitli anlayislar tarafından universitelerde bildiriler dagitiliyordu. Bu bildiriler “Kurt ve Turk Halklarina” ya da “Turk ve Kurt öğrenci gencligine” diye baslardi. [...] bu bildirilerin mantigi ”Kurt degilsen Turk’sun” gibi geliyordu bana. Cumhuriyet yönetimi bize Turkluk’u dayatmisti, simdi kendime en yakin buldugum sistem de bana Turkluk’u dayatiyordu. Ve sen yine kendin olamiyordun, cunku yok sayiliyordun.’

[Handouts were distributed by certain political views [groups] at the universities. These handouts used to start as “To Kurdish and Turkish people” or “To Turkish and Kurdish students”. [...] To me, according to the logic in these handouts “if you are not Kurdish then you are Turkish”. Republican era had imposed Turkishness, now the ideology that I felt myself closer to was also imposing Turkishness. And still you cannot be yourself, because you are ignored.]

‘önümüzde yeni bir dönemin var oldugunu görmek hic de zor degil. Bu yeni dönem bize ne getirecek? Gözumuzu acmaz, kulagimizi vermezsek hic bir sey. Önümüzde acilan bu yeni dönemdekendi adimize kazanimlar elde etmek için öncelikle sorumluluk duymamız gerekiyor. Kime karsi mi? Sana bu dili tasimiz olan atalarina ve senin bu dili tasiman gereken cocuklarina yani *gecmisine ve gelecegine!*’

[... now it is not that difficult to see that there is a new era in front of us. What will this new era bring us? If we do not open our eyes and pay attention, nothing. In order to gain things for our benefit in this new era, we should first feel responsibility. To whom? To your ancestors who has lend you this language and to your children to whom you are supposed to transmit this language, in other words *to your past and your future!*]

3. Quotation from “Dil, kultur, kimlik sorununa kısa bir giris” [A brief introduction to language, culture and identity problem. (Çuta Noxlams, 1993: 5-6)

‘Ne Turke ne de Lazca. Ne Turk ne de Laz. Iki kimlik, iki kultur arasinda sikismis, hicbir sekilde kendini ve kimligini tanimayan, kimlik bunaliminda bir halk. Bu halk Istanbul’da Laz’dir. Atina’da (Pazar), Vi3ze’de yada Xoppe’de Turk’tur. Kendi kimliksizligini biraz dusununce kafasi karisir, o zaman da ‘bunalim’dir. Son moda kiyafetler giyse de konusmasi onu hemen ele verir. Ona ”Sen Laz’sin” derler. Bir Laz fikrasi anlatip gulerler. Laz olmak’ Turke’yi iyi konusamamak sanki bir ayipmis gibi icten ice alinir. Bir turlu kimligini ortaya koyamaz.’

[Neither Turkish nor Lazuri. Neither Turk nor Lazi. A people pressed between two cultures, by no means familiar with its identity and suffering from identity crises. These people are Lazi in Istanbul. They are Turkish in Atina (Pazar), Vi3ze or Xoppe. When he thinks of his lack of identity, he is confused, then he is ‘depressed’. Even if he dresses in fashionable clothes, his accent reveals him. They say; “you are Lazi”. They tell a Lazi joke and laugh. He is secretly offended even if being Lazi is something embarrassing. He cannot reveal his identity in any way.]

‘Kulturumuzu, dilimizi atalarimizdan miras almadik, onu cocuklarimizdan ödunc aldik. Cocuklarimizdan ödunc aldigimiz bu kulturu onlara yok etmeden, yozlastirmadan aktarmak tarihsel görevimizdir.’

[We did not inherit our language and culture from our ancestors but we did borrow it from our children. It is our historical mission to transmit this language and culture that we have borrowed from our children [to our children] without destroying or deteriorating it.]

4. Quotation from “Laz Vakfi Girisimi Komitesi’nden Yuksel Yilmaz ile Görüşme” [Interview with the Lazi Corporation Initiative Committee member Yuksel Yilmaz. (Ogni, 1993: 7-9)]

Interviewer: “Turkiye’nin su anda icinde bulundugu durumda, bu tur faaliyetin zararli olabilecegi konusunda bazi görusler var ...”

[Under the current circumstances that Turkey is going through, there are some opinions asserting that such activities [referring to the Lazi initiative] could be destructive ...]

Yilmaz: ‘Biz siyasal veya ideolojik bir calima ve eylem icinde degiliz ve böyle bir amacimiz yok. [...] Böluculuge karsi bizim faaliyetlerimiz birlestirici, butunlestirici olacaktir, ki Turkiye’nin buna bugun cok ihtihaci var.’

[We are not running a political or an ideological mission or activity and we do not have such intentions ... our activities will be unifying and integrative against separatism, this is what Turkey really needs nowadays.]

Yilmaz: ‘Turkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandasi, *Laz’iz, Laz’dik, Laz kalacagiz ...*’

[We are citizens of the Republic of Turkey, *we are Lazi, we were Lazi and will remain Lazi...*]

Interviewer: Bazi insanlarda bu tur aktivitelerin degisik amaclara cekilebilecegi gibi bir dusunce ...?’

[Some people might think that such activities might be drawn to diverse purposes ...]

Yilmaz: ‘Biz cocuk degiliz. Bizim dusuncemiz, yapmaya calistigimiz ortada, kendimizle ilgili konularda duyarliyiz... biz bu guzel cografyada vardik ve hep olacagiz. Anadolu mozaiginin renkli bir parcasi olarak. *Biz turkulerimizi, agitlarimizi kendi dilimizde söylemek istiyoruz ... Ayrica Kurtulus Savasi’nda Lazlarin payi buyuktur.*’

[We are not children. Our idea, what we are trying to do is obvious, we are sensitive to the issues concerning us... we have existed on this beautiful geography, and will always exist here. As a colourful piece of the Anatolian mosaic. We want to sing our songs and requem in our own language ... Besides, the Lazi had a great role in the War of Independence.]

Yilmaz: ‘... Sarpi Kapisi acildi. Gelen Megrel-Laz kardeslerimizle yakin iliskiler kurmalarini, kulturumuzun renkliligini görmelerini istiyorum .’

[...Sarpi Gate has opened. I want them [the Lazi] to establish close relationships with the Megrel-Lazi brothers coming through the gate, and see the colourfulness of our culture.]

Appendix D: *Ogni* (January 1994)

1. Quotation from the press release upon the confiscation of the first issue by the State Security Court

‘Turkiye, bir cicek demeti gibidir. Lazlar da bu cicek demetinin bir parcasidir. Dunya’da yasayan her halk bir cicek guzelligindedir. ‘Cicekleri koparmayin!’ ’

[Turkey is like a flower garden. The Lazi are also a part of this flower bouquet. Every people living on Earth is as beautiful as flowers. ‘Do not tear off the flowers!]

.....

2. *Yüzyıl Sonra Yakalanan Sıcaklık*

The Intimacy Apprehended After a Hundred Years (Toti Mboli, 1994: 41)

(I’ll type the original text)

In short, Lazi culture is maintaining its existence in Akcakoca. Lazi culture has a distinct dominance on every aspect of life. However, we cannot know how long it will continue in this way. If we do not protect and let it disappear, Lazi culture in Akcakoca will also be extinguished.

Appendix E: *Ogni* (March- April 1994)

Quotation from “Anadilin Önemi” [**The significance of mother tongue. (Bedia Leba¹⁴⁹, 1994: 3)**]

‘Turkce’nin resmi dil olmasının yani sira ulkemizde anadil olarak konusulan bir cok dil vardir. Lazca, Gurcuce, Cerkesce, Kurtce, Arapca, Ermenice, Ibranice, Suryanice, vb. Ulkemix cesitli kulturlerin ve dillerin bulustugu cok kulturlu bir topluma sahiptir. Var olan bu kulturel zenginlige sekte vurulmaya calisilmasi anlasilmaz bir durumdur. Sure gelen bu durum Turkiye’deki demokratik yapı uzerine bize bilgi vermektedir. Konusulan bu dillere gereken degerin verilmemesi ulkemizin demokratiklesme surecinin engellerinden biridir. Demokratik bir devlete sahip oldugumuz var sayildigindan bu tur insan haklarına aykiri dusen uygulamalar karsisinda insan tum umudunu yitirmek durumunda kaliyor.’

[Apart from Turkish as the official language, there are a great deal of languages in our country used as mother tongue. Lazuri, Georgian, Circassian, Kurdish, Arabic, Armenian, Romaic, Hebrew, Syrian, etc. Our country has a multicultural society where various cultures and languages meet. It is an inconceivable situation that this existing cultural wealth is being disrupted. This ongoing situation gives us an idea about the democratic structure in Turkey. The fact that these languages are not given the required importance is one of the barriers to the democratization process of our country. Since we are supposed to have a democratic country such practices against human rights makes man lose all his hopes.]

‘Anadillerinin gelismesine olanak vermeyen toplumumuzun belli kesimleri kulturel yasamin temeli olan bu en önemli aractan mahrum edilmektedir. Anadilinden mahrum birakilan insan kendinden önemli bir parcayi yitirmek durumundadir.’

[Certain sections of the society are not given the possibility to improve their mother tongue; they are being deprived of this most significant tool which is the basis of cultural life. The human who is deprived of his mother tongue is in the position of losing an important part of self.]

‘Şüphesis bazı demokratik haklar hediye edilmez. Sürdürülen eritme politikalarına karsi mesru platformlarda gösterilecek direnç önemlidir. Bu uygulamalara karsi durma Lazca somutunda yalnızca Lazlardan beklenen bir tavir degildir. Turkiye’de yaşayan ve Anadolu mozağini teşkil eden her halk aynı duyarlılığı göstermek zorundadır.’

[Beyond any doubt, some sort of democratic rights are bestowed. Resistance that would be performed on legitimate platforms against the on-going homogenisation politics is significant. Resistance against these practices is not an attitude that is expected only from the Lazi. All the people in living in Turkey and constituting the Anatolian mosaic have to show the same sensitivity.]

¹⁴⁹ Bedia Leba is the name Selma Kociva, a Lazi expatriate living in Germany, uses in her various writings.

Appendix F: *Ogni* (May-June 1994)

1. Quotation from “Laz Edebiyatı (Mçaraloba) Uzerine” [**About Lazi Literature**. (Kamil Aksoylu, 1994: 11-14)

‘Elbette ki tarih aralanacaktır, elbette ki yore halkı kendi dili ve edebiyatı ile yeniden buluşacaktır.’

[Sure enough the history will be revealed and the people of the region will reunite with their language and literature.]

‘Lazlar kültürel değerlerini günümüze kadar tasimada yazı dilini değil sözlü dili kullanmışlardır. Son yirmi-otuz yılı saymazsak başarılı da olmuşlardır. Butun bunlar, tüm engellemelere rağmen sözlü dilin ne kadar güçlü olduğunun göstergesidir’

[The Lazi used the oral language rather than the written language in transferring their cultural merits. If we do not take the last twenty or thirty years into consideration, they had been successful indeed. All these are the indicators of the power of oral language despite all the repression.]

‘Zira Lazlar ve edebiyatları Anadolu’da ve de Kafkasya’da Türkler’den çok eskidir.’

[Because the Lazi and their literature are much older than the Turks [Turkish existence] in Anatolia and Caucasia.]

‘Laz edebiyatına gelince, belki çok parlak devirler yaşamıştır, bilemiyoruz. Ama Tanzimat gibi, Servet-i Fünun gibi kendi tarihine damgasını vurup halk dili ve edebiyatındaki gelişim sürecini yasayamamıştır.’

Avrupa’da ortacı yıkıp yeni çağı açan hümanizm ve Rönesans düşünceleri filizlenirken, bu düşünceler yeni edebiyat akımlarının da hazırlayıcısı olmuştur. Ne acıdır ki, tarihte medeniyetlerin beşiği olan Anadolu ve Kafkasya’nın yerli halklarından Lazlar ve kültürleri Avrupa’daki bu gelişmelerden habersiz bırakılmışlardır.’

[When it comes to Lazi literature, it might have had glorious periods, we do not know. However, it could neither enjoy the development process in the public language and literature nor could print its impact on the history as Tanzimat or Servet-i Fünun did.]

While in Europe, humanism and Renaissance were blossoming as they pulled down the Middle Ages, these philosophies gave rise to new movements in literature as well. It is such an intense grief that, the Lazi-the native people of Anatolia and Caucasia which were the cradle of civilizations in history- had been kept ignorant about these improvements in Europe.]

‘Bugünkü sınırlar çizilirken de bölge insanı bir elmanın yarısı gibi ikiye ayrılmış, bir yarısı bugünkü Gürcistan’da diğer yarısı Türkiye’de kalmıştır.’

[When today’s borders were defined, the people of the region were split into two, like the two halves of an apple, and one half remained in the current borders of Georgia while the second half remained in Turkey.]

‘İkibinli yıllarda kültürel değerlerimize ve mirasımıza sahip olabilmek, Türkiye mozaiginde insan olabilmeyenin en belirgin koşulu olacaktır.’

[In 2000s, being able to possess our cultural wealth and heritages will be the most salient necessity to be able to exist as a human in the mosaic of Turkey.]

2. Quotation from “Bazı Gürcü Aydınlarına (!) Kolay Sorular” [**Some simple questions to some Georgian Intellectuals (!) (p. 40-41)**]

‘Gerçek gün gibi açık: Lazlar, “Gürcüsünüz” dayatmasını kabul etmeyecekler ve sınırın öte yakasındaki Megrel-Laz Kardeşlerine dayatılan Gürcü resmi ideolojisinin haksızlıklarını cümle aleme ilan edecekler.’

[The truth is crystal clear; the Lazi will not accept the enforcement that they are “Georgian” and will announce the injustice that their Migrelian-Lazi Brothers in Georgia are exposed to due to the Georgian official ideology to the whole world.]

Appendix G: *Ogni* (July-August 1994)

Quotation from “Lazepe so idasen?” [**Lazlar nereye?/ Where do the Lazi go? (Mustafa Çeçen, 1994: 2)**]

‘Açıklıkla görülebilir ki, LAZLAR, Anadolu mozaği içinde azınlık bir halktır ve diğer azınlık halklar gibi yetmiş yıllık Cumhuriyet tarihinde dilleri, kimlikleri ihmal edilmiştir. Ve hatta daha da aşırı gidilmiş, pek anlaşılmayan Türkçe konuşan bir Türk kavmi sayılmışlardır. Ancak tüm bunlar, yine de bir Laz Ulusal Sorunu’ndan söz etmeyi olanaklı kılmaz.’

[It is apparent that, the LAZI are a minority community within the Anatolian mosaic and just like other minorities their language and culture are neglected throughout the 70-year-long Republican history. What is more, it was taken further, and the Lazi are considered as a Turkish tribe speaking an unintelligible Turkish. However, all these are still not enough to claim a Lazi National Conflict.]

Appendix H: *Ogni* (September-October 1994)

1. Quotation from the foreword

‘Tüm sorunlara ve imkânsızlıklara karşın biz LAZLAR’ın inatçılığıyla kısa vadede daha büyük atılımlar yaparak tarihi misyonumuza uygun bir yere oturacağımıza gönülden inanıyoruz.’

[Despite all the problems and impossibilities, we wholeheartedly believe that thanks to our Lazi stubbornness we will attain an appropriate place to our historical mission and do further progress in the short term.]

2. Quotation from “Demokratiklesme ve Beklentiler” [Democratization and Expectations] Anonimous

‘Simdiye kadar varliklari inkar edilen ve erime tehlikesiyle karsi karsiya olan halkimiz ...’

[The Lazi] whose existance have been denied so far, and who has faced the threat of disappearing ...’

Appendix I: *Skani Nena* (March 2009)

1. Quotation from foreword to *Skani Nena* 1

'In the beginning of 2008, the Laz came together to do something that had not been achieved before. They established an association in order to preserve their 4000 years old cultural heritage and language.' (p.4)

2. Quotation from "Laz Kultur Derneği kuruldu, haberiniz var mı?" [Do you know that Lazi Culture Corporation has been founded?" (p.5)

'Memleket hasreti, gurbette yapismisken yakalarına bir gun sehrin dumani, sisi arasinda kendilerine su soruyu sordular: "Şk u mi voret? – Biz kimiz?" ve cevabini yuksek sesle verdiler, "Biz Laz'iz" diye. Madem gurbetteyiz, dogup buyudugumuz köylerimize dönemiyoruz, öyleyse dilimiz ve kulturumuzu elimizden geldigince burada yasamaya ve yasatmaya calisabiliriz. Iste böyle bir ortamda dogdu, bir cati altinda toplanma ihtiyaci. Hemen kollar sivandi. Lazca'yi ve Laz kulturunu koruyup yasatmaya yönelik bir dernek kurulmasi getirildi gündeme. 2008'in basinda da Türkiye'nin adinda 'Laz' kelimesi gecen ilk derneği dogdu: Laz Kultur derneği.'

[When on day abroad, homesickness laid hold of them, in the smoke and fog of the city, they asked themselves this question: "Şk u mi voret? – Who are we?" and they gave the answer aloud, "We are Lazi". Since we are abroad, since we cannot go back to our villages where we were born and grew up, then we can do our best to enjoy and sustain our language and culture here. It was such an atmosphere, in which the need to come together emerged. We rolled up our sleeves at once. The idea of founding a corporation to protect and maintain Lazuri and Lazi culture was brought to the agenda. In early 2008, the first corporation in Turkey which has the word 'Lazi' in its name came to being: the Lazi Culture Corporation.]

3. *Skani Mjora* Panel Dizisi, from Ahmet Kırım's¹⁵⁰ speech [Skani Mjora Panel Sessions]

'... Türkiye'de Lazlara karsi asimilasyonun teshir ve tespitinde yeterince etkili ve kararlı olmadık.'

[... we could not be effective and determined enough in determining and displaying the assimilation the Lazi in Turkey are exposed to.]

¹⁵⁰ Ahmet Kırım had a leading role in *Ogni*'s publication.

Appendix J: *Skani Nena* (May 2010)

Giris

Lazca ...

Anadilimiz, anamızdan, ninemizden öğrendigimiz, atalımızdan bize miras ama çocuklerimize, torunlarımıza aktarmakla yukumlu oldugumuz yuregimizin dili ...

Ve anadilimiz Lazca artik yok olma tehdidi altında. Kolxeti'den gunumuze binlerce yildir bu topraklarda konusulan bu kadim dil, Lazlar tarafından sahiplenilmezse bir kac nesil sonra konusanlarinin sayisi iyice azalacak hatta yok olacak.

Care bizlerde;

Biraz caba ile, sadece cocugumuza, torunumuza Lazca konusarak anadilimiz Lazcayi yok olmaktan kurtarabiliriz.

Bundan sonra da her ne sekilde olursa olsun bu mucadele devam edecektir.'

Quotation from the foreword

[Lazuri ...

Our mother tongue,

The language of our heart that we have learned from our mothers, from our grannies; the heritage from our ancestors but that we are responsible from its transfer to our children, to our grandchildren ...

And now our mother tongue Lazuri is under the threat of disappearing. This ancient language that has been spoken on this land since Kolxeti will be spoken by less and less people and as a matter of fact it will vanish in a few generations if it is not protected by the Lazi .

The remedy is in our hands;

With a little effort, only by speaking to our children and grandchildren in Lazuri we can save our mother tongue Lazuri from disappearing.

This struggle will be proceeding by all means no matter what it takes.]

Appendix K: *Sima* (Spring 2001)

“Lazlar: Kafkasya ve Anadolu’nun Hircin Usakları” (Ali Ihsan Aksamaz, 2001: 11)

‘Lazlar, digger Osmali tebalari gibi, Cumhuriyetin kurulmasında da fedakarlıklarda bulundular, emek verdiler.’

“The Lazi: Caucasia’s and Anatolia’s Rough Child”

‘The Lazi, just like other subjects of the Ottoman have made sacrifices and worked hard.’

Appendix L: *Sima* (October 2003)

“Yerel Diller: Ana Dilleri Yasatmak mi? Öldürmek Mi?” (“Regional languages: Destroying or sustaining mother tongues?”) (Ali Ihsan Aksamaz, 2003: 16)

‘Nugzar Dzhodzhua, “dil politikaları”na dikkat çekerek şu önemli tespitte bulunuyor: “...Haziran 1990’da Londra’da toplanan 5. Avrupa Kafkasoloji Kongresi’nin oturumları yapıldı. Sunulan tebliğlerden bir tanesi Megrelce ve Lazca’ya ayrılmıştı. Kardeş dil Lazca’nın Türkiye’deki durumu gibi Megrelce’nin de Gurcistan’da yok sayıldığı konuları tebliğin tartışılan noktalarındandı ...”’

[Nugzar Dzhodzhua draws the attention to “language policies” and makes this very important statement : “...Caucasologica Europa held in *London* in June 1990. One of the papers presented there was dealing with Migrelian and Lazuri. One of the points discussed in the paper was that just like the sister language Lazuri’s situation; Migrelian has been ignored in Georgia ...”]

‘Gunumuzde, Lazca gibi “konusanlari sayica (daha) az olan diller” veya “yerel diller” gündeme geldiginde kimileri “bu diller”i “böluluk” sebebi olarak lanse etmeye calismaktadir. Kimileri de “ana dil egitimi”, “anadilde egitim” vb. Tartismalari “Kurtce” uzerinden yapmaktadir. Oysa ne “bu diller” lanse edilmeye calisildigi gibi “böluculuk” sebebidir ne de ”Kurtce” Turkiye’nin tek “konusani sayica (daha) az dil”i veya “yerel dil”idir.’

[Today, when languages like Lazuri which “have (relatively) fewer speakers” or which are called “regional languages” are brought to the agenda some people are trying to introduce the “these languages” as a cause of “separatism”. On the other hand, some others are holding discussions about “education in mother tongue” or “mother tongue teaching” in terms of the “Kurdish language”. However, “these languages” are neither causes of “separatism” as they are being introduced nor is “Kurdish” the only language “spoken by (relatively) fewer people” or the only “regional language” spoken in Turkey.]

Appendix M: *Sima* (June 2009)

“Lazlar kimdir?”

‘Karadenizliler bir kimlik ifadesi olarak Laz olduklarını söylerler. Ancak bölgede yaşayanlar için Laz daha doğrudur.

[...]

Lazları, Karadenizli Rumlardan ayıran temel unsurlar Lazların farklı bir dil konuşması ve bu iki halkın yaşadığı bölgelerin kesin olarak birbirinden ayırtılabilemesidir.

[...]

Lazlar, yaklaşık olarak aynı coğrafyayı paylaşan ve aralarında kültürel olarak bazı benzerlikler bulunan Hemsinlilerden de farklı bir grup teşkil ederler. Lazların dil ailesi itibarıyla ortaklaştığı Gurculer ve Svanlar gibi halklardan en önemli farkı ise tarihseldir. Lazlar, Gurculer ve Svanlardan farklı olarak ikibin yıla yakın bir süredir Kafkasya’dan ayrılmış ve farklı etkileşimlere açık olan başka bir kültür alanında varlıklarını sürdürmüşlerdir. Bu itibarla Lazlar dilsel olarak Kafkasya’ya, ancak kültürel olarak daha çok D. Karadeniz kültür alanına aittirler bu farklılaşma Lazların, VIII. Yüzyıl gibi daha geç sayılabilecek bir tarihte ayrıldıkları ve aynı etnik grubun Kafkasya kültür alanında kalan parçası olan Megrellerle aralarındaki kültürel farklılıklarında bile görülür.’

Quotation from “Who are the Lazi?” (Ismail Avcı Bucaklısı, 2009: 11)

The Black Sea people define their identity as Lazi. However, for the people living in the region the Lazi are the people living in the east.

[...]

The basic difference between the Lazi and the Romic people living in the Black Sea region is the fact that they speak different languages and the regions they live in can be distinguished precisely.

[...]

The Lazi also constitute a distinct group from the Hemshin people who are also living in the same region. The Lazi’s major difference from the Georgians and Svans in the same language family is the fact that the Lazi left Caucasia nearly two thousand years ago and have lived in contact with other cultures in a different cultural area. For this reason, the Lazi belong to the Caucasia in terms of language, but they belong to Eastern Black Sea [region] as far as their culture is concerned. This differentiation can be observed in the differences between the Lazi and the other part of the same ethnic group left in Caucasia - Migrelians- with whom they were separated at a relatively later time, in the 8th century.]

Appendix N: *Mjora* (January 2000)

1. About *Mjora*

'In this case of Turkey, Laz language is one of the living languages in the rich cultures of Anatolia. Although the official conception of minority is restricted to some non-Muslim communities, everybody knows that different languages are spoken in this geographical region. However, expressing this fact is oppressed and there are irrational and even ridiculous arguments developed on the explanation of these differences.'¹⁵¹

2. Yıllar Sonra Bir Ses Daha : Nugzar Dzhodzhu*

'Abkhazya'da yaşayan Megrel bir yazar olan Dzhodzhu, 1989 yılında Abkhaz televizyonuna çıkararak artık Gürcü resmi ideolojisinin kabul edilemeyeceğini, Megrellerin Gürcü olmadığını açıklar. Bu açıklamanın ardından dövülür, işinden kovulur, silahla görüşlerini değiştirmeye zorlanır. Bununla yetinilmez, annesi yerel Gürcü basınında oğlunu suçlaması için tehdit edilir. Bu yaşananlara rağmen Dzhodzhu, 1992 yılında bazı Megrellere yönelik bir açık mektup yazar. Ancak bu açık mektup Gürcüstan'da yayınlanmaz. Dzhodzhu, mektubunda televizyonda açıkladığı görüşlerinin arkasında durduğunu gösterir. Haziran 1990'da Londra'da toplanan 5. Avrupa Kafkasoloji kongresinde Megrelce ve Lazca ile ilgili bir tebliğin sunulduğunu ve bu dillerin içinde oldukları zor durumun vurgulandığını belirterek mektubunu İleride torunlarımızın cevaplayamayacağı davranışlar sergilemiyelim dileği ile bitirir.

Bizce bu açık mektuptaki Megrel ve Gürcü ibareleri Laz ve Türk ibareleri ile yer değiştirirse durumda şekli olarak bir değişiklik olmayacaktır.'

[The author, Nugzar Dzhodzhu, is a Mingrelian from Abkhazia. In 1989 he went on Abkhazian television to declare that he could not accept the view which since circa 1930 has been 'official' throughout Georgia to the effect that Mingrelians are correctly classified as 'Georgians'. His reward for stating this personal opinion was to be beaten up and sacked from his job; his home was frequently visited by armed individuals who wished to 'persuade' him publicly to renounce his views, and his mother was obliged to denounce him in the local Georgian-language press... Despite all he went through, he wrote an open letter to his fellow-Mingrelians in 1992. However this letter wouldn't be published in Georgia. He concludes his letter reporting that at the 5th European Caucassian Conference in June 1990, a report was presented emphasizing the difficult situation Migrelian and Lazuri are in. He also adds his wishes "not to do anything for which our descendants in the future will have to answer."

To us it would not make any difference in appearance¹⁵² if the words "Mingrelian" was replaced with "Lazi" and "Georgian" with "Turkish".

3. Lazca Diye Bir Dilin Olmadığını Söyleyenlere Bir Hediye: Lazuri Turkuli Nenapuna¹⁵³

Akyüz Yayıncılıktan Mart 1999'da çıkan sözlüğümüzde 9000 kelime, 500 civarında deyim ve atasözü var. Altı yıllık bir emeğin ürünü olan sözlük bugüne kadar Lazlarla ilgili olarak gerçekleştirilen çalışmalar arasında eksikliklerine rağmen çok önemli bir yerde duruyor. Yazarlardan İsmail Avcı Bucaklışı 1970 Atina-Noxlamı doğumludur. Bucaklışı aynı zamanda usta bir horoncu. Diğer yazarımız Hasan Uzunhasanoğlu 1973 Vi3e doğumludur. Halkımızın olumlu değerlerini üstünde taşıyan Uzunhasanoğlu, genç yaşına rağmen Laz kültürüne ciddi katkılarda bulunmaya devam etmektedir.

A Gift to those who claim that thereis no such language as Lazuri: Lazuri Turkuli Nenapuna

[Our dictionary which was published by Akyüz Yayıncılık in March 1999 contains 9000 words, approximately 500 idioms and proverbs. The dictionary, despite its weaknesses, has a special place among the studies conducted about the Lazi. One of its authors, İsmail Avcı Bucaklışı was born in 1970 in Atina-Noxlamı. Bucaklışı is also a master *horon*¹⁵⁴ dancer. Our second author Hasan Uzunhasanoğlu was born in 1973 in Vi3e. Hasanoğlu bares the positive characteristics of our people and despite his young age, he has been making noteworthy contribution to Lazi culture.]

¹⁵¹ The text is originally written in English and the above extract is directly quoted from the original text .

¹⁵² Since the author does not make any further comments, what he means by "şekli" (translated as "in appearance") does not allow exact translation. Instead a direct translation is preferred.

¹⁵³ Source: Anonymous author, *Mjora* 2006, Issue 1, Retrieved on March 10, 2011 from http://www.lazuri.com/tkvani_ncarepe/m_b_yakin_tarih_01.html

¹⁵⁴ My emphasis.

Appendix O: Press Release by the Turkish General Staff (December 17, 2010)

