

TRANSNATIONAL IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES AND ETHNIC SOLIDARITY: THE CASE OF SAMSUN AND SYRIAN CIRCASSIANS

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Abstract

This study will focus on the ethnic ties of the Circassian communities living in Turkey, as well as the problems faced by the Circassian communities in the mass migration movements caused by the Syrian crisis. The Syrian Circassians, who during the civil war in Syria took refuge in Turkey, tried to solve their housing and other problems that arose during the Great Circassian migration, with the help of ethnic predecessors who had settled in Turkey. This process contributed to the development of ethnic solidarity and social cohesion. During the Great Circassian migration, the Circassians who came to Turkey after the Syrian crisis of 2011 met with the Circassians, who by that time were already living in Turkey. This meeting showed results that should be examined from the point of view of the formation of migration links and solidarity of ethnic identity. This study will analyse the results

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obtained from the Circassian Association of Samsun, reflecting the process of the formation of ethnic solidarity in nine settlements in Samsun.

Keywords: *Syrian Circassians, Migration, Migration Networks, Ethnic Solidarity, Meeting, Transnational Migration and Communities, International Territories, Social Capital*

ULUSÖTESİ TOPLULUKLAR VE ETNİK DAYANIŞMA: SAMSUN VE SURIYE ÇERKESLERİ

Öz

Bu araştırmada Suriye Krizi sonrası yaşanan kitlesel göç hareketleri içinde yer alan Çerkes toplulukların Türkiye’de yaşadıkları sorunların aşılmasında Türkiye’de yaşayan Çerkes toplulukların gösterdiği etnik dayanışmanın etkileri tartışılacaktır. Suriyeli Çerkesler, yaşanan iç savaş ortamında Türkiye’ye sığınmışlar, bu esnada Büyük Çerkes Göçü ve sonrasında Türkiye’ye yerleşmiş etnik öncülerinin yardımları ile barınma ve diğer sorunlarını çözmeye çalışmışlardır. Bu etnik dayanışma ile toplumsal uyum süreçlerini kolaylaştırmışlardır. Büyük Çerkes Göçü esnasında Türkiye’ye gelen Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşı göçmen Çerkesler ile 2011 Suriye krizi sonrası gelen Suriye Çerkeslerinin bu buluşması göçmen ağlarının oluşumu ve etnik kimlik dayanışmasının göç süreçlerine etkileri açısından araştırmaya değer bulgular ortaya koymuştur. Bu araştırmada, 2011 sonrası Suriye’den zorunlu göçe mecbur bırakılan Çerkeslerin, Samsun’da Türkiye uyruklu Çerkeslerin yaşadığı dokuz yerleşim birimine etnik dayanışma içinde yerleştirilmeleri sürecinde Samsun Kafkas Derneği’nden elde edilen bulguların değerlendirilmesi tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Suriye Çerkesleri, Göç, Göç Ağları, Etnik Dayanışma, Buluşma, Ulusötesi Göç ve Topluluklar, Devletası Alanlar, Sosyal Sermaye*

Introduction

Migration is defined as changing the place where people have lived their whole lives (Sayın 2010:19; Tekeli 2008:42; Toksöz 2006:109; Yalçın 2004:1). A change of place can be defined as either within the internal territorial boundaries, or by crossing external borders and moving to another territory. (Faist 2003a:19; Sayın 2017). Migration movements carried out by transcending national boundaries are called international migrations. “International migration is defined as a permanent movement from one nation state to another, which can be a multidimensional economic, political, social, cultural or demographic process.” (Faist 2003b:30). In this respect, those movements forced Western societies to reconsider their pluralisms and cope with a new kind of multiculturalism (Konuralp, 2018: 141).

John Lukacs argues that the 21st century gave rise to “great unanswered questions”, more in Europe than in other countries of the world, and lists them as “What is most important in the 21st century?” Class conflict? Conflict of the state? In other words, the revolution? Wars? Tribal wars? Mass migration? (1993:135). Lukach’s “great questions” come from Castles and Miller; who argue that international migration, which they consider a permanent phenomenon in the history of mankind, is global in the 20th century and in the early 21st century and deserves to be called the “Age of Immigrants” (2008: 405).

In the early 2000s, there were seven general trends in migration movements: globalisation, diversity in ethnic identities, acceleration, differentiation, feminisation, politicisation, illegalisation (Abadan Unat 2006:364-366; Castles Miller 2008:12-14; Sayın, 2010:100-102). The Arab Spring, a phenomenon that took place in the early 2000s, and its consequences in Syria, also added to this list. The masses, who fled from the civil war beyond the borders of Syria, caused a movement that shook the whole world.

The migrants did not cease their ties with their homeland and felt that they belonged to that place, explaining this with the term “transnational migration”. The concept of “transnational communities” was developed in order to explain the strong ties that ethnic communities have with their countries. Developing transport and communication technologies have weakened the idea of loyalty to a single country that allows immigrants to integrate. The identity of migrants has developed in several aspects of belonging and is the link. (Toksöz 2006: 40).

