

Nestorian-Kurdish Social Relations in the Context of Narrative Theory

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Naratