

DERSIM FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

In the late 19th century, the (historical) region of Dersim was a blind spot on all available maps; there was hardly any information, just a little data from the Ottoman Empire and a small number of European sources. Neither were the topographical frontiers of the historical region of Dersim exactly defined nor were the administrative borders stable. The historical Dersim encompassed today's provinces of Tunceli and parts of the provinces of Elazığ, Bingöl, Sivas, Erzincan, Varto, and Erzurum.⁵²⁷

The lack of information is the result of the poor accessibility of Dersim, including the mountainous character, the hardly developed network of trails and paths, and the steadfastness of the population against centralization efforts and integration measures of the state. The Dersimli tried to defend their autonomous state for decades. Several military operations failed due to the inaccessibility of the region. Armenians and Kurds, mainly adherents of the Alevi religion, could defend their independence and resisted the centralization policy of the empire. Strategies of self-defense and resistance against tax collection or the provision of soldiers made the region even less approachable for foreigners. Due to the firmness of the population and their armed resistance combined with their "otherness" in ethnic and religious terms, an image of the population as backwards, well-fortified warriors, robbers, and infidels developed, and travelers willingly adopted this stereotyping. In addition, local authorities often disallowed foreigners from approaching the region and local gendarmes or guides refused to set foot in Dersim.

Many (south)eastern Anatolian provinces were confronted with various transformations and centralization policies in the 19th century. The inhabi-

tants of Dersim were the last ones to resist the overall integration policy of the empire. After the Turkish-Russian War of 1877–78, the Ottoman military tried to defeat the least impregnable provinces. Dersim faced a militarization of its outermost frontiers.

The stereotypical images of the inhabitants and the de facto state of exception could not deter Josef Wünsch from trying to travel this unexplored province. He was captivated by the idea of documenting and mapping the region, which was still a "white spot" on the maps. Wünsch published his outcomes and maps in German scientific journals. In contrast to this practice, however, he published a multi-piece outline of his journey to Dersim in 1889, which had a format comparable to a field diary, in the Czech illustrated literature and arts magazine *Světobzor*. A translation of these kinds of "field notes" into English with comments by Petr Kubálek should allow us to gain insight into his endeavor in Dersim. Wünsch's documentations will be compared to two specific sources that came into being at almost the same time: the well-known Armenian author Antranik on the one hand, and the Hungarian Desiderius Butyka, who was a member of the Ottoman army for almost a decade, on the other. These two additional sources underpin, partly contradict, and further explain Wünsch's outlines.

In his German articles, Wünsch followed a problem-centered approach. One article about the southern Dersim region scrutinizes the sources of the western Tigris branches and Lake Gölcük [Hazar Gölü], close to Harput. He had heard of the hydro-geographical particularities of the lake, as the water level showed fluctuations that could not be

⁵²⁷ This paper was realized with the support of two experienced scholars: Petr Kubálek was responsible for the translation of Josef Wünsch's Czech article into English; Tereza Amryan translated the book passages of Antranik from Armenian into

English. The introductory parts, the translation of German sources from Josef Wünsch and Desiderius Butyka, and the analysis were composed by Maria Six-Hohenbalken. The photographic documentation originated from Mehmet Emir.

explained. Several authors speculated about subterranean limestone breakthroughs and subsequently a subterranean connection between the Tigris and the

Euphrates. In comparison, the Czech publication of Josef Wünsch is herein more descriptive and ethnographic.

THE HISTORICAL REGION OF DERSIM

Geographically, the highlands of Dersim span between the upper Euphrates basin, the Karasu river in the north and west, the Peri river in the east and, today, the Keban dam in the south. The most important trade routes were peripheral in the north (leading from Erzincan to Erzurum) and in the south (from Malatya to Diyarbakır) and did not cross Dersim.

Much larger than today's province (with the Turkified term Tunceli), the historical region of Dersim was explored, documented, and described rather late compared to other provinces in the Ottoman Empire. Many travelers between the 15th and the 19th centuries had only glanced at these mountainous regions from afar.⁵²⁸

After the battle of Chaldiran [türk. Çaldıran; kurd. Ebex] (1514) and the border drawing between the Ottoman and the Persian Empire, the eastern and southeastern provinces became (semi-)autonomous provinces, ruled by local chiefs, tribal units or confederations, or Kurdish aristocratic families.⁵²⁹ Oral traditions refer to the immigration of Alevi Kurdish tribes from Chorassan before the 15th century and from Mardin, Urfa or Diyarbakır since the 16th century. Armenians and, above all, Kurdish Alevis with their own denomination, creeds, and rituals far from orthodox Islam, were a source for prejudice and distancing from the Sunni, Turkish and Kurdish population. As Bumke⁵³⁰ states, in the course of the centuries, Dersim was never fully integrated into either of the empires (Selçuks, Akkoyunlu, Qarakoyunlu, Ottomans). Only a formal sovereignty existed in the last decades of the 19th century. The region of Dersim was ruled by larger and smaller chieftains—e.g., in Eğil, Hozat, Kemah or Pertek.⁵³¹ After the first upheaval of the inhabitants against

the Ottoman Empire in 1834, Dersim also became a political term, although its borders were difficult to determine. Due to the independence of the population and inaccessibility to larger military units, Dersim was also a safe haven for people who were displaced or on the move.⁵³² Neither the Ottoman tax nor the recruiting system could be implemented there. Military campaigns—e.g., to defeat the population in 1855-56—remained unsuccessful.

Attempts were also made at the administrative level to gain control of the region. The fact that this was not expedient can be seen in the multiple change in the administrative assignment to different provinces. Dersim had become an administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire from 1849 onwards. Initially founded as a *sancak* in 1857 and integrated into the Vilayet Harput a decade later, Dersim and its capital Hozat became part of the Vilayet Erzurum.⁵³³ Between 1881 and 1888, Dersim was operated as its own Vilayet or province.⁵³⁴ Then again, Dersim became a *sancak* and was integrated into Memuretal-Aziz (formerly Harput, today Elazığ).

The inhabitants defended their independence almost until the first half of the 20th century. The multicultural and heterogeneity of its population—Armenians, Zaza and Kurmançî-speaking Kurds, Alevis, and Sunnis—were reasons for the harsh policy toward the population at the end of the Ottoman Empire and during the first decades of the Turkish republic.⁵³⁵ In the shadow of the Second World War, Dersim was defeated and the population experienced both mass violence and displacement.⁵³⁶ Dersim was still inaccessible due to the closure of the province to foreigners. A historiography of Dersim was started only in the last two decades.⁵³⁷

⁵²⁸ Bumke 1979: 531.

⁵²⁹ Van Bruinessen 1992; Strohmeier/Yalçın-Heckmann 2003.

⁵³⁰ Bumke 1979: 531.

⁵³¹ Ceviz, 1996: 51.

⁵³² Also, during the First World War and the genocide of the Christian population, the inaccessibility of Dersim offered a safe haven for refugees; see Bumke 1979: 531.

⁵³³ Ceviz 1996: 51.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.: 53.

⁵³⁵ Besikçi 1990; Göner 2005, 2016, 2017; Kieser 2011; White/Jongerden 2003; Zeydanlıoğlu 2008.

⁵³⁶ Van Bruinessen 1994; 1997; Üngör 2011, 2018; Watts 2000.

⁵³⁷ Aslan 2016.





The modern comparative map shows that in the eastern part of the Wünsch route the Euphrates is dammed up today, and that some of the villages marked on the historical map no longer exist.

HISTORY OF ENCOUNTERS

Peter Bumke characterizes the relationship between this peripheral area and the center with marginality and heresy.⁵⁴⁰ He elaborates on the research history of Dersim and, in the first decades of the 19th century—besides Moltke, Ritter, and Brant, who described Dersim from afar—he mentions Jaba, a Russian, and Taylor, an English diplomatic representative, as having been to the region. There were only a few other travelers at the end of the 19th century who approached the central of Dersim—e.g., from the neighboring Caucasus regions such as Sargis Haykuni.⁵⁴¹ Concerning Turkish sources,

*Public records about the region in the Ottoman period are also notably limited as an effective state organisation could not be established in the aforesaid region. Primary sources of information about the mountainous and outlying Dersim are the oral literature and the information given by a limited number of travellers who visited the region.*⁵⁴²

When Josef Wünsch crossed Dersim, Desiderius Butyka, another citizen from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a Vienna-based physician of Hungarian background, was also present to serve in the Ottoman army. Besides military advisors, generals, and technical experts, the insertion of foreigners in the Ottoman military (in command or as specialists) was quite common back then. Butyka was enlisted as a physician for a regiment of Corps IV in the Ottoman army, deployed in the east of the empire. He participated in the Russian-Ottoman War (1877–78), stayed in Diyarbakır for three years, and spent almost a decade in the Ottoman army.⁵⁴³

At the end of the 1880s, Antranik Ozanian (1865–1927) visited Dersim. He was born in the Vilayet Sivas and was working as a carpenter in Constantinople when he decided to return to Sivas in 1888. He traveled to Dersim for the first time when he was 23 years old, before starting his

⁵⁴⁰ Bumke 1979, referring to Moltke (1838), Ritter (1834), Brant (1835), Jaba (1860), Taylor (1868).

⁵⁴¹ Haykuni 1896.

⁵⁴² Ertaş/Reçber 2017: 227.

⁵⁴³ Butyka 1893. All we know of Desiderius Butyka's life is outlined in these publications.

political career in the Armenian independence movement. Later he was known as Antranik and became a military general and famous politician. He visited Dersim once more in 1895 and published the results of his journey in Armenian in 1900.⁵⁴⁴ His book is more than a travelogue; it is an essential source for the history of Dersim. Even more than a century after its release, it was translated from its original Armenian to Turkish, Kurmancî, and Zaza.⁵⁴⁵

In the following chapter, Wünsch's multi-piece article in *Světózor*, translated from Czech into English, will be presented in full length and contrasted by paragraphs from Antranik's classical work, translated from Armenian into English.⁵⁴⁶ In the analytical chapter a further comparison with Butyka's article, enables a parallel reading, a critical comparison and the analysis of Wünsch's contribution.

IN DERSIM⁵⁴⁷

On June 5, 1882, I arranged through negotiation in Charput-Mezere [Harput] that on the next day,⁵⁴⁸ I would set out on a trip toward the north, and that it would be sabachdan erken, that is, early in the morning.⁵⁴⁹ So, on the next day, I got up and prepared myself for the trip. The horses that had been ordered had not arrived yet. Fra Pellegrino—the cook and the gardener at the missionary station in Charput, where I was staying—brought me breakfast. He invigorated my body with thin slices of bread, and [invigorated] my soul with pieces of advices. There was still no news on the horses. As late as at 10 o'clock before noon, the Zaptieh⁵⁵⁰, who was supposed to accompany me as a guard, was still snoring in a shed.⁵⁵¹ This was his way of preparing himself for the long trip. The horses still had not arrived yet. In the end, all of us ate lunch together, and I was already starting to expect that today, sabachdan erken, I would also eat supper here. However, at 1 o'clock in the afternoon—that is, à la franca—a groom arrived with two strong brown horses. So, now it was still possible that, within a day, we would reach Pertek, a village situated by the Euphrates, for an overnight stay. It is true that my companions, with whom I was supposed to set out on the trip in the morning, were already gone, having left me behind, but I still had the chance to catch up with them today in Pertek.