The immigrants migrate through organisational registration personal connections, under duress and indirect violence. The organisations try to meet their labour needs with migrant worker records. They offer personal connections, facilitating opportunities for hidden immigrants or refugees. Arriving as tourists, they legitimise their status with the help of personal connections. Finally, persecution of certain social groups, civil war, suffering during natural disasters, indirect violence becomes a “catalyst” for the movement of refugees. “In all three cases, hidden immigrants and refugees do not make their own choices. They are usually unaware of the larger groups or networks of people surrounding them. People who motivate them are more likely to be close friends, family members, neighbours, fellow villagers or colleagues. These bonds are used in all three cases. When immigrants initially form a migration path, more and more potential immigrants join this path, using the information they receive from previous migrants. In all three cases there are obligations, reciprocity and solidarity in the bonds within the networks. The links provided by network organisations reduce the risks associated with international migration because individuals can expect assistance from previous immigrants for their business and housing issues” (Faist 2003b:201-202). Migrants moving within

network organisations benefit from “social capital benefits” in the form of limited resources such as money, knowledge and power relationships for the group. They benefit from the risks and experiences of previous migrants and these networks are supported by informal agreements and illegal contracts. “The financial and psychological costs of immigration for friends, relatives and elected members of communities in the homeland are greatly reduced. As the immigration choices reach a critical concentration, the spreading features of social capital are at the forefront. Generally, social capital within cooperation networks is strengthened by the self-sustaining processes of immigration” (Faist 2003b:202-203). Social capital, acquired from belonging to a group, becomes international and at the same time protects the economic and cultural capital of a migrant, provides economic saving, combines the two and maximises its limited power.

Syrian immigrants were added to immigrants from countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Myanmar, where conflict situations were resumed or revived, and migration became the main problem of international politics. Current immigration has created the masses that have accumulated along borders and created areas that go beyond states. “The international arena is a multi-site link between people, networks, communities and organisations that transcends national borders. These transnational relations have a high density, frequency and continuity. International ties are characterised by the circulation of people, commodities, money, symbols, thoughts and cultural practices. Throughout this circulation, the flow of elements of mutual exchange, such as commodities and persons, have priority determinants. They play a founding role in people and their networks, organisations and communities in interstate migration and social spaces “ (Faist 2003a: 19).

I. General Information about Research

In the framework of the study, after 2011, the Circassian communities that were forced to migrate from Syria had to fill in special personal forms prepared by the Caucasian associations that assisted settlement in Samsun, Turkey. The forms were created by the directors of the Association to study the needs of immigrants. They included personal data of immigrants, micro-ethnic affiliation, places of residence in Syria, social profiles, health conditions, disabilities, the need for personal assistance, assistance in moving to Turkey, information on entry routes, dates and legal statuses in Turkey (the information on documents ensuring legality), accommodation and subsistence working conditions. The forms were provided to researchers by the administrators of the Samsun Circassian Association for research purposes.

The basis of the study includes mass and forced migration networks. The data obtained is from the information collected by the Caucasian non-governmental

organisations in Samsun. According to various estimates, it is assumed that the number of Circassians who arrived from Syria to Turkey is about 6000-6500 people (Akbulat, 2017a) . Some of the Syrian Circassian immigrants settled next to Circassian compatriots who already lived in Turkey. (Akbulat, 2017b; Akbulat & Sayin 2017). The interaction of old and new immigrants in the framework of promoting solidarity on the basis of ethnic identity and the processes of adaptation of the old to the new, is determined by Mr. Sayin as a meeting (Hudayi Sayin, Personal communication, 20.04.2017, Akbulat, 2017:1).

After the migration movement that began as a result of the Syrian civil war, a large majority of Turkish people accepted Syrian immigrants with their ethnic, religious and political identity. Therefore, Syrian refugees tend to reside in Turkey alongside people similar to their own ethnic, religious or religious identity. (ORSAM, 2014, s. 17-18; Kaypak, Bimay, 2016, s.101; Erkan, 2017, s.64-65). Syrian immigrants in the regions where they settled after their arrival in Turkey are concentrated in accordance with their ethnicity, identity, (Doğan, Karakuyu, 2016, s.302-333) language and in accordance with social needs, consisting of religious and cultural ties (Özkarlı, 2015, s.186), in order to try to facilitate the process of spatial adaptation (Harunoğulları, Cengiz, 2014). After the forced displacement of Syrian Circassians their compatriots, acting as non-governmental organisations, showed effective solidarity in solving the problems they encountered during the immigration process. (İHA, 2013; orsam.org.tr, 2012; dnyabulteni.net, 2013; jinepsgazetesi.com, December 2012-January 2013; ajanskafkas.com, 2015; özgürcerkes.com, 2016).

The Syrian Circassians, who came from Syria and settled in Samsun, are the subject of research. The data obtained is the information collected by the Caucasian Circassian non-governmental organisations in Samsun “Samsun Çerkes Derneği³”. This information is explanatory for migrant networks starting in Syria and ending in Samsun. The Syrian Circassians investigated, travelled along various migration routes and arrived in Samsun. The study is limited to the data of this group.

The study is aimed at analysing migration movements and problems in the process of adaptation in Turkey after the Syrian crisis of 2011, specifically with regard to the situation of the Syrian Circassians. The main purpose is to analyse official data in order to help the international community and Turkey, where about three million Syrians live.

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II. The Method of Analysis of Collected Data Used in Research

The study was conducted through the collection of information, which was recorded in a form organised by the Circassian Association in Samsun “Samsun Çerkes Derneği” as the basis for statistical evaluation. The classified data was evaluated using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 20.0. The statistical values of the variables derived from the classified data were identified and analysed. Numbers and percentages were used as descriptive statistical values when evaluating data. 174 forms organised by the association were retained for evaluation. In cases where the statistics were insufficient or inexplicable, the leaders of the associations were interviewed and the results were discussed and analysed.

III. Results

Under this title, the personal and social profiles of the Syrian Circassians will be discussed, the social capital promoting the formation of group identities, ways to facilitate migration processes, the records from associations regarding the assistance that migrants need, the records that determine the legitimacy of their migration and their routes and stops.

According to the General Administration of Migration Management, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkey, in 2016 the number of Syrian citizens under the provisional protection status was 2,834,441 persons. 4,011 of them were registered in Samsun province. According to whole number of Syrian citizens, 0,0014% Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey were located in Samsun. The ratio of this group to the population of the province of 1,295,927 people was 0,0031%. In 2017, the number of Syrians in Samsun province increased to 5,001 people. So from the total number of Syrian refugees in Turkey, that is 3,381,005 people, the figure for Syrians in Samsun remained relatively stable as 0,0015%. Additionally the proportion of Syrian asylum seekers in the population of Samsun province is 0,0039% (goç.gov.tr, 2015/2016/2017).

Table 1.1. Number of Syrian Citizens with Temporary Protection Status

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Syrians in Turkey (people)</i>	<i>Number of Syrians in Samsun Province (people)</i>
2016	2 834,441	4 011 (0,0014%)
2017	3 381,005	5 001 (0,0015%)

Table 1.2. Number of Syrian Asylum Seekers in Samsun Province

Year	Number of Syrians refugees (people) of Samsun province	Ratio to the population in Samsun (%)
2016	1 295,927	0,0031 %
2017	1 312,990	0,0039 %

The total number of Circassians in Syria who were assisted and registered up to May 2017 by the Samsun Circassian Platform Humanitarian Assistance Commission “Samsun Çerkesleri İnsani Yardım Komisyonu” and the Samsun Circassian Association “Samsun Çerkes Derneği” was 243. Of this number, 174 immigrants filled out the form provided by the Circassian Association in Samsun “Samsun Çerkes Derneği”. The immigrants were accommodated in nine different settlements in Samsun. Other immigrants who could not find a similar opportunity for solidarity seem to have accepted living outside of humanitarian conditions (Avcı, Sayın, 2017; Dinçer, vd., 2013, s.23; Reçber, 2014, s. 259; Yaman, 2016, 106/114; eskisite.pa.edu.tr, 2016, s. 16; mülteciler.org.tr, 2017; ttb.org.tr, 2016, s.32). It is evident that immigrants who have good economic status are homeowners and tenants, and those who do not have this status are forced to live in unauthorised and unprotected living spaces in large cities without legal permission.

According to the results of a field study conducted in Turkey from among the Syrian immigrants of Arab origin, about 20% have their own housing and 75% have the status of tenants. It was found that about 70% of the Syrian immigrants of Kurdish origin have the status of tenants. According to the same study, it is understood that 75% of Syrian immigrants of Turkmen origin live in vacant available houses. 1% of Syrian immigrants of Arab and Kurdish origin live with relatives in Turkey. The number of Syrian refugees of Turkmen origin who live as a guest of a relative living in Turkey is 12%. (Doğan, Karakuyu, 2016, s.317)⁴. The data demonstrates that while solving the problem of housing by meeting the costs of immigrants with good economic levels, the poor are trying to survive in inadequate conditions or are involved in ethnic solidarity networks. The survey results show that immigrants with a good economic standard of living can solve their housing problems. Migrants, whose economic standard of living is poor, try to survive in impoverished conditions or support their lives with the assistance of ethnic people of the same nationality.

4 In the study, settlement in unoccupied houses was described as “invasion”.

IV. Results Related to Personal Characteristics

It is seen that around 70% of the general immigration population from Syria is from a relatively young age group. (Avcı, Sayın, 2017; Bitkal, Doğan, Karakuyu, 2016, s.310; Erdoğan, 2015, s. 13; Kaypak, Bimay, 2016, s.102; Sayın, Usanmaz, Aslangiri, 2016, s. 7-8, goc.gov.tr, 2015, s. 87/ 2016, s. 76). From the data on the Syrian Circassian records, which was received by the association, 27% of people were under the age of 15, 60.9% were between the ages of 15 and 55, and 8.6% were older than 55 years. Therefore, 71.8% of the people were under 40 years old. A significant number of the Circassians who are settled in Samsun region can be placed in the children's age group and a group of over 70% can be categorised as a young and active population.

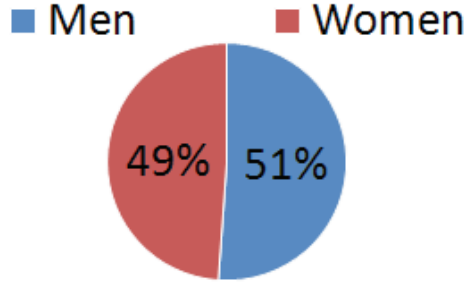
Table 2. Age Ranges of Immigrants

Value	Number of Persons	Percentage %
0/4	11	6,3
5/9	20	11,5
10/14	16	9,2
15/19	16	9,2
20/24	13	7,5
25/29	17	9,8
30/34	18	10,3
35/39	14	8,0
40/44	11	6,3
45/49	13	7,5
50/54	4	2,3
55/59	6	3,4
60/64	6	3,4
65/69	1	0,6
70/74	6	3,4
75/79	1	0,6
85/89	1	0,6
Total	174	100

The gender distribution of Syrian migrants is close to equal. 89 are women and 85 are men, and migrated to Turkey with their families. Under the conditions of the Civil war, the Syrian Circassians did not act with any of the belligerent groups

and did not support either side. Therefore, after the conflict in Syria, they, along with their families, participated in forced mass migration.

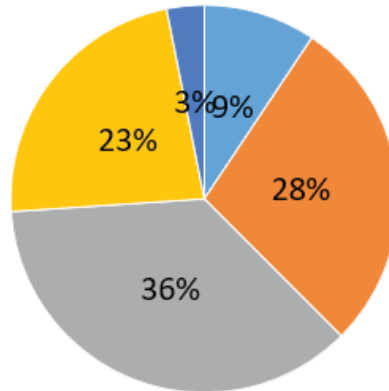
Graph 1. Gender Distribution of Immigrants



96 Syrian Circassians answered the question about their level of education in Syria. This figure corresponds to 55.1% of the total surveyed group. Of those whose level of education was defined as having an education in secondary school the figure is 30.0%, 37.0% of the group graduated from secondary school, 23.0% of them are college graduates. The level of education of 8.6% of immigrants was not defined. 11 of them were non-school age, 1 was mentally disabled and 3 persons had received literacy education. The level of education of the Syrian Circassians living in Samsun shows parallels with Syrian immigrants in other areas of research conducted in Turkey. (Avcı, Sayın, 2017; Doğan, Karakuyu, 2016, s.311). Group studies show that there is a relative difference between ethnic groups in terms of access to educational opportunities in Syria. A group of field surveys show that there was a relative difference between ethnic groups in terms of access to educational opportunities in Syria. For example, according to the findings of Avcı Sayın, 1% of illiteracy among people of Arab origin grew to 8% among Turkmen and 16% in Kurds. For example, according to other findings of Avcı Sayın, it follows that 1% of illiterate migrants are Arabs, 8% are Turkmen migrants, and 16% are Kurds. (Avcı, Sayın, 2017; Özkarslı, 2015, s.180).

Graph 2. Education Levels of Immigrants

■ Primary School ■ Middle School ■ High School
■ University/College ■ Reader/Writer

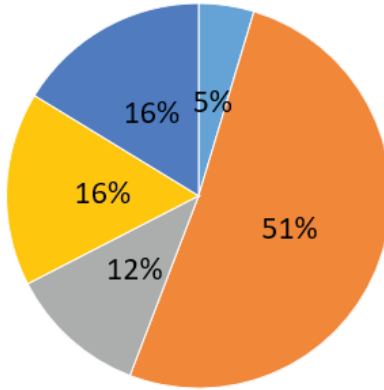


In Turkey, 63 Syrian Circassian immigrants continue to study, which is 45%. From this group, 68% have a middle school education or below. 16% of this group are studying in high school in Turkey, while 16% continue their university education in Syria. Dogan and Karakuyu's field research showed that a group of over 60% of immigrants who defined their ethnic identities as Arabs, sent their children to school and among Kurds and Turkmen this ratio was around 20%. The study shows that Arabs with economically better opportunities tend to wish their children to receive education and training, while Turkmen and Kurds, having an economically low income, are forced to work (Doğan, Karakuyu, 2016, s.326-328). In another field study in the Kartal district of Istanbul, 60% of the immigrants did not send their children to teaching institutions and instead encouraged them to work (Avcı, Sayın, 2017). It can be seen that the Circassian immigrants who settled in Samsun have access to the possibilities of educating their children, using the opportunities of their ethnic compatriots. This situation also seems to be related to the fact that a group of immigrants receiving assistance from the Association has no problems with legalisation.

The results of the study show that a significant proportion of migrants are children. They have entered the social environment of Turkey, and their personalities are developing in this country. Accepting that the young population of migrant Syrians is permanent in Turkey, policies to facilitate integration processes in this framework should be developed.

Graph 3. Educational Status of Migrants in Turkey

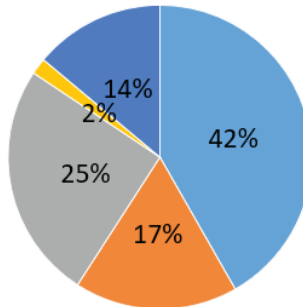
- Kindergarden
- Primary School
- Middle School
- High School
- University in Syria



42% of Syrian Circassians who filled the association form were workers, 25% housewives, 17% officers, 2% retired people and 14% were unemployed. Those who have not entered information about their profession on the form are unemployed, students or children who have not yet reached the age of education. The occupations of immigrants are related to their level of education. Since approximately 56% of immigrants have secondary level or incomplete education, it is clear that 42% of them are workers.

Graph 4. Occupation of Immigrants

- Worker
- Officer
- Housewife
- Retired
- Non-Worker



V. Compliance Process and Social Data of Immigrants

Officials of the Circassian Association of Samsun also talked with the Syrian Circassians, whom they helped with their resettlement, and asked questions about their origin. It is believed that in the current situation, the identification of origin is very important, since this facilitates the process of the adoption and distribution of immigrants. Taking into account the negative perception of Syrian refugees in Turkey, it is clear that the Syrian Circassians, who have the same genealogy as their compatriots in Turkey who provide assistance to them, are very fortunate. Meetings between the two groups increased the communication opportunities offered by social media, facilitated and accelerated this. Another Syrian Circassian group, who settled in the city of Balıkesir, has communication channels in social networks with the same settlements of Circassians with whom they exchanged messages through cellular communication, and met without any prior acquaintance (Akbulat, Sayın 2017). At the level of evidence, it should be recognised that the process of ethnic solidarity is one of the types of social capital that facilitates the process of migration.

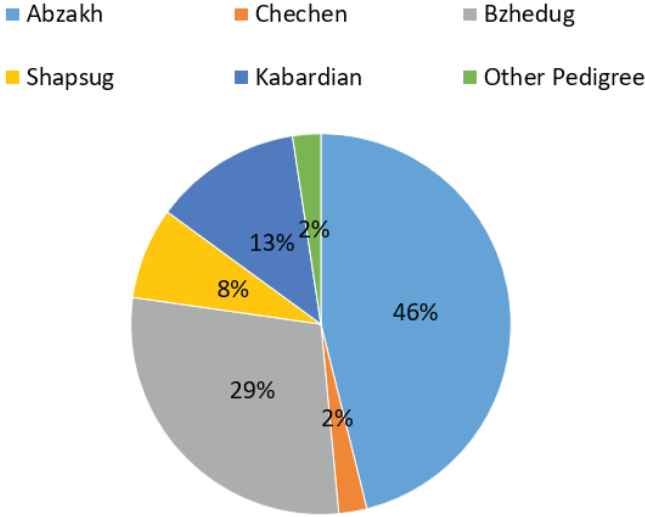
44.3% of those surveyed are Abzakh, 12.1% are Kabardian, 27.6% are Bzhedug, 7.5% are Shapsug, 2.3% are Chechen, 0.6% are from Daghestan, 0.6% are Abaza, 0.6% are Balkar and 0.6% are Karachay. The identity of the remaining 4.0% has not been established.

Table 3. The Origin of the Immigrants

Value	Number of Persons	Percentage%
Abzakh	77	44,3
Kabardian	21	12,1
Bzhedug	48	27,6
Shapsug	13	7,5
Chechen	4	2,3
Daghestan	1	0,6
Abaza	1	0,6
Balkar	1	0,6
Karachay	1	0,6
Undetermined	7	4
Total	174	100

The graphic distribution of the identification of immigrants is shown in the table above. As can be seen on the graph, Abzakh make up almost half of the total number of Circassians who have settled in the Samsun region.⁵

Graph 5. The Origin of Immigrants



37.9% of Syrian Circassians are from Damascus, 28.2% from Homs and 14.9% from Aleppo. The birthplace of other immigrants is indicated in Table 3. It should be noted that the Syrian Circassians live in the regions of Damascus, Homs and Aleppo. Circassians began to migrate to Ottoman territories from the second half of the 19th century and settled in Europe, Anatolia and Asia. The ancestors of the Circassians who were settled in the Bilad-i Şam provinces were Circassians who lived in the lands that now comprise Syrian territory (Akbulat 2017:80,81). Another remarkable piece of data is that immigrant children were born in Libya and Samsun. Although the history of the expulsion of the Circassians from their homeland spans a hundred years, the period from the beginning of the Syrian Civil War has lasted six years, and now a new generation has been born in new regions of immigration. This is the reason for the resettlement of the Circassians from Syria, and the place in which they live now will become their new homeland.

5 The assistance rendered to the Circassians of Syria from ethnic solidarity took place because the Circassians residing in Syria and Samsun had the same identity. However, there is no evidence that the Circassians living in Samsun belong to which tribes of the Circassian race. This issue requires a new research.

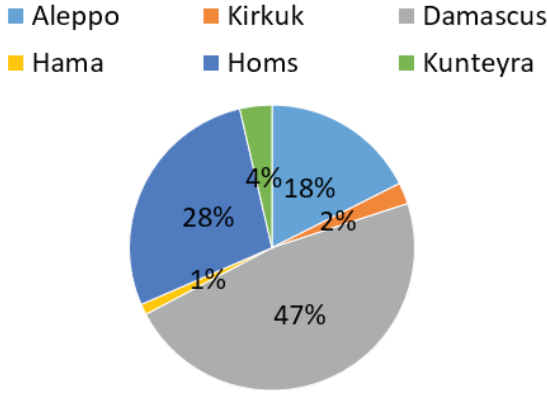
Table 4. Place of Birth of Immigrants

Value	Number of Persons	Percentage%
Qamishli	1	0,6
Aleppo	26	14,9
Damascus	66	37,9
Golan	1	0,6
Homs	49	28,2
Deraa	6	3,4
Kirkuk	4	2,3
Quneitra	5	2,9
Libya	1	0,6
Samsun	5	2,9
Undetermined		5,7
Total	174	100

VI. The Life of Immigrants in Turkey: Problems and Obstacles of Integration

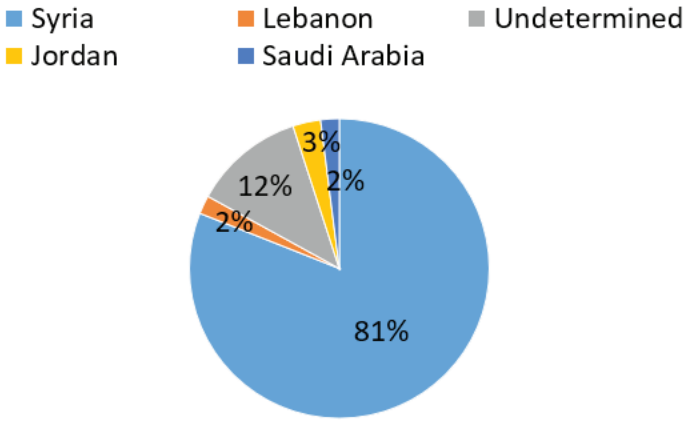
Before the settlement of Syrian Circassians in Samsun, 44.8% of them lived in Damascus, 26.4% in Homs, 16.7% in Aleppo and around 7% of the population lived in Quneitra, Kirkuk and Hama. Quneitra is a settlement in the Golan zone, on the border with Israel, where communities from the Caucasus were resettled in 1878. There is a linear link between where the Circassian immigrants appeared and where they now live. The fact that the social mobilisation of Circassians is low, a sedentary lifestyle is usually preferable. The relationship between stable spatial loyalty to social opportunities and limitations should also be investigated in the context of the Syrian Circassians.

Graph 6. Provinces Where Immigrants Reside in Syria



Nearly 81% of the Syrian Circassians entered Turkey from Syria. For a small group, Turkey became the second place for resettlement, initially this group went to other countries, and then moved to Turkey. Initially, three people from this group moved to Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, but subsequently preferred to live in Turkey. One person came to Turkey from the United Arab Emirates and other person from the Republic of Adygea, which is in the Russian Federation. Maykop is the capital of the Republic of Adygea and the homeland of Circassians. Some Syrian Circassians, instead of staying in Maykop, made their choice in favour of Turkey and came to live here. However, it is impossible to identify all immigrants who have preferred to live in Turkey. After the Great Circassian exile to Turkey, it should be recognised that it is considered the birthplace of the Circassian communities. 40.8% of the Circassians who came to Turkey from Syria were from Damascus, 24.8% from Homs, 16.1% from Aleppo, 2.3% from Kirkuk and 1.1% entered Turkey from Hama. 12% of immigrants who came to Turkey could not be identified, 4 of them were born in Samsun. There is a linear relationship between the place of entry and the place of birth and place of residence. This is also in parallel with the fact that the level of mobility of Circassians, as mentioned above, is at a low level.

Graph 7. Countries from Which Immigrants Arrive in Turkey



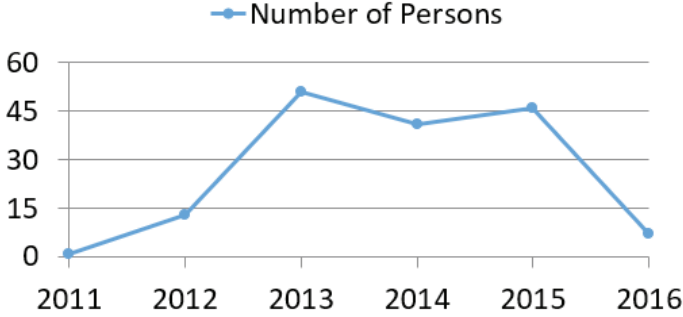
The Syrian Circassians, who settled in Samsun from the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011 until the end of 2016, reached the highest density of settlement of 29.3% in 2013. The migration movement, which grew until 2013, reached 23.6% by 2015, followed a stable course with a ratio of 26.4, and in 2016 sharply decreased to 4,0%. The entry date of 6.6% of the total number of 174 persons has not yet been determined.

All Syrian Circassians registered by the Samsun Circassian Platform of Humanitarian Assistance Commission and the Samsun Circassian Association have legal documents. All of the people of this group have “identity cards for the temporary protection of persons” and a residence permit which was issued by the official authorities of the Republic of Turkey. The Commission and the association carried out activities aimed at helping to obtain the necessary permits, since immigrants first arrived in the province of Samsun, and carried out all the necessary legal procedures.