| 2010 Yılı Basın Açıklamaları Arşivi | |
|---|------------------|
|  BASIN AÇIKLAMASI ¹⁵⁵ | |
| TARİH | : 17 Aralık 2010 |
| SAAT | : 15:05 |
| NO | : BA - 03 / 10 |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Büyük Önder Atatürk'ün Türk ulusuna armağan ettiği en büyük eseri olan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti; halk egemenliğine dayalı, kuruluş felsefesinin temelinde, "Üniter devlet" ve "Ulus devlet" olgusunun yer aldığı, demokratik bir yapı ve sağlam hukuki temeller üzerinde yükselerek bugünlere ulaşmıştır. 2. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası'nın değiştirilmeyecek hükümleri arasında yer alan 3'üncü maddesi; "Türkiye devleti, ülkesi ve milletiyle bölünmez bir bütündür. Dili Türkçedir." hükmünü amirdir. 3. Dil, kültür ve ülkü birliği, bir millet olmanın başta gelen vazgeçilmezleridir. Dil birliğinin olmaması durumunda bunun sonuçlarının neler olacağı, tarihteki birçok acı örnekleriyle gözler önündedir. 4. Son günlerde "Dilimiz" üzerinde kamuoyunun gündeminde yer alan birtakım tartışmaların, cumhuriyetimizin temel kuruluş felsefesini kökten değiştirecek bir noktaya doğru hızla götürülmeye çalışıldığı endişeyle izlenmektedir. 5. Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri; Devletin, Anayasamızda yer alan, Türk milletinin bağımsızlığını ve bütünlüğünü, ülkenin bölünmezliğini, Cumhuriyeti ve demokrasiyi koruma görevi kapsamında; Ulus devlet, üniter devlet ve laik devletin korunmasında her zaman taraf olmuş ve olmaya devam edecektir. <p>Kamuoyuna saygıyla duyurulur.</p> | |

Translation

Turkish General Staff 2010 Press Release Archive

PRESS RELEASE¹⁵⁶

Date: December 17, 2010

HR: 15:05

No: BA – 03/10

1. Great Leader Atatürk's greatest work and gift to Turkish nation, Republic of Turkey which is based on the sovereignty of people, has reached our time as a democratic and legal system based on the philosophy of "unitary-state" and "nationalism".
2. The unalterable third article of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey is; "the republic of Turkey is a whole with its government, country and nation. Its language is Turkish."
3. The primary rule of being a nation is unity in language, culture and ideal. The results of lacking unity in language are apparent in various painful examples in history.
4. Nowadays, it is a point of concern that there have been discussions about "our language" in the public agenda which may draw the basic philosophy of the foundation of our republic to a radical change.
5. Turkish General Staff; as stated in our Constitution has always been and will always side with the protection of the Nation-state, unitary and secular state in order to protect democracy, the Republic, solidarity and unity of the nation and the indivisibility of the country.

Announced to the attention of the public with respect.

¹⁵⁵ Retrieved on March 7, 2011 from <http://www.tsk.tr>

¹⁵⁶ Above text is not an official translation. It is translated by the author to serve to the purpose of the respective research.

Appendix P: Press Release by Devlet Bahçeli (December 21, 2010)

Bahçeli'nin yaptığı yazılı açıklamadan bir bölüm şöyle:

Radikal, 21/12/2010

MHP lider Devlet Bahçeli, 'Son dönemde PKK ve uzantılarının başlattığı Türkiye'yi bölme projelerinin fiilen hayata geçirilmesi girişimleri ve dayatmaları, Anayasa ve kanunlara meydan okuyan bir ayaklanma hazırlığıdır.' diye konuştu.

"Türkiye'nin ve Türk milletinin milli birliğini, dayanışma ve kardeşlik ruhunu, huzurunu ve güvenliğini hedef alan çok yönlü hain tahrikler son dönemde bilinçli ve planlı bir şekilde hız kazanmış ve yaygınlaşmıştır.

[...]

Türkiye'nin milli birliğinin temel harcı ve sigortası olan Milliyetçi Hareket Türkiye'nin etnik köken, dil, din ve mezhep temelinde ayrıştırılmasına, çatıştırılmasına ve bölünmesine sonuna kadar direnecektir.

[...]

Tarih henüz nihai hükmünü vermemiş, Büyük Türk Milleti ve bu vatani ve milleti karşılıksız seven Milliyetçi Hareket henüz son sözünü söylememiştir."

.....
21 December 2010, 13:28 / Radikal

Below is an extract from Bahçeli's written public release:

"The leader of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) Devlet Bahçeli asserted that "recent attempts and impositions by PKK and its subsidiaries to launch their ideal to divide Turkey is a preparation for a revolt challenging the Constitution and laws."

"Multi-directional villain drives have recently gained momentum and spread the conscious and planned activities targeting Turkey and the Turkish nation's national unity, solidarity and the spirit of brotherhood, peace and security."

[...]

"Being the major component and guarantee of Turkey's national unity, Nationalist Movement will forever resist against the efforts on language, religions and ethnicity basis in order to separate, to dissolve and cause chaos in Turkey."

[...]

History has not yet made its final decision. Great Turkish Nation and Nationalist Movement, which loves its land and nation without expecting anything in return, has not said its final word yet."