So, we were quickly loading our baggage on the pack animal. The groom was inexperienced and needed much consultation. All three missionaries were helping. After all of them had given me their fatherly blessings, I quickly rose to the saddle on my riding horse and enthusiastically moved forward! Where to? To the unknown!

The pack animal made only a few steps and—boom!—all the baggage fell to the ground. The damned groom! He cannot even tie it on properly! We were loading again and I had to fasten everything by myself in an orderly manner. In this way, on June 6, I happily got out of Mezere.

* * *

We were slowly ascending to the limestone mountain range. Beneath it, Mezere is situated on a fertile plain called Charput [Plain], amid carefully irrigated gardens and industriously cultivated fields. On top of that [mountain range], the old famed Armenian city of Charput is proudly looming. Ruins of a mighty fortress can still be seen on top of a rock that is protruding from the surrounding mountain range. The opposite side is dominated by the grandiose buildings of the American mission.

As we were in a hurry, we did not even stop in Charput this time. We happily sneaked through between the fortress and the mission—like between

⁵⁴⁴ He was already a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF or Dashnaktsutyun). During the Hamidian massacres, he tried to defend the Armenian villages of Mush and Sasun.

⁵⁴⁵ The Armenian original, *Dersim: Canabarhortutyun yev Değakrutyun*, was translated and published in Turkish as *Dersim: Seyahat ve Topografi* [Dersim: Travel and Topography]. The Armenian original was published in Tbilisi in 1900. This book was translated into Kurdish by Têmurê Xelîl, titled *Dêrsim: Rêwîti û Erdnîgarî* and released in 2009. One year later, the publication in Zaza language, *Dêrsim: Raywanî û Cografya*, was published. See also Ertaş and Reçber 2017: 227.

⁵⁴⁶ Translated by Tereza Amryan.

⁵⁴⁷ Wünsch 1889c, translated by Petr Kubálek. The article is online, available <http://archiv.ucl.cas.cz/index.php?path=SvetozorII/23.1889/4142/482.png> [accessed 15.11.2018].

⁵⁴⁸ Wünsch 1889c: 482.

⁵⁴⁹ Translator's note: The author's original way of spelling of non-Czech names and terms (adapted for Czech readers) is preserved, unless specifically indicated otherwise.

⁵⁵⁰ Translator's note: This term refers to the Ottoman Turkish *zaptiye* for "policeman," "security officer," etc.; see glossary.

⁵⁵¹ Wünsch 1889c: 483.

Scylla and Charybdis—across the tight *çarşijas*⁵⁵² of Charput, as we were heading north. Outside the city, there were vast graveyards, both Mohammedan and Christian. From there on, we were making our way toward the north, only slightly diverting westward, across a rocky and deserted plateau, with only rare gardens dispersed throughout. Several wells with pure water served as signposts on our way.

In this way, just before 4 o'clock, we entered the valley of the small river of Karaçalı, then climbed over the ridge of the Kazel mountain, then [went] again down to a valley, and then again ascended to new heights. From here, we already could see the [dark] red-colored Euphrates, here called Murad-su [Murat], as it was flowing from the east through a mountain constriction and was making a turn to the north beneath our feet. On its right bank, a mighty, lonely, perpendicular rock was towering, and on its top, there were again ruins of a fortress. This was Pertek-kala.

And beyond Murad, a wild mountain range stretched from the west to the east. Evening shadows were already falling on its gray rock walls, and its sharp tips were reflected in the sunlight against the shining blue sky. This was Dersim, the mysterious acropolis of the Near East⁵⁵³, an independent empire in the middle of the Ottoman Empire, an undefeated stronghold. It was for its sake that the Kurd, the harsh son of the rough mountains, managed to preserve his self-rule until our times! This was Dersim, with its proud rock foreheads, with its dark gorges and wild rivers, with its fragrant pastures and bleating herds, Dersim with its golden sun and golden freedom!

It was as late as after 6 o'clock that we reached the river. The watercourse was about 100 meters wide and the dirty water streamed very swiftly. We needed to make some noise⁵⁵⁴ to call the ferryman,

whose boat, the *gemi*, was swinging by the right bank of the river. It took a very long time until it finally swung all the way to us. The ferryboat was for sure made according to the model of Noah's Ark—it was so sharp-edged and clunky. It was as big as a barn, and it actually did very much resemble a floating barn. Whoever stood in the boat could only see the blue sky above him—its sideboards were so tall. Only the forward end, where people had to jump in the boat, was a little lower. As there was nothing similar to a haven here, the boat was [tied] quite far from the bank. I reached it by traveling on the broad shoulders of the strong ferryman. The horses were driven to the water until they came near the boat, and from there on, they had to make a giant leap onto the boat. This thing was pretty uneasy, because—while subjected to all this—some animals got badly exhausted and bruised. But, at the end, all of us happily made it to the boat. The ferryman made a few shakes by the rudder and four [big] guys rowed with wide wooden boards.

We moved forward quite quickly, but the strong torrent in the middle [of the watercourse] swept us far down the stream. Finally, we stood on the right bank, to which I was carried again by the ferryman, who received an orderly tip for this.

I was in Dersim.

* * *

Several cottages stood at the very bank of the Murad.⁵⁵⁵ They were already part of the village of Pertek⁵⁵⁶, which stretched across the mildly sloping mountainsides [on such a vast area] that it took two hours to cross the longer side and one hour to cross the shorter side.

It was already past 7 o'clock and the sun was going down toward the mountains. But we still had about one more mile to go to the part of the village where the *müdür*—a lower political as well as judiciary official—had his seat. After 8 o'clock, it was

⁵⁵² Translator's note: This word is used in a plural form. The singular would be *çarşıja*. It refers to the Turkish and Ottoman Turkish *çarşı* for "covered marketplace." The form *çarşıja* exists in Slavic languages of the Balkans.

⁵⁵³ Translator's note: More precisely, the author uses a Czech equivalent of the German *Vorderasien*.

⁵⁵⁴ Translator's note: The meaning of the Czech verb used here (*houkat*) is unclear. In today's usage, it would typically mean "to honk" (a car horn), but it can also mean "to blow" (a horn or a similar wind instrument) and "to hoot" (like an owl). It can also be used figuratively, in the sense of "to make some (unspecified) noise," "to shout."

⁵⁵⁵ Other authors, as e.g. Butyka regarded Pertek not as a part of Dersim, but positioned at the southern fringes then belonging to the Sancak Hozat (Butyka 1892: 109f.). The

name Pertek/Perteg or Berdak relates to the Armenian term Pertag, which means "tiny fortress."

⁵⁵⁶ Antranik writes about Pertek: "Berdak, which is the biggest villages of Char-Sanchag/Char-Sanjak, is divided in two parts—Old Berdak and New Berdak. Hin Berdak is far from Karberd four hours to the north and is situated on the right rim of Euphrates-Aratsani: it is totally ruined and not inhabited. Nor Berdak, which occupies the western part of Char-Sanchak/Char-Sanjak, is north of Old Berdak, a way of two to three hours, and is situated on the slopes of mountains, in a flowery valley. Its inhabitants are mostly inhabitants of Old Berdak who, because of different predicaments or (...) because of horrible persecutions, escaped to the slopes of the mountains and founded there their abode which became known by the name of their previous abode—Berdak." (Antranik 1900: 136)



Pertek castle. Foto Mehmet Emir.

already pitch dark. That is why I cannot say anything, except that we drove through some gardens under tall and thick trees, against the branches of which I often banged with my head. I was already tired to death. Only the shining fireflies illuminated our way here and there. However, on the other hand, they scared the horse, which then started to shy.

Toward 9 o'clock, we finally stood inside a garden. The groom and the Zaptieh started to call. After that, people carrying paper lanterns came to see what was going on. They took me to a building hidden in the dark of the night, to some kind of a porch. After that, they brought in my belongings. We were in the house of the müdür. He was a kind and helpful elder. He immediately brought what he had: milk and bread. A young officer was also here, who had spent some time in Herzegovina and spoke Slavic. We could communicate quite well. He even rendered his bed prepared on the porch to me and went to sleep elsewhere.

So, I did not have a bad time in Pertek. However, I did not meet the friends whom I was supposed to meet here. That worried me. Later on, I found out that they had spent the night just by the ferry. The ferryman was supposed to tell me where they had been staying overnight, but he somehow forgot to do that, overwhelmed by the joy of the bakış.

I slept very well and felt refreshed by the pure night air. I got up as early as at 5 o'clock. The thermometer was showing 11.5°C⁵⁵⁷, but the pleasant orchard, in which the müdür's house was situated, was already filled with warm sunshine.

The officer accompanied me to some mighty ruins of an old structure,⁵⁵⁸ on which I could not decide whether it had been a Roman spa or an Armenian church. Unfortunately, neither any inscription nor any indication could be found that would clarify the origin of the structure.⁵⁵⁹

The Zaptieh of Charput, who had led me up to here, now returned to his home. But the new, local

⁵⁵⁷ Translator's note: About 53°F.

⁵⁵⁸ Wunsch's translation from German: beneath the castle, a village stretched in earlier times; but it was abandoned several years ago and the inhabitants settled in complexes which are far from each other and an hour away from the Murad. Now one detects only ruins of rather proper houses, chans and two beautiful mosques – one strolls like in Pompeii towards the Murad su.

⁵⁵⁹ Antranik: "Berdak, in which now inhabitants live, has the importance like a city for the people in Dersim. The Kurds and Turks are the majority [of the population] here. Armenians who migrated mostly from the villages of Karberd, though, constitute the minority, but anyway the business and craft is in their hands. Without the Armenians, Berdak can lose its significance, because the inhabitants of surrounding areas especially the Kurds of Dersim will have to go to

Zaptieh, who was supposed to accompany me up to Masgirt [Mazgirt], was not arriving for a long time. We could only set out on a further trip at 8 o'clock. At the beginning, we were heading eastward. We crossed several [villages called] Pertek. The last of them was Garalim-başı Pertek in the valley of Sarmenika. From there on, we then headed north, climbing down from the eastern slopes of a mountain range consisting of the Merdžimegün Dagħ [Mercimek], Sakaldutan, Čeurmen, and Charapuar Dagħ mountains. A deep, fissured valley, in which water streams flowed toward the Murad, stretched along our way.

In this way, after half an hour, we finally reached Jeniköi [Yeniköy], a village situated in the middle of rich pastures. Judging by the view of several pigs enjoying a mud bath, I concluded that Jeniköi—New Village—was a Christian place. The male population was mostly dispersed across the pastures while all women and children were occupied with intense work. They were making the tezek. These are, so to say, bricks made of cattle dung. At first, the dung needs to be thoroughly moisturized, diluted, and often also mixed with chopped straw. In diverse regions, the bricks are given diverse shapes, based on the richer or not-so-rich imagination of their graceful creators.⁵⁶⁰ There is a lot of folk poetry⁵⁶¹ in this. After that, the bricks dry in the sun and are then carefully piled in tower-like heaps. The tezek is almost the only fuel in this forest-free landscape.

In Jeniköi, we wanted to reserve an hour of rest for ourselves and the horses. Obviously, we longed for a better company than the tezek and the thick clouds of flies swarming in the village and around the village. So, we found for ourselves a green place

above the village, where we refreshed our bodies in the shadow of slim poplars and our horses enjoyed the pasture with full appetite.

The Zaptieh went to the village for reconnaissance, because no person has ever gotten fed by the air, however pleasant [the air] could be. He was lucky. He was returning and behind him walked people carrying milk, eggs, and bread. After the banquet, we cooked black coffee and before 3 o'clock, we were again in the saddles. After leaving Jeniköi, we crossed the Tasün-su and Tas-su creeks. At 5 o'clock, near the village of Kačer, we forded the Valse-su creek.

Soon after that, we climbed up a mountain ridge, which offered a magnificent view of the deep valley of the Mussur [Munzur] river rushing beneath us and yet another wild rocky mountain range. Beneath its foothills, Masgirt—the goal of our trip—could be seen in the distance of about three miles. We walked down the steep slope toward the Mussur. After 6 o'clock, we stood in the village of Charapuar and wanted to stay overnight there. We were already very tired. The Zaptieh was already a gray-haired elder, but still agile. He was taciturn, but agreeable. He started to negotiate with a farmer. But the negotiation did not go well. We found out soon that the people of Charapuar were more than troublesome and that we would do the best service to our security if we left and tried our luck elsewhere.

So we left. After no more than an hour, we reached the village of Havsik, situated closer to the Mussur. We were accommodated there without any problems in a cottage. As the ground floor was inhabited by animals, we stayed on the first floor and climbed there on a ladder. This type of a staircase

far places to obtain necessary things, which is not profitable. Armenians of Berdak are more educated and wealthier than Armenian and Kurdish villagers in the surroundings. They have a church called Surb Tikin (lit: Saint Lady), which has the importance of a monastery (Antranik 1900: 137) to which people go to pilgrimage from different places. They have also a school (...). The Turks have only one mosque. Local Turks are commonly gardeners, and some of them follow Armenians and cultivate the land. Old Berdak, as we mentioned, is on the right bank of the Euphrates-Aratsani and is not inhabited. The visitor feels deep sorrow when he, for the first time, sees the semi-ruined buildings of Berdak, in which only owls sit while it is a fine place to live. Though it is [actually] a heap of ruins with its semi-ruined fortress (which name was probably famous earlier), but it has more importance for Dersim rather than other near and far places. Every Friday people gather here from remote areas of Dersim, to change goods, which resembles a fair-market.

While the Armenian merchant trade with textiles, clothes, shoes and tools for textile production, Kurds sell their animal husbandry products, such as dairy products [drained sour milk: in Armenian „chor” means dry, and „tan” sour milk or yoghurt. Chortan in Kurmancî is keşk, in Turkish keş peyniri), wool, carpets, furs, and livestock.” These encounters between different ethnic groups often lead to disputes, especially between Turks and Kurds. He argues, “If the Turkish government bans the trade of Berdak in order to avoid these predicaments, the people in Dersim will have to attack the surrounding villages and cities in order to acquire the vital things they need: this [however] happens in Dersim [even] without that ban.” (Antranik 1900: 140) (Translation and comments: Tereza Amryan)

⁵⁶⁰ Translator's note: The word “creators” is feminine in the original (like the German *Schöpferinnen*).

⁵⁶¹ Translator's note: The expression “folk poetry” seems to indicate something similar to a “rural idyll.”



Munzur Sources. Foto: Mehmet Emir

is very common in these regions. Also, our “room” on the first floor was distinguished by a peculiarity: it had only three walls built of tamped clay, because [the residents] had meanwhile removed the fourth wall for the summer. But when the winter comes near, a wattle wall will be built here again and the holes will be sealed with clay. Moreover, we did not stay here alone. The guests were accommodated in a representative corner, which also had the fireplace. The householders—man and woman⁵⁶²—were lying on dirty carpets in the other corner. Between us and them, a child was sleeping in a cradle hanging from the ceiling. As a whole, we had a good time there.⁵⁶³ They brought for supper whatever was available. They cooked a bowl of rice and also made a pancake from eggs. The only thing that I disliked about all this was [the fact] that the preparations and the supper itself were getting endlessly protracted. I would have preferred to go to sleep as soon as possible. But after that, in the evening, all notable residents of the village came for a visit and ate with

appetite what the guests did not eat and the householders could not finish eating. In the end, black coffee was served, so I can responsibly say that I had the honor to host the whole village.

I expected that the company would leave at the soonest occasion, that they would go to sleep. But, on the contrary, the number of guests was gradually growing. Each [newcomer] sat on his haunches next to a fellow and silently smoked a long pipe. The room was full of them. The only reason they came for was to see and wonder what suddenly appeared in their distant village, isolated from the whole world. And there was not a single thing on me that would not be worth wondering! The hat, the shoe, the seam on [my] underpants, the button on [my] coat—everything equally attracted their attention. When I finally assembled my iron bed, the general surprise was expressed through a long, hushed exhalation, “Allah!” I realized that that was precisely a moment in which they would not leave but would wait to see how one can actually lie down and sleep

⁵⁶² Translator’s note: The original corresponds to the German *der Hauswirt und die Hauswirtin*.

⁵⁶³ Wunsch 1889c: 495.

on that hellish machine. I wanted to torture neither them nor myself any longer, so I slid into the woolen [sleeping] bag and covered myself with blankets.

As I fell asleep quickly, I do not know when and how my yesterday's honorable guests left.

* * *

From Havsík, it would only take us about a quarter of an hour to reach the Mussur river, which we needed to cross. But how and where to get across the wild river? It is said that a little bit down the stream, opposite the village of Gögtepe [Göktepe köyü], some kind of a ford should be there, through which it is possible to reach the left bank, but only when there is scarce water. But right now, the Mussur is swollen. That is why we have to travel along the right bank toward the southeast until we reach a ferry. We reached such a ferry on the next day, following a one-hour journey, after 7 o'clock in the morning. It was not a boat, nor was it a barge, nor was it a steamboat with a paddle wheel or a propeller. It was a kelek. What is a kelek? When Xenophon—in the 4th century BC, after the battle of Cunaxa—was leading 10,000 Greek troops through this landscape down to the Black Sea, he mentioned special barges assembled from inflated animal skins. Here we have such a barge in reality, and they call it kelek. It consists of about 8 goat skins inflated and connected in two rows. On top of that, for the sake of more firmness, several thin poles were tied and some brushwood stretched both at the forward end and on the sides. In addition to this, think of the two human hands of the kelekçi as propelling force and a big wooden spoon⁵⁶⁴ in them, and the whole accurate photograph of that mysterious machine appears in front of your eyes. It is neither waterproof, nor is it a warship armored “to the ears,”⁵⁶⁵ but still, it is something that—if things go well—can transport you to the other bank.

Apart from the kelekçi, or the ferryman, the kelek only has the capacity to carry about less than a metric cent⁵⁶⁶, that is, about one person with lighter baggage. That is why several rides are usually done. I let the guide get transported first, so I could see if it really could carry that much. When the Zap-tieh was on the left bank, the katrdži [Katırcı] and I unloaded all three horses and drove them into the

river. As they were not willing to enter the torrent, we drove them further by shouting and throwing stones. Although the torrent did sweep them far down the stream, they still managed to swim across successfully. It is not uncommon to happen that the wild torrent sweeps a weak animal away and it gets drowned. That is why many travelers riding a kelek let their horse swim behind them and hold it on a long reign. But it has frequently happened that the horse reached the middle of the river, saw the danger, and tried to save itself by getting onboard the kelek, by which it destroyed the whole unstable vessel. It is thus better to sacrifice an animal than oneself.

When the kelek returned to the right bank for us, I entrusted my bodily container to it. For enhanced security, I laid myself parallel to its length, finely in the middle. We soon found ourselves amid the roaring torrent, which was taking us quickly down the stream, but at the same time, [the torrent] by itself carried us to the other bank. In this way, I, too, happily reached the other bank. The kelekçi then returned several times to take the remaining baggage, saddles, and other parts of the horses' harnesses as well as the katrdži. After that, I donated several piasters to him.

This transport occupied almost a whole hour. It is obvious from this that, in our country, it is much safer and faster to use bridges for crossing [rivers]. But even after this, very bothersome work waited for us. Two of our horses longed for golden freedom, ran away from us, and did not want to allow us to catch them. With the help of some farmers around, we had to organize a little hunt to get them. By force, we saddled up the fugitives again.

From this place, we went past the Kurdish village of Gögtepe and ascended a steep slope toward the north for almost 4 hours until we arrived in Masgirt around noon. It was precisely the day of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

* * *

Imagine a huge mountain range with slopes leaning to the south that ramifies and stretches further in two branches, similar to a horseshoe. In this way, it forms a deep and fissured valley. On its bottom sloping to the south, a Kurdish district center—

⁵⁶⁴ Translator's note: The author obviously referred to a paddle or an oar, but literally used the word “spoon.”

⁵⁶⁵ Translator's note: Although the Czech language has the idiom “armed to the teeth,” the author uses exactly this expression, possibly as a variation of that idiom.

⁵⁶⁶ Translator's note: Like the German *Zentner*, that is, 100 kilograms according to the usage of the word in the 20th century.

the city of Masgirt [*türk*: *Mazgirt*, *kurd*. *Mazgêrd*]—is situated.⁵⁶⁷ I call it a district center, because it is the seat of a Turkish mutessarif. I doubt that it has more than 100 buildings, that is, cottages with flat roofs, [the roofs being] made of tamped clay. As no more than 5 inhabitants can be counted per one house in Turkey, Masgirt has about 500 inhabitants, not including the garrison and the Turkish administration staff. As the city is situated on a slope, the houses are protruding one above another in stages, that is, a neighbor above walks out of the door of his house and directly enters the roof of a neighbor below. That is, the latter's roof serves the former as a courtyard. This really means a very convoluted property relation between them. Both the Masgirt garrison and the administration staff are Turks. The other inhabitants are either Armenians or Kurds. They earn their living mainly from cattle breeding. They spend the summertime on the rich pastures high up in the mountains. There are not many cultivated fields here. Industry is largely limited to home production for home consumption.

When we arrived in Masgirt around noon, I drove to the paša's konak. But there was neither the paša nor other clerks. I ordered to look for a chan, but that, too, was something still unheard of in Masgirt. After that, I negotiated with an Armenian local who wanted to accommodate me. I drove to that place. The house was near the outskirts of the village. Below it, there was only a single cottage, and its roof served our cottage as a courtyard. Although it was extremely hot here, I had a nice outlook, so I stayed. My landlord actually offered me one room.⁵⁶⁸ And now, indeed, they were carrying some cloths out of a kind of a dark hole, which was 2 meters wide, 2.30 meters long, and between 2 and 2.20 meters high. When I was now reproaching him that the [room] did not even have a window, he responded to me

that this did not matter at all, because it could be solved easily. He took a stick, punched it into the front wall, and thus made a hole 0.25 by 0.15 meters large. That was a window. This work was finished so quickly, because the walls of my room only consisted of wattle mesh, on which clay had been applied. None of the buildings in Masgirt had ever seen any lime. To make this new residence of mine complete, I assembled [my] iron bed, which, however, barely fit in. I put the baggage on the floor under the bed. On the other hand, when I carefully inspected my residence, I found out with great joy that 3 wooden pegs had been hammered down in one of the walls: so, it seems, I had a light room—and furnished!

Not long after that, a Constantinople Greek visited me here. He was Mr. George⁵⁶⁹ Nikolaides, an *exáči*⁵⁷⁰, that is, the pharmacist of the military garrison in Masgirt. He was a very agreeable and helpful person. He also spoke French well enough. Meanwhile, our housekeeper had prepared a lunch for us, and I with my people finally ate, because all of us were already very hungry. After that, I paid everyone their dues, and they returned to their homes.

After that, Nikolaides guided me through Masgirt, showing the few places worth seeing. We went to the barracks—a spacious building, which once used to belong to a Bey. We visited the military hospital, in which Nikolaides was a secondary physician and which he administered when the chief physician was absent. Then we sat down in a tiny garden, which they had set up for themselves next to the hospital. Also the *binbaşı*—the local military commander—came here, and finally also the military physician, Dr. Gebhart⁵⁷¹. I should mention here with gratitude that Turkish officers of any rank with whom I had the chance to be in contact here and there, in the course of two years, always flooded me with sincere friendship and special attention.

⁵⁶⁷ Butyka proceeded to Masgirt [Mazgirt] several times, partly as a member of an Ottoman military unit between 1880 and 1881: "From Kharput (where I had to stay a whole month until the path in the north was clear of snow and I received a proper escort), the path leads to Masgirt, located in the eastern Dersim (now the main location of the Mutessariflik with the Kaimakamlık Masgird, Pah, Kisil-kiliss and Kusitschan). (...) Masgird, which was in former times much bigger and surrounded with beautiful still existing gardens, a location which is reachable in a four hour ride from the river bank [Munsur]. The way from Masgird to Pach is ascending but leads hills up and down; in summer it is easily passable, in midst of palamud oak trees, one collects a kind of Manna (Ssöghüdsch but not Kudret-helwasssi) from its leaves, this is a sugar-containing liquid, quickly drying. Poor people use

it instead of sugar and honey to sweeten various drinks and dishes). (...) I had the opportunity to observe the Armenian way of life, who—also here—stay separate from the few Muslims. The incoming urban Armenians—mostly from Kharput—have a more decent and proper life, than the locals living from animal husbandry and farming, from which only single ones live in better houses and could afford the luxury of clean clothes and houses." (Butyka 1892: 113)

⁵⁶⁸ Wunsch 1889c: 498.

⁵⁶⁹ Translator's note: The author uses the Czech form of the name, *Jiří*.

⁵⁷⁰ Translator's note: Turkish *eczacı*.

⁵⁷¹ Translator's note: Further down in the text, the author spells this person's name interchangeably as Gebhard and Gebhart.

I think that they mainly acted that way out of collegiality. The thing is that, more than once, I have found out sideways that they considered me to be a staff officer. It would have gone in vain to try to convince them that this was not the case; they would not believe me anyway. So, I had no other choice but to put myself in the role of an outstanding warrior, which they had imposed on me against my will, and pay back the sincere friendship with equally sincere [friendship]. I still like to remember all those Turkish colleagues and their military dignity, because there was not a single one among them who had saddened me with anything.

The name Masgirt is of Armenian origin,⁵⁷² because girt or gert means village, town, and is often found in local names.⁵⁷³ The highlands between both branches of the Euphrates—today's Dersim—was once inhabited by the Armenian people. Indeed, it seems that it may have been completely Armenian. This is also suggested by the very numerous ruins of beautiful Armenian churches, which are still being found here and which awake our admiration up to this day with their magnificent decoration as well as artistic stone ornaments. But in Masgirt itself, no Christian monuments have been preserved. I only extrapolate that the fortress called Kala—which is looming above the town, northwest of it, on top of a steep basalt elevation—possibly used to be an Armenian fortress. That elevation towers a little more than 100 meters above the town. On its top side is an uneven plain, measuring about 2 kilometers in circumference, enclosed from all sides with mighty walls. Those walls have been built of red and black basalt blocks and have been demolished at numerous locations. I visited the place sometime later with my housekeeper. On the way up, he is praying and piously kissing some marks in the rock as well as the stone base of a column. After climbing up a kind of a rudimentary staircase carved into the rock, we entered the enclosure of the fortress. There were no more traces of any buildings in the enclosure. The only objects that can still be noticed are a backfilled water well and some water reservoirs.

The remainder is covered with high grass, which will be soon burnt by the scorching summer heat. On the northern side, we saw that part of the fortification wall was a massive rounded tower. And it really was needed here for security, because the cone on which the fortress had been built was connected on its northern side to the basic mass of the mountain range, and so the fortress was more easily accessible from that side. The wall of the tower incorporates several blocks with Arabic or Persian inscriptions. It is said that [the blocks with] the inscriptions used to be located elsewhere, and later, in order to save them from perdition, they were walled up at an inaccessible location. The [inscriptions] are perhaps related to a period when the Persians ruled here and possibly re-fortified the old fortress. In the middle of the apex of the fortress, a mighty basalt pillar is towering, with vertical walls about 30 meters high. An unconquerable part of the fortress used to be located on top of the steep block. That part is now almost inaccessible. There is no way to explain how they used to reach it. It is said that the Persians destroyed the fortress; but, at the same time, it is obvious that an earthquake also wreaked havoc on this place. The rocks have big cracks and continue to break off, which exposes the town itself to a grave danger on a daily basis. Beneath the fortress, two remarkable basalt pillars are standing. One is smaller and the other one is about 20 meters tall. Although they look as if a stonemason has shaped them, they were created by nature.

Traces of old stone buildings can be found on elevations around the town. It is obvious from this that Masgirt once used to be much larger and much more representative a town than is the case now. It is said that the Persians destroyed that town too, and it has not managed to recover up to now. A tomb with a rounded cupola may date back to Persian times. In its middle stands a bricked grave, in which a Persian princess is said to be resting. At least this is what people tell [in stories].

A bit further out of town, other ruins can be seen, of a big and magnificent building. Out of all that old

⁵⁷² Antranik: "Metskert [Mazgirt] is also situated in the northern part of Char-Sanchak/Char-Sanjak—on the slopes of the black rocky mountains. To the south-west of this—at a distance of five minutes by foot, there is the old citadel of Metskert which has actually lost its strategic importance because there are unbridled (unruly) Kurds towards the north" (Antranik 1900: 144). Antranik had also accuses these Kurdish neighbors of destroying the fortress: "There are approximately 700-800 houses, their inhabitants are both

locals and incomers. The last once are involved in government affairs or [have their] own shops. Armenians officially have a church and a school. Metskert is ruled by one Turkish Kaymakam, one coy [company: military unit] soldiers and half a coy policeman gendarmes. There are 25-30 Kurdish villages around the city, there are also few Armenians living among them." (Antranik 1900: 145) (translation and comments Tereza Amryan).

⁵⁷³ Wunsch 1889c: 511.

beauty, only the mosque has remained up to now. Opposite it, there are the remains of another building, with new brick filling just freshly added. The Masgirt garrison is now using this place as a depot for wood. It is said that it was a school before. In its middle, there was a spacy courtyard bordered with arcades. Behind them, there were several large halls. Numerous arches of the arcades have been preserved up to now. Other, overturned blocks of beautifully carved stone, decorations, arabesques, and white limestone stilts continue to bear testimony to how magnificent this building used to be. A rounded minareh [minaret] is standing in a corner. Although half of it collapsed long ago, the remainder continues to serve the worship of God.

* * *

The political conditions in these territories are truly strange. When we look at the Asian part of the Turkish empire, we consider all those regions to be a single, unified, homogeneous empire, over which the sultan of Constantinople rules just as, for example, the German emperor [rules] over Stralsund or Breslau. But we are very wrong in this assumption because individual Kurdish tribes—especially those that live in these impassable and hardly accessible highlands and earn their living mainly from their sheep and goat herds—have succeeded since time immemorial to resist the rule of Turkish authorities and have continued to live freely and independently up until our times. Each Kurdish chieftain here is a sovereign ruler who knows that somewhere far—on the side where the sun goes down—there is a Turkish sultan, but that is all he cares about that sultan.⁵⁷⁴ To the maximum extent, [the chieftains] may occasionally send a fee from their herds as a gift. But this only happens when they are in a good mood, when they want. But usually they do not want at all, no and again no!

Now, as Turkish rule in Europe has lately been crumbling down perhaps too seriously, it is no wonder that the government of Constantinople—once

rid of the troublesome rule in Europe—has gained more time to look around its dependencies in Asia Minor more attentively than it was doing before. In this way, it has only recently found numerous regions in the middle of its Asian empire that actually did not belong to it before, because it had never imposed its rule on them. That is why the Sublime Porte is now trying to finally subdue these independent Kurdish regions, establish and strengthen its rule over them, and thus finally make up for everything that it has missed [doing] for centuries. It is now setting up Turkish offices in areas about which it hardly knew anything until recently, and is appointing Turkish administrators in villages in which only Kurdish Beys ruled before. It is understandable that the Kurds are extremely unsatisfied with these novelties because substantial harm is being done to their ancient rights. That is why they are revolting and taking revenge. They are descending from the mountains to fertile territories, which they are plundering and laying waste to. Woe betide anyone who would dare to go up to their mountains.

In this way, it was only recently that the Turkish government established a new vilajet called Dersim and set up a complete stadtholder administration with all offices. In other places—such as Chasköi [Hasköy], Ovadžik [Ovacık],⁵⁷⁵ Čimišgezek [Çemişgezek], Masgirt [Mazgirt], Peri, and Pelemür [Pülümür]—it appointed mutessarifs and kaimakams. The Kurds revolted against these authorities. As for the clerks who came to their places to impose taxes, [the Kurds] simply expelled them after writing something on their backs for remembering better.⁵⁷⁶ The revolt was so widespread and the government humiliated in such a scandalous way that there was no other choice than interfering against the rebels by military force.

In 1879, strong military corps were sent to Dersim from Charput in the south and from Erzingian [Erzincan] in the north. After taking control of the Ovadžik plain, these [corps] set up fortifications

⁵⁷⁴ Translator's note: The original of this sentence was in plural ("chieftains"), but the translation needed to be modified for the sake of clarity.

⁵⁷⁵ Antranik outlines: "Ovachukh [Ovacık] is in the western end of Dersim. It is at the border of Akna, near the beginning of Mndzur [Munzur] river in a very wide area, which has a beautiful emplacement. It has 35-40 Kurdish villages, in which the inhabitants are mostly Ghzlbash [Kizilbash]; there are not Armenians at all. They are divided mostly in two tribes—that is ashirets, and the leaders of those ashirets are Tiapi-Ağa and Ahmed-Ağa,

who are sometimes independent, sometimes semi-independent, but have always rebelled against the Turkish government. Now they sometimes organize to invade the villages around Chmshkacag/Chmshkatsag [Çemişgezek], Pinkean and Akna and make people pay taxes by force of arms: whoever doesn't pay will be killed. As this place is near Chmshkacag/Chmshkatsag and Akna, Armenian craftsmen, who are respected among Kurds, come [here] and start to do their business just like people from Karberd do in Berdak." (Antranik 1900: 146 f)

⁵⁷⁶ Translator's note: This metaphor refers to beating.

in Chosat, Masgirt, Pach, and Kigilkilisse. Moreover, three infantry battalions took positions near *Pülümür*, by which the famed *Kuttudere* [*Kutu Dere*], or *Darboghos* [*Darboğaz*]—a narrow defile, through which the *Kozliçan* [*Kozlican*] river flows—was completely sealed off on the northern side. The Kurds, thus encircled from all sides, took refuge at their firm stronghold, *Kusguntoş*, called Raven Rock, to defend themselves. It was expected that all units of the Turkish army would simultaneously strike at *Kusguntoş* [*Kuzguntaş*] and thus break the demonstrative Kurdish resistance. But this did not happen. The Turkish battalions were idly remaining in their fortified positions and not a single Turkish soldier fought his way forward into those mountain regions.⁵⁷⁷ The garrisons also stayed in the aforementioned places over the winter and did not dare to take a decisive step against the Kurds during the following year either.⁵⁷⁸ It is understandable that the troops needed food provisions to be sent to them from Erzingian and Charput because the Kurds continued to send threats and did not give out anything. In the spring of 1882, large food provisions were sent to the occupied areas. Understandably, these [provisions] were sufficiently protected by strong military units. However, the Kurds ambushed the contingent, beat the guards to death, and snatched the food provisions. This caused great

horror in the government as well as military circles. New reinforcements were deployed to the garrisons and everything indicated a run-up to a bloody clash between the troops and the rebels. (...)

They let me know that the mutessarif was present in the administrative building of the *konak* and that he was ready to grant me an audience. I ascended to the first floor, walking on something that was reminiscent of a ladder rather than a staircase and that squeaked terribly with every step. The *Zaptieh* was holding me, so I did not lose my balance during the climbing. I entered a large room plastered only with clay without any lime.⁵⁷⁹ At the front wall, there were about three tall windows, which had—and I am mentioning this as a curiosity—real glass panes. The place by the windows was all occupied by a long and wide sofa, coated in flimsy English calico. Sitting on the sofa, with his feet resting on a stool, was the mutessarif of Masgirt, *Assef-Bey*, from a noble family, a pretty agreeable person. I sat next to him. Along the two walls adjacent to the wall with the sofa, reed mats were laid on the ground and the remaining officials of the local district office were sitting on them. On the wall opposite the door, two rather small cloth sacks were hanging, similar to those which the careful housewives of our countryside have in their kitchens to store dry mushrooms. In those sacks, all official documents of the mutess-

⁵⁷⁷ See also Wünsch 1881: 492 and Antranik's further outlines: "The product in Ovachukh valley is always fertil, but local people don't care to fructify them and instead enjoy demolishing one another's planted goods like enemies. Truly, vegetables and fruit are abundant there but because of their lazy and wicked character, they miss even garlic and onion. There is a village called Dzerinik or Zerinik in the western part of the valley near Akna in the beginning of Mndzur [Munzur] river: in that village a Turkish Kaimakam sits and has some soldiers under his service, who just protect the Kaimakam against Kurds. In summer, the government sometimes has to bring one to two cay [company] police soldiers from Karberd to keep them on the different points, important ways of Ovachukh from which the merchants and the travelers used to pass: [it was done] in order to prevent robbers from Ovachukh, of which there are a lot in those places. But despite such caution, many times even the guardhouses are robbed and their buildings are set on fire, the policemen are killed, fighting the Kurds attacking them. These military policemen, who are sent to Ovachukh in companies, are sent back to their places in winter: in winter it is so cold, it snows so much in Ovachukh that no traveler can move, so to make the policemen to wait is useless. One of the reasons of the unruly character of the people of Ovachukh is that they deal with policemen-soldiers in summer but not in winter. They [the Kurds] know very well that the enemy will not

be able to move to Ovachukh through the snow and during winter, but they become furious like wolves in winters and are waiting for heavy snow and storm. Their obedience is formal and only in summer." (Antranik 1900: 147-148) (Translation Tereza Amryan)

⁵⁷⁸ Butyka once proceeded from the north, from Erzinghan and once from the south to reach the valley basin of Ovadschuk: "On the foot of the southern descent, one observes the naked rock walls of the Munsurdagh in majestic-dark beauty, which lingers from northeast to southwest in a semicircle around the small valley of Ovacuk." Butyka then proceeded to Hopik, which he described in very prejudiced manner as a feared and notorious nest of Kurds, whose inhabitants do not practice robbery openly, but support it secretly and give message to the tribes, when there is something to be robbed. Then he concludes, "they are harsh and rough (...)." Most enlightening about the mission of the military units where Butyka was on service are the descriptions of Pach, "(...) at Pach, where two battalions were stationed but no soldier dared to move away 15 minutes alone from, they were inculcated and it was understandable. Never did we receive visits from neighboring Kurdish villages, with the exception of the Kurdish owners in Pach, who came once. Everything around us was as if it was extinct, despite not far in the east, between Pach and Masgirt, the land was blessed with tobacco and other good stuff." (Butyka 1892: 115 f.)

⁵⁷⁹ Wünsch 1889c: 512.

sariflik of Masgirt were kept. It is true that there were not many of them, because the mutessariflik is not old yet. And even those few [documents] that were there suggested that this place, that we were at together, was a writing room, a filing office, and a mail room all in one.

After the usual welcome compliments, I put forward a firman, or actually a copy of a firman. Everyone was inspecting it and reading, helping each other: whatever one of them could not read, another one read. A whole consilium stood above the firman, including the chief judge, the financial director, and others. However, all of them sang one and the same song: that I would not get further into the mountains. At least now, it was completely impossible. Moreover, I was told, I would not even receive a person to accompany me there. But still, I was not giving up hope and believed that perhaps, despite everything, I would manage to find a guide and a horse. In the evening of the same day, the mutessarif sent [someone to me] for the firman. I was told that they needed to send a copy to the vali in Chozat [Hozat]⁵⁸⁰. But, as a whole, I had a good time in Masgirt.⁵⁸¹ I spent full 9 days in attempts to get a horse for my further trip to the mountains, and I still did not feel time flying by so quickly.⁵⁸² Sometimes, I was making additions to my geographical drawings. Other times, I tried to go out and see the surroundings [of Masgirt], as far as the conditions allowed.

On the latter note, on May 14, I made a walk to Dēduk Dagħ,⁵⁸³ a vertical slope towering some 300 meters just above the town. The soldier Hassan and a Kurd from Masgirt accompanied me. We walked out when it was still dark because the path was [expected to be] very strenuous. After ascending steeply for about an hour, we reached a peak. From there on, we needed to climb up its stone blocks again for an hour until we arrived at the highest point. The weather was marvelous and the view of the surrounding mountains was very instructive. A drawing was quickly made there and several important angles were measured.

Senior administrative staff and military officers shortened the long periods of their banishment there by taking walks in the nearest surroundings [of Masgirt]. However, they cannot and must not dare to [walk] around at a longer distance. One afternoon, no one but the mutessarif himself organized such a trip and invited me to join. However, Asian trips are remarkably different from ours, Czech trips. There is no music, no banners, and—which is evident by itself—not even a trace of the beautiful gender. That is because, in the east, there is no place for the beautiful gender in decent male company. A woman has no value in the east. She actually is not even [considered] human. There is no place for her in church⁵⁸⁴ either. Although the Koran does not fully prohibit her from there, it says that she would do better by not going there at all.⁵⁸⁵

We set out after noon. Already in half an hour, we struggled our way up into a narrow little valley with a rivulet flowing through its center. People block the rivulet through a reservoir a little bit down the stream and then use [the water from] it to irrigate several fields, depending on the need. They call that place, in local dialect, Čartárl bunár [Çatal Pınar], or Fork Spring (čatal [çatal]= fork). When we arrived, carpets had already been stretched across a little shady place beneath a rock, and several guests were already lying on them. Among them was also the bimbaši, with whom I had been acquainted before. We sat together with the company and they offered us coffee and cigarettes. Many of them enjoyed diverse games. A dice game known in our country under the name lurč is very popular here as well. Mainly the bimbaši⁵⁸⁶ donated all his attention to me and taught me Turkish. When I said a phrase wrongly—and that actually happened most of the time—he kept reciting it for me until I pronounced everything [correctly], even with the required accent. (..)

And there was much more care for our refreshments at Čartárl bunár. It was thanks to the mutessarif, our host, who ordered several fat rams to be driven in. They were then killed there and roasted on

⁵⁸⁰ Translator's note: This local name is spelled further below as Chosat.

⁵⁸¹ Wunsch 1889c: 519.

⁵⁸² Translator's note: The author uses a Czech idiom here: "That time passed as quickly as water for me."

⁵⁸³ Translator's note: The Czech grapheme ě is either pronounced as ye or it softens the pronunciation of the preceding consonant. It is unclear which pronunciation was intended (possibly ö, ü, or Kurdish ê?).

⁵⁸⁴ Translator's note: The author obviously means a mosque.

⁵⁸⁵ In general women or families were not accompanying the officers or soldiers to their mission areas or the places where they were deployed. Therefore, it is not surprising that there were no women around.

⁵⁸⁶ Binbaşı – "chief of thousand," major.

a turnspit. It was delicious mutton and rice served with sour milk.

*The sun moved over [our heads] and hid beyond the high rocks long ago. Mild shadows and pleasant coolness settled across the valley now.*⁵⁸⁷ Myself, Dr. Gebhard, several Armenians, and several “enlightened” Turks separated from the rest of the company and lay down on the grass by the rivulet higher up the stream.⁵⁸⁸ A mighty basalt rock was hiding us from curious sights. Here, in the hideout, we indulged in the sweet delights of European civilization. Little bottle after little bottle resurfaced from the broad Armenian pockets and we drank ample gulps of mastika, a delicious liquor made of mulberries. We combined it with eating raisins and almonds as well as fresh mint that we plucked by the rivulet. As could be expected, we were soon carried away to super-terrestrial realms by these pleasures. There was joy and singing in several languages, European and Asian. However, the person in the best mood was the doctor.

The mutessarif also came to have a look how our things were going in the new settlement. Although we offered him a toast, he did not drink, most probably not to cause nuisance. The thing is that, in our time, really a lot of noble Muslims drink wine and liquors, and many of them do not only drink, but directly booze. In this way, Šerkete paša and Fasly paša in Charput have already disregarded Mohamed’s strict law for a long time.

Also among us today, one young-aged Turk familiarized himself with mastika more than he should have done. He was obviously so charmed by my excellence that he shared his heart with me and assured me of his most devoted friendship. (...)

On another afternoon, we undertook a trip to Kala, situated about 1 mile east of Masgirt. There were about 10 of us, mostly Armenians. All of us traveled on horses and were well-armed. We crossed two mountain ridges and in the second valley, we saw vertical basalt walls towering high up, similar to a fortress. They call these rocks Kala (fortress), the small village situated beneath them Kalaköi, and the valley—through which a creek flows into the Mussur further in the south—Kaladere. On the

southern side of Kala, a square hole, about 1 meter high and equally wide, is carved into the rock. This entrance leads to a hall about 6 meters long, 3 ½ meters wide, and 2 ½ meters high. This hall has a door richly ornamented by a stonemason’s work. Through this [door], a similar hall on the right is entered, with a niche 1.55 meters wide and 0.95 meters deep. All of this has been carved into a thick, black basalt rock and perhaps served as a graveyard for generations long dead.⁵⁸⁹ Both on the right and the left sides of the entrance, I discovered a cuneiform inscription, unknown up to now, which possibly gives account of the lineages that used to be buried here. The surface covered by the inscription is about 0.80 meters long and 0.60 meters high. The letters are very fine, but damaged in some spots. Unfortunately, I was not equipped with all the utilities at that time, so I could not take a picture of this inscription, and it was impossible to copy it due to insufficient illumination. And so, the inscription has still remained unknown. Several meters below the inscription, a corridor is carved in the rock, more than 1 meter high and leading down with an inclination of about 45 degrees. However, its end is backfilled. I could not find an explanation of where it could have perhaps led or what purpose it could have served.

* * *

My landlord in Masgirt shows me great attention indeed. This morning—on the day of J.⁵⁹⁰ 9—he shored up the ceiling of my little room with a thick rough log. He obviously did this out of fear that the ceiling might collapse on my head and he could thus lose me.

Otherwise, however, my housekeeper is a very calm person. Throughout all God’s day, he sits cross-legged, cradling a baby in his arms. He kisses it and licks it, and only God knows what acts of affection he shows it. But I have to add to this that the baby is a boy. If it were a girl, he would certainly not even hold her in his arms. As for his daughters, he only chases them with a cane any time they come to his sight. His other young son is about 4 years old, and he is already uncovering the mysterious depths of science to him. He started by teaching him

⁵⁸⁷ Translator’s note: The author uses the words *coolness* and *valley* in diminutive forms here to stress the positive emotions attached to them.

⁵⁸⁸ As the following passages show, the term “enlightened” could have been used in the sense of not strictly religious or liberal.

⁵⁸⁹ Wunsch 1889c: 520.

⁵⁹⁰ Translator’s note: Just like the English abbreviation J., also the Czech č. in the original can indicate both June and July. Judging by other parts of the text, it must have been June.

to count, already doing so in both languages of the country: in Armenian and in Turkish. Just today, they are contemplating the deep mathematical truth contained in the sentence, “İki kere iki dört var”—two by two is four. (...)

While the male housekeeper rests in this way on the laurels of fatherly activity, it is up to the female housekeeper—together with the young children of female gender—to take care of all the home estate: prepare meals, clean after the cattle (because they have about 6 buffalo cows), wash clothes, spin, weave, make clothes, and other [activities]. On Sunday morning and almost the whole time before noon, the whole female part of the family did not put on festive clothes and did not go to the church or for a walk, as you might think, but enjoyed the preparation of the tezek from cattle dung. Then they dried the tezek in the form of big cakes for several days exactly under my nose. You can see from this that the nose is taken care of, too, in Masgirt.

At this time, the whole outside of our house also received a new, festive garment. It was because they brought clay, sparsely diluted it in water, and then painted with the solution not only the walls and the floor, but also the ceiling. This is the way that limewashing is done in Masgirt. And I absolutely endorse this limewashing because it was very wise. It was namely due to this [procedure] that a big quantity of jumping and crawling insects, which are not exactly the most needed for peaceful sleep, got stuck in the sticky matter and died. The following nights were then much more bearable. For experts in the national economy—the male ones, but no less the female ones as well—I am finally adding here a short list of natural and non-artificial food, on which I was decently living in Masgirt and how I decently paid for everything in cash: *airan* (butter-milk), about a liter = 10 para; *juurt*⁵⁹¹ (thickened sour milk), a liter = 30 para; five eggs = 20 para; 1 *ekmek* (long flat bread) = 10 para; 1 *oka* butter (1 ¼ kilograms) = 5 piasters and 20 para.⁵⁹² —a piaster is equal to about 11 kr. r. m.⁵⁹³ and 1 para is a fortieth of a piaster.

During all the time that I was remaining in Masgirt, I constantly negotiated with all of those owners of horses, mules, and even donkeys. Everyone would have been pleased to go to the west, to the east, or to the regions in the south as well. But that is where I did not want to go. I definitely and

only wanted to go to the north, further to the mountains. But that is where no Turk, no Armenian, and no Kurd wanted to go with me. Still, [a spark of] hope was once lit for me. I promised a double pay, and that seduced a certain Kurd to promise me that he would set out on the trip with me on the next day. But on the next day, there was no trace of the Kurd. After such experiences, I reached the conviction that there was no way for me to get to the north from there. I also suspected the local authorities of taking the initiative themselves and thwarting my intentions by discouraging the muleteers from the trip, out of fear of troubles in the event that something would happen to me in the mountains. So I decided that the best thing would be to divert from here a little bit to the west, to Chosat, and then make efforts to continue the trip from there.

Chosat [Hozat] is the seat of a stadtholder; and so I will have the maximum means available there.

* * *

Indeed, it was high time for me to get out of Masgirt. Otherwise, I would have definitely become a dyer, or a varnisher, or a painter, or a sculptor, or just any kind of a big artist. The wife of a captain at the military garrison in Masgirt had died and a stonemason was just carving a big [stone] slab as a headstone for [her] grave. It seemed that the officer had loved her a lot, so he wanted to have a very beautiful headstone. It was possible, because I was there, the *baş-mehendis* [*baş mühendis*], which they probably interpreted as a chief engineer. And such a *baş-mehendis*, on which there can be absolutely no doubt, is definitely capable of pulling out a magnificent piece of art! So they implored me to draw for them something beautiful for the headstone, which the stonemason was then supposed to carve based on the drawing. Of course, I, the *baş-mehendis*, complied with the wish and drew a sprinkling fountain, flowers in a vase, and a woman's hair locks. I would have drawn a complete angel, but Islam prohibits creating animate beings. That is why people cannot be represented [in visual arts], but it is allowed to create images of parts of a human body because they are inanimate. What beauty it was! Before I was even done [drawing], full processions were coming from inside the town to admire the piece of art, to which there was no equal in the whole of Dersim. The unhappy widower, probably moved by the hair locks, spilled streams of tears.

⁵⁹¹ Translator's note: Meaning yoghurt, a word then obviously unknown in Czech.

⁵⁹² Wünsch 1889c: 521.

⁵⁹³ Translator's note: The abbreviation might refer to a currency unit in then Austria-Hungary, the *Kreuzer*.

On the next day toward the evening, I was supposed to set out on the trip to Chosat. Before noon, other people came again [with a request] that I paint something beautiful for them on stone slabs in the graveyard. They said that they would give me as much black paint as I would need and a kalem, a pen, too. Their trust in my artistic talent was growing, and so was mine. Yesterday, you were an excellent sculptor; today, you will be an excellent painter! One needs to be able to have things arranged. I came to the graveyard, sat astride on a grave, took a pot with black paint in my left hand and a kalem, a reed cane, in my right hand, and started to work wonders.⁵⁹⁴ Water lilies, roses, palm trees, cypress trees, and weeping willows were brought to life on the cold marble under my creative hand. It is true that the paint in the pot was getting thick and the kalem ceased to release [the paint]. But a true artist manages to help himself. I poured water into the pot and angrily threw away the stubborn kalem. Instead of it, I cut and shaped for myself a solid [wood] splinter and continued to paint with it. In this way, I decorated one headstone, then a second and a third one. The number of admirers in the graveyard is growing, my fame is rising: new requests, new commissions!

However, the horses are already waiting impatiently. I have to go to Chosat.

Dr. Gebhard and an officer from the military garrison in Masgirt also headed to Chosat. Apart from that, several Armenians joined us as well. I set out after 4 o'clock, but I was alone because the company had already gone ahead. I quickly descended from the precipitous rocky slopes in the southwestern direction, toward the Mussur river. I only caught up [with the company] as far as at the ferry beneath the village of Lasvant. It was already dark in the narrow and deep defile from which [the

water of] the Mussur was pouring when we were crossing [the river] onboard a kelek. This took more than half an hour from us. After that, on the right bank, we ascended steeply to the mountains until we reached the village of Šechs, also called Srdžoch, at 7 o'clock.

On the next day, June 18, already before 5 o'clock, we were again in the saddle.⁵⁹⁵ We were making our way across the northern mountainside of Kandülü Dagħ, through the villages of Sorpian and Tumajek, further toward the west. After 9 o'clock, we saw several trees on the slope of a cone-shaped hill, and [local] people said that there was a spring as well. (...) After 11 o'clock, we continued to make our way from there on toward the northwest until we arrived in Chosat after 6 o'clock.⁵⁹⁶ Namely, in a short time, we moved to the basin of the Chosat river, which was getting lost in the south, [flowing] toward Sagman, in a deep defile. South of the mountain ridge called Gögtepe, we crossed the Dada-su and the Ulupuar-su—tributaries [of the Chosat river] from the left. Near Ergan [today Geçimli], we admired the ruins of a beautiful Armenian temple.⁵⁹⁷ It is said that there are many [buildings] similar to this one in the surroundings. Near the village called In, we saw a strong stream [of water] pouring out of a limestone rock. After [we passed by] Tarnot, we forded the Karadža-su. Beyond it, Chosat is spread in a large fertile valley, on the left bank of the Chosat river.

* * *

So I was in the seat of a Turkish stadtholder. But I doubt that Chosat, except for a military garrison, has much more than 1,000 inhabitants. As recently as 6 years ago, it was a poor Kurdish village⁵⁹⁸, but since Chosat became the center of the newly established vilajet of Dersim, a lot has been built quickly.⁵⁹⁹ There are now large barracks near the town

⁵⁹⁴ Wunsch 1889c: 522.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.: 535.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.: 536.

⁵⁹⁷ Translator's note: The author uses an alternative term for "church."