The Samsun Circassian Platform Humanitarian Aid Commission and the Samsun Kafkas Association recorded all Syrian Circassians and they were placed in nine different areas of Samsun. Nearly half of the 243 immigrants were settled in Terme (49%) and 34% in Samsun city centre (Atakum). The remaining 17% of immigrants live in Çarsamba, Kavak, Asarcık, Dikbiyik, Ortasogutlu Village and Emiryusuf Village. From the group of 17%, 12 immigrants are in Kavak and 9 immigrants reside in the village of Ortasogutlu. All immigrants live in rented houses.⁶

6 The Samsun Circassian Platform Humanitarian Aid Commission and the Samsun Circassian Association Syrian Circassians, provided help and guidance in total to 243 Syrian Circassians. However, only 174 immigrants could be enrolled in the registration forms of the immigrants detailed information. This was explained to the authorities of the Samsun

Graph 8. Number of Syrian Circassians who Settled in Samsun in 2011-2016

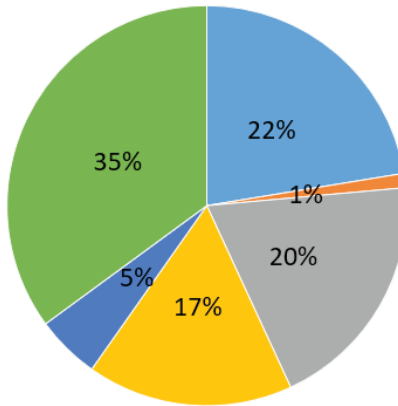


22.4% of Syrian immigrants of Circassian origin have jobs that generate income in Samsun. 72.3% of immigrants do not have an income-generating job. In the general group, 35.0% neither are students nor have reached working age. 16.7% of the group defined themselves as unemployed and 19.5% as housewives. Two immigrants stated that their poor health is an obstacle to their work. The working status of 5.2% of the group could not be determined. 54.5% of the group consists of housewives, teachers and young children in the age group of six. According to a survey of Syrian immigrants of Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen origin living in Beyoğlu, one of the most cosmopolitan regions of Istanbul, it was clear that 40% of all three ethnic groups are labourers. Obviously, about 60% of Turkmen migrants are itinerant salesmen. 10% of Arabs, 20% of Kurds and 30% of Turkmen are unemployed. (Doğan, Karakuyu, 2016, s.318-319). The fact that the Circassian places in Samsun are rural areas, clearly favourable for agriculture, generally explains the high level of unemployment. A low level of income negatively affects the process of adaptation of immigrants themselves and their families.

Circassian Association.as a result of the lack of communication after the emergency assistance in the period of immigration, and the inability to fill the forms for this reason.

Graph 9. Working Conditions of Syrian Immigrants in Samsun

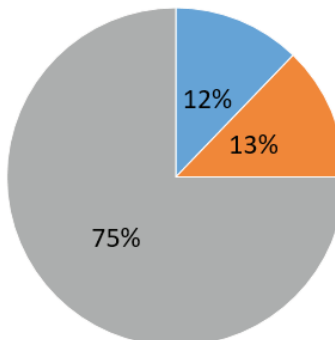
- Income Earner
- Disabled
- Housewife
- Unemployed
- Undetermined
- Neither Student Nor Under Working Age



It is seen that the Syrians settled in Turkey have a low income from their jobs during their working life. 75% of Syrian Circassians immigrants do not have any income. The income of 12% is below 1000 TL and for 13% it is 1000-2000 TL. The fact that a significant number of immigrants do not have minimum subsistence, indicates the provision of assistance in obtaining a livelihood as the key to solving the problem.

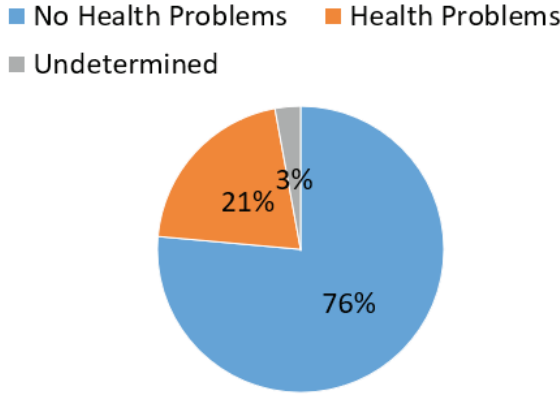
Graph 10. Income Level of Immigrants in Samsun

- 0-1000 TL
- 1001-2000 TL
- No Income



76.4% of those surveyed stated that they do not have health problems, 20.7% stated that they need health care. 2.9% were not able to determine their health status. It is noted that the level of use of health services by Syrian immigrants is low, and they apply to medical institutions only in emergency cases. (Avcı, Sayın, 2017).

Graph 11. Health Status of Immigrants



Discussion and Conclusions

As of 2017, the Circassians of Syria, who are formally regarded by the Turkish authorities as “Citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic under temporary protection”, are concentrated in Istanbul, Canakkale, Balıkesir, Samsun, Amasya, Tokat, Adana, Hatay and Kahramanmaraş, as well as small groups in others cities. The opportunities provided by members of the Circassian diaspora who are already citizens of Turkey, in the process of “new / re-homelessness” that the Syrian Circassians experienced after 2011, have a facilitating effect on their life and its spheres. The Turkish Circassians, who had previously settled and already adapted to Turkey, shared their material capacities and experience of adaptation, which helped the Syrian Circassians cope with migratory trauma and adapting socially.