⁵⁹⁸ Translator's note: The author uses the words *poor* and *village* in diminutive forms here to stress the positive (or compassionate) emotions attached to them.

⁵⁹⁹ Butyka had visited Khosat [Hozat] in 1887 and 1889. He approached it from Ovacık, and on the way in the valley incisions he saw isolated houses of Kurdish families: "This Khosat was in 1887 (...) nothing else than a big village; in 1879 there was a single street with side alleys which lead to a market square still under construction. A river flowed through the southern parts of the village and in the surroundings [of Khosat] there are some gardens

and in the valley basins around several villages—proceeding from the east one can oversee them, e.g. proceeding from Mezere, where the eldest female and the youngest male population migrates to the jailas [yayla], the summer pastures. In 1887 Khosat was already transformed to a residency of a Vali and a Mutessarif and had, beside the rather big rectangular barrack for the soldiers, also a small bazaar and some better houses with gardens. Recently it became the residence of a military Liva-Pasha (brigadier) und must have a post office. A telegraph office was already installed in 1879 (obviously neither the Vali nor the Mutesarif and the Liva had proper houses and offices for them and their members and subordinates; they helped themselves as best as they could). In 1879, during my first visit, about one hundred villages belonged to the Kaimakamlık Khosat." (Butyka 1892: 111)

outskirts, then an extensive government building, a *çaršie*⁶⁰⁰, and 30 to 40 smaller and bigger houses. More than 20 new houses are being built just now. Apart from that, I saw that the vali also had a [design] plan of a large chan with stores and a [design] plan of a school with one [upper] story.⁶⁰¹

I will point out a peculiarity: There was a narrow spiral staircase for ascending to the first floor, sufficient just for one person to sneak through. One evening, a government assistant was running through the streets of Chosat and, speaking in meticulous speech—roughly as a police guard announcing some kind of a public auction in a Czech village—called upon the residents to come with their pack animals tomorrow and on the following day to work on bringing stones for the construction of the school. The number of residents who gathered on the next day was not substantially high, and so I do not know up to this day how far the construction of the school in Chosat has proceeded.

When I was received for an audience by the vali, Fikri paša, I realized that this was not the place either from which I could get further to the north or to the west. Not only did the local government have some misunderstanding with the Kurds, due to which no people have been coming from the mountains to Chosat for the last 14 days, but also, they viewed me with a strong suspicion that I was an officer and had come to these regions for spying. This also was the reason that a cable was sent to Charput, and I was followed by police surveillance from all sides. Also, I already wanted to set out on the trip secretly, against the

government's will, and even twice rented horses for this purpose.⁶⁰² But then, neither the people nor the horses ever came. As I found out, the vali himself declared that he knew very well that I was an officer; that he recognized it from the fact that I greeted him by giving a salute. However, I did not usually use any other way to greet the Turks who, nonetheless, do not take off [their headgear in greeting]⁶⁰³ either.

So I remained in Chosat up until June 24 without achieving anything. I made two excursions to the surroundings, and mainly to the elevations, accompanied by the doctor's⁶⁰⁴ servant. Once, I saw the whole area to the south [of Chosat], stretching as far as to Sagman Dagħ. The other time, I wanted to have a look from the foothills of Chrsan Dagħ to the north as well. But I returned without success because all of the mountain ridge was covered with such a dense low forest that after half an hour spent by strenuously creeping and slithering, I got barely a quarter of a kilometer into the forest. That meant that I would hardly reach the ridge in several hours, and then, who knows whether there would be free outlook from the top.

Throughout all that time, I stayed together with Dr. Gebhart at [the house of] the miller of Chosat—a man who was good but burdened by many worries. Although he had had quite significant wealth, nothing went well for him and he was constantly getting poorer. He was just setting up another, new mill on the Karadža river, about half an hour before [the way along the river reaches] Chosat. About 1 kilometer above the mill [up the stream], he diverted water [from the river] into a canal—partly carved

⁶⁰⁰ Translator's note: This is a Bohemian form of a word used by the author above as *çaršija*, referring to the Turkish and Ottoman Turkish *çarşı* for "covered marketplace." The form *çaršija* exists in Slavic languages of the Balkans.

⁶⁰¹ Antranik writes a couple of years later: "Khozat [Hozat] is situated to the north of Karberd—a way of two days, in the western part of Dersim, in a wide canyon. As it is the Liva of Dersim, it is enough crowded city: a Mitesarif [Mutessarif] with two coys (company) soldiers and one coy police cavalry. It has also a Vilayet tayresi [dairesi] and cheza tayresi (lay court), in which also two Armenian members sit, chosen by the government. Khozat was the first which accepted Dersim as its Vilayet (before the Vilayets it had nothing), then under many circumstances Vilayets were changed and became mitesarifis, and the others became four gazas [kaza, regions]—Ghzi-Kelise, P'akh, Metskert, Ovachukh, which was under Khozat's authority: the last one is under the dominion of the Karberd governor. There are 1,500 houses/families in Khozat, most of them are local and incoming Armenians, a part of the other group [in the population] are incoming Turks, who occupy government positions, a part

of the population are Kurds which just serve for them. Incoming Armenians are involved in craft and merchandise (for which they have come) mostly from the cities and villages of Karberd, Arapker, Akna, Chmshkacag/Chmshkatsag. They have a church and a school. The Turks have a mosque, which is, of course, built only for incoming Turks (the Ottomans). The barrack of Khozat is on the route from the city Karberd, which is famous for its big buildings and locations, and once armies used to live there. There are 30 to 35 little Kurdish villages round Khozat, in those [villages] the population is mixed, and local Armenians are fewer. In Khozat the best walnuts are produced, which are very famous within the surrounding provinces, it [the town] also produces wool and carpets." (Antranik 1900: 145 f.) (translation Tereza Amryan)

⁶⁰² The information here can also be found in Wünsch 1881: 494 f.

⁶⁰³ Translator's note: The original has a Czech verb with the archaic meaning "to greet (someone) by taking off (one's hat, cap etc.) from the head."

⁶⁰⁴ Translator's note: As becomes obvious below, this refers to Dr. Gebhard (or Gebhart) of Masgirt.

into a rock, partly dug [into the ground]—and led it to the mill. Before [the canal reaches] the mill, that is, about 3 fathoms above it, there is a not very big reservoir. From there, water flows through a clay pipe, about 15 centimeters wide, and falls from an angle of about 45 degrees directly onto a [mill] wheel, which has only 4 wooden spoon-shaped wings. With this gradient, the pressure of water is so strong that the water wheel rotates very quickly, setting the millstone into motion. The grinding room inside which this machine is working is a small, tight basement, where light can only penetrate through an open door. The whole of it rather resembles a child's toy, but still, it is grinding. And what progress it is compared to a manual mill made up of two stones, which still continues to be routinely used even in Chosat!

At the end, on June 24, when I made sure that it was impossible [to continue] to the north from Chosat, I moved to the southeast, to Palu, with the intention of inspecting the watercourse of the Euphrates all the way down to Muš.⁶⁰⁵ I consoled myself with the Czech proverb, "The wiser retreats." Why should I allow being ripped off exactly in Dersim, being robbed of all my earlier work, when elsewhere, in less dangerous regions, there also was enough meritorious work to do? With a high permit from the famed governorate, this time I rented two horses in Chosat that were supposed to transport me to Peri, by a river of the same name. The groom hailed from the village of Sagman. We agreed that we would stay overnight in his birthplace today. By this, we did not substantially divert from a direct way.

We set out from Chosat at about 8 o'clock. Dr. Gebhart and the miller, my landlord, accompanied me. We said goodbye to each other. From there, I forded the Chosat river. Going toward the southeast, I passed by the large Armenian village of Indžrge and ascended to the mountains, to the village of Dersim. Over there, we took rest in a shady garden from 1 o'clock till 3 o'clock. From there on, we descended to the valley of the village of Sagman-bakče at almost 5 o'clock and dismounted [from the horses] in front of our groom's house. However, [the res-

idents]—whatever the reasons were—did not take us into the house. We spent the night in the fields, not far from the house, where also [the groom's] brother became our nice companion.

On the next day, we took a roughly eastern direction from there. The first thing was to reach again the Chosat river. We forded it in a deep dip after 5 o'clock [in the morning]. After that, a difficult way followed, leading up the steep slope to Sirgič. Then, after 7 o'clock, we went down again to a more leveled landscape. Over there, in the village of Čeurma, we took rest and ate some food. After that, we quickly went through the villages of Vališir, Kačar, Čuchurbach, and Kaukara. After [passing by] Černeč [Černek], we again reached the Mus-sur [Munzur] at half past 2 o'clock. A kelek took us across [the river] to a place a little bit further down the stream than the place where we had crossed some two weeks ago. Over there, we needed to get over a mountain ridge which divides the Mussur from the Peri-su—another abundant tributary of the Euphrates. On the right bank [of the Peri-su], the township of Peri is situated. We happily arrived there at half past 5 o'clock, after a very long and strenuous march.

In Peri, I did not find the kaimakam at home because he had just traveled somewhere. For the next day, I immediately rented two horses for [a trip to] Palu and then spent the night at the konak together with the Zaptiehs. On June 26, at 6 o'clock in the morning, we were getting transported across the Peri-su, which occupied us again for a whole hour. Although the river is not as wild as the Mussur, it is much wider and also has much more water. From here, we took steep ways and gradually got deeper into the mountain range called Bejramlū Dagħ that stretches between the Peri-su and the Murad toward the northeast. There are marvelous pastures on its spacy heights. Over there, in the village of Bedevi, we were taking rest during a hot noontime. When the evening got closer, we descended through the eastern slopes to a small fertile plain that stretches between the mountains and the Murad. Many Armenian villages are dispersed throughout. After 6 o'clock, we arrived in Palu.

⁶⁰⁵ Wünsch 1889c: 537.

ANALYSIS

Wünsch published his observations in *Svetozor*, which was not an academic but a literature and arts magazine. As Veronika Faktorová outlines in this volume, Wünsch did not fulfill the expectations of the readers. These remarks on Dersim were written more like field notes and less like an evocative travelogue. Nevertheless, we find in it rather some attributive representations. Butyka published the two articles in prominent geographical journals. Antranik released his reports in form of a travelbook in Armenian language about ten years after his visit.

In their linguistic expression, the three sources are rather different. Wünsch's field diary in Czech is an interesting source unraveling the writer's attitudes, while his German academic publications reflect the distant, scientific, and professional observer. Butyka, in comparison, pretended to be a distant observer, focusing on hard facts, while reproducing stereotypes.