The Syrian Circassians, who already had more than 150 years of immigration experience, started a new migration process, and this same process led to the solidarity of immigrants with compatriots residing in Turkey who provided support in overcoming the problems that they encountered on their way. The Circassian diaspora in Turkey played the role of pioneers for Syrian Circassian immigrants, and they alleviated the difficulties that arose in the migration process. Syrian Circassians transcended settlement problems with their aid and began the process of harmonisation within the framework of security created by social networks based on ethnicity.

The Caucasus-Circassian diaspora, which perceives Turkey as its homeland, and civil society organisations, track the arrival of migrants to the regions in which they live, continue to record personal information about them, identify problems, manage aid mechanisms and provide necessary assistance in the framework of solidarity. The provision of information and financial support to meet housing, health and education needs, etc., contributed to the settlement of a new immigrant community and facilitated the process of adaptation. Official aid and the organisation of individual donations were distributed among immigrants according to their needs, and the traumatic consequences of migration were overcome through solidarity. As of 2017, there are no Syrian citizens of Circassian origin in the asylum centres in the Gaziantep Nizip container city within the framework of the information provided by the authorities of the Caucasus Association. Instead of living in the camp, Circassians prefer assistance from civil society organisations, as well as assistance from Turkish compatriots and individual initiatives that provide shelters and other services.

The Caucasian Circassian associations and representatives of civil society believe that, according to some estimates, about 6000-6500 Syrian Circassians crossed the borders after the civil war. In terms of the number and location of this population in Turkey, there is no clear data. Quantitative data is unclear due to the lack of ethnic and religious identity in official records, the lack of accurate quantitative data of all Caucasian Circassian associations, the interruption of communication with some Circassians arriving in Turkey and the reluctance to register immigrants who plan to leave Turkey. Circassians who had to emigrate from Syria to the Caucasus seemed to want to leave Russia and settle in Europe in 2014-2015, (Akbulat 2017: 202) and the situation is the same for groups coming to Turkey.

For all the immigrant populations of the Syrian Circassians who settled in Turkey, the priority issues are housing and employment. In the same field of research, the educated majority of Syrian Circassians demonstrate that they will achieve a high level of success in overcoming social integration problems if they participate in business life in Turkey (Akbulat, 2017:203).

When massive immigration started after the Syrian Civil War, KAFFED, the umbrella organisation of the Turks of Caucasian origin, and the Caucasian Association of Samsun realised a joint meeting. At the meeting, probable Syrian Circassian immigration had been assessed and political aid for their compatriots had been discussed. At the meeting it was decided that the Syrian Circassians should be sent not to Turkey, but to the Caucasus, as their homeland, so that the second “expulsion” would not lead to even greater suffering. In this regard, a policy has been formed to help organisations to send Syrian Circassians to the Caucasus. In order to achieve this, the Caucasian Association together with the Perit Khasa As-

sociation operating in the Kaberdey Balkar Republic started to collect donations and in 2013 many of the Syrian Circassians were sent to the Caucasus in coordination with both institutions. When in 2014 the Russian Federal authorities closed the Perit Khasa Association and arrested many association leaders, the Circassian Association of Samsun in Turkey had to find a solution to the problem. The Association provided assistance to Circassians living in Samsun, through coordination with the municipality of Samsun, other Caucasian civil society organisations and the local authorities in Samsun. For this purpose, the Samsun Circassian Platform Humanitarian Aid Commission was established and organised a series of events that would draw attention to the issue and keep it on the agenda. The Commission contributed to civil protests against Russian policies aimed at preventing a return to the Caucasus during the period 2013-2017.⁷ Prior to the closure of the Perit Khasa Association in 2104, the Association's lawyer was invited to Samsun to obtain information about the Syrian Circassians who planned to immigrate to the Caucasus and acted as an intermediary for immigrants. In the same way, official processes were implemented, such as obtaining a passport, visa support for Circassians, who wanted to go to the Caucasus, and the costs associated with these transactions were met. For other Circassians who wanted to go to other countries, mainly to Europe, they acted as mediators in contact with the Circassian diaspora, and the needs for the immigrant process were followed. Another activity conducted by the Association was the introduction of immigrants to the local community.⁸ For this reason, an informative meeting with the local press was organised and combined programs were arranged with the local community⁹ To allow Syrian Circassians to participate in making decisions about their own future, their representatives were appointed to the boards and services of the Circassian Association of Samsun. A number of measures to alleviate living conditions were organised.¹⁰

7 On January 5, 2013, participation in the action organised in front of the Russian Embassy was held.

8 01 May 2013, Circassian Association of Samsun

9 The courses were organised with Samsun Public Education Centre (Samsun Circassian Association and Samsun Municipality facilities). "The fraternal family" project was initiated, and families from among the Circassian families with whom consultations were to be held were identified. Food management systems were arranged. Sport events were organised, and an attempt was made to strengthen integration. In special cases, families were visited personally.

10 Housing and household problems were satisfied. Circassians were assisted in finding employment. The needs of Circassians in education were identified, and these issues were resolved. Psychological counselling was conducted for children. A group was formed to help patients and people in need of care, and the need for medical care was met.

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