In their analyses, there are still great differences to be found. Butyka's analytical parts are biased and full of prejudice. Antranik, on the contrary, was completely caught up in the beauty of the Dersim's landscape and was attached to his family's region of origin: „All valleys, canyons and heights of the mountains are full of grass and flowers. In some places, the grass grows and reaches the height of shoulder-high. (...) The types of flowers and herbs are manifold and different that one can just sit and pick 35-40 different colorful flowers.”⁶⁰⁶ The description of the natural environment sounds often like a heavenly scenario with luxuriant nature: „If the wild oaks don't have fruit, they produce Manana (Gazpe or Mannah), which is on its leaves. All people in Dersim enjoy this granted blessing which is sweet like honey. People living in the mountains can earn due to that, if they take it to the city and sell it to the merchants who can take it to Europe.”⁶⁰⁷

Antranik was not only a very detailed observer, but, due to his language knowledge, he gained deeper insight into the specificities of and adaptation to the natural environment. Like Wünsch, Antranik was fascinated by the rich nature and the human ad-

aptation to harsh conditions or e.g. cultivation and irrigation projects to fertilize the soil.⁶⁰⁸ Antranik writes:

*Dersim is really located in a temperate zone, but it is extremely cold due to its elevation, especially as it snows too much on its heights (hills), so it is normal for those places to have 4-5 arshin⁶⁰⁹ snow, especially in the northern parts. The winter is longer and stronger on the heights of Dersim and in the northern parts rather than in southern parts: the reason is clear. [Even] during summer there is usually one or more arshin of snow, especially in dense forests where the new snow usually lies on the old, and in such kind of territory the snow is usually red and wormy (full of worms or not clean). (...) While many arshins of the layers of snow lie on each other, people in Dersim take off their usual charukhs [çarık, i.e. sandals] and put on a kind of strange wide shoes which resemble skis. These shoes, due to their ugly and long style, never wallow in the hardened (solid) snow: it is called “hetik [snowshoe]”.*⁶¹⁰

Antranik's readers learn about the various cultural technologies and natural characteristics, such as the various fish species in the single rivers, how the power of the water is used to drive mills, and about the healing power of certain springs.⁶¹¹ As the Kurdish Alevi creed has strong relations to the natural environment, so mountains, springs, and trees are seen as holy, Antranik's descriptions are rather unique here and obviously the initial source to give insight into the spiritual life of Kurdish Alevism of that time.

The most famous warm mineral water in Dersim up till now has been the mineral water which is called Sovug-Su and is situated near Perkin-Chay of Khuzuchan: that is considered to be a pilgrimage site and a spring that heals different types of diseases [and] weaknesses. People from different places of Dersim come here and get rid of different types of

⁶⁰⁶ Antranik 1900: 118.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.: 117 f.

⁶⁰⁸ Wünsch 1885: 17.

⁶⁰⁹ *Arshin* is a unit of measurement, which once was used in some countries: Iran, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Russia; one *arshin* was approximately 71 square meters (Tereza Amryan).

⁶¹⁰ Antranik 1900: 113 f.

⁶¹¹ „Snatamos is a big mountain which is situated to the east of Meckert/Metskert. A clear spring rises (flows) from the top of that mountain. [The spring] is considered sacred by people in Dersim; they drink its cold water and use it for taking a bath. Due to that, they get rid of many diseases.” (Antranik 1900: 115 f.)

*manges, diseases and also rheumatism. (...) [The] perception of these springs by people in Dersim is nothing more, just worship and belief, and people living in the mountains in their traditional lifestyle speak about them with fear. If somebody tries to interpret the real reason of bitterness, acidity, or warmth [of those springs], they will without doubt consider him/her to be heretic.*⁶¹²

Butyka's report on the contrary is shaped by his military background—he focuses on routes, paths, and mountain range passes. His perspective was driven by Western arrogance and valuation. He explains that only few Armenian families could afford a higher living standard, “the others were a miserable bunch—their women and children lively, sassy, and very healthy, but the men rather pressed and reserved.”⁶¹³

Although it seems that Wünsch had expressed a closeness to the Armenian population rather than to the Kurdish one, in the German articles he hardly uses prejudicial or degrading language. In some exceptional cases, he delineates his view on gender relations. Based on the close reading of his articles, it is obvious that he hardly had contact with women in the field, but mainly to the local guides, state officials, representatives of religious communities and of the diplomatic corps. Wünsch intended to explore the peculiarities in religion, language and traditions of the Dersim population; these initial plans could not be maintained and only parts of Dersim explored. From these outlines it is obvious that the Armenian population in Dersim was as prominent as the Kurdish Alevis, which he depicts on the maps. The history becomes retraceable in the description of the ruins of places of worship. From the end of the 19th century onwards, Dersim was concerned by the empire's measurements of breaking the autonomy and wielding state power. Decade-long attempts to fully integrate it by military force ended up in mass violence during World War I and 1937–38. Various periods in the history of Dersim are not yet written, and it is explored differently from the Kurdish, Turkish, and Armenian side.⁶¹⁴ Thus far, these sources might have a significance for the historiography and for the analysis of the interethnic relations.⁶¹⁵ It is obvious, however, that especially with regard to population statistics, these publications are not meaningful sources. In the comments on Hozat, it becomes clear that the data are very diver-

gent. For example, Wünsch assumes a population of 1,000 at the beginning of the 1880s, while Antranik speaks of 1,500 households at the end of the 1880s. Nor can such population growth be explained by an influx of residents or additionally stationed military units. Decisive seems to have been the changes in the administrative units or divergent assignments of the rural population to cities or towns.

To start, certain communalities and differences in the biographies of the three writers can be stressed briefly. All three authors were born in empires, the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian, and belonged to ethnic groups (Armenian, Czech, and Hungarian) other than the political leadership. From Antranik and Wünsch we know that, even in their youth, both were confronted with the challenges of multicultural settings, which might have influenced their later engagement in the struggle of national independence. Antranik was a member of a political movement and then a famous military commander, while Wünsch was active in the cultural realm, having close contact to the leading figure of the Czech national movement, Vojtěch Náprstek.

Butyka, serving in the Ottoman army, was subject to duties of confidentiality and loyalty. Antranik's and Wünsch's travels lasted one or two years in the 1880s, while Butyka was sent to the eastern Anatolian provinces for several years. His contact with the civil population seems to have been rather limited, though. The three authors had different positions and came from different intellectual backgrounds: Antranik was a young man with an apprenticeship, the middle-aged Josef Wünsch had finished his studies and worked as a schoolteacher, and Butyka was an experienced military physician. For Antranik, the field was not as strange as it was for Wünsch and Butyka, as Armenian was his mother tongue and he was a resident of the Ottoman Empire. Wünsch seemingly had basic knowledge of Armenian, Turkish, and Kurdish, and Butyka's knowledge of local languages is not clear; French was a common language for foreigners in Ottoman institutions, but it is comprehensible that he had acquired solid language knowledge in Turkish over time. All three were at least bilingual and were eager to explore a hardly known region and make it public within their own contexts, thus in Armenia and in the Russian and in the Austro-Hungarian empires, specifically in Vienna and Prague.

⁶¹² Antranik 1900: 128.

⁶¹³ Butyka 1892: 116 f.

⁶¹⁴ See, for example, Arslan et al. 2017; Watts 2000; White/Jongerden 2003.

⁶¹⁵ For Antranik's book, see Ertaş/Reçber 2017.

Especially noticeable is the difference in Wünsch's German and Czech publications. As already shown by Veronika Faktorová,⁶¹⁶ Wünsch's positionality differs as he addresses a different readership. The German publications were oriented toward an academic public, while the articles in Czech addressed an audience in which national ideas, concepts for an independent statehood, and political dependencies were highly discussed. It seems that the Czech national question and the Habsburg's concerns with national movements are mirrored in the descriptions of the interethnic power relations in the Ottoman empire. In Czech he critically depicts the expressions of superiority of Turkish state representatives—in some instances, even with harsh words or ironic expressions. In the German publications he tries to remain rather objective, while his closeness to the Armenians becomes apparent. Besides the descriptions of the natural and cultural environment, there is additional information for elaborating the political history of Dersim. All three authors were (in different manners) related to, opposed to, or dependent on the military. Even Wünsch was ascribed a role comparable to those foreigners who were attached to the Turkish military. Otherwise—as outlined in his “field diary”—he interacted with the local population in various manners, such as his artworks in one of the villages.

Based on the author's incidental reports on military units and settlements, one learns about the increasing militarization at the frontiers of Dersim. Even though Dersim was only defeated in the late 1930s, the attempts to vanquish the resistant population preceded it by several decades. As the plan was to establish state authority—through military power and state administration—military units were inserted in border regions to push forward into the high mountain regions of Dersim during the summer months. From Butyka's itinerary, we know that his battalion approached Dersim from Erzincan via Pülümür in 1878, and the “Turkish battalions after the Turkish-Russian war intended to besiege Dersim from around the different angles. But the Dersim Kurds had occupied the abandoned garrisons during the war and the military did not proceed further.”⁶¹⁷

Butyka's experiences were angst-driven and full of prejudice, representing the official stereotyping. On the contrary, Wünsch and Antranik could expe-

rience freely and reflect independently on what they had observed. In the German articles, Wünsch tries to stay objective and avoids taking a clear stance in favor of one of the ethnic or religious groups. Even in reporting robberies or raids carried out by Kurdish tribes, he tries to take an objective stance and explains structural problems or political inequalities. In comparison, Butyka's glance is full of stereotypes, ascribing robbery, corruption, moral insanity, and disbelief to the Kurds: “Robbery runs in the blood of the Kurds, although the need enforces them to it.”⁶¹⁸ This might be related to his employment as a military physician in the Ottoman army, which could have influenced his perceptions of the social and interethnic relations and willingness to reproduce stereotyping perspectives. About the Armenian population and Armenian writers, Butyka continues in the same manner:

*[O]ne cannot rely to his exaggerating oriental and especially Christian and national biased information, as the most Armenian writers in older and recent times like to do just as it suits. Each objectivity is lost, even in the information in the names/terms of the towns and villages. Their ethnographic, statistic and above all historic information are not reliable at all.*⁶¹⁹

In the parallel reading of these three sources it is shown how the epistemological interests and the publication strategies are shaped by the social background, the positionality, and the prospective readership. Dersim was, in Wünsch's words, the *mysterious acropolis of the Near East*, mysterious because it was unexplored and an undefeated stronghold due to Kurdish resistance. Antranik's representations seem more objective and, while esteeming the independence, show concern for the Armenian population. Dependent on consequences of rivalries and exposed to the lawlessness of remote areas, the Armenians were in a better economic but weaker political position.

Suraya Faroqi argues that, despite the Orientalist focus and the partiality of European travelers, these works should not be neglected. A critical evaluation has to regard the sociopolitical background and status, the length of stay, the language competencies, and, above all, the concepts about urban living, governmentality, and imperialist agendas of the travelers.⁶²⁰ A critical reevaluation shows the religious and

⁶¹⁶ See Chapter 9 in this volume.

⁶¹⁷ Butyka, 1892: 104 ff.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.: 209.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.: 204.

⁶²⁰ Faroqi 2004: 110 f. and 140.

ethnic bias of the authors, the willingness to adapt to the journals' or readers' expectations and enables a reassessment of these sources. The parallel reading

of the three authors shows that the political contexts of the authors and the readers furthermore shape epistemological and publication strategies.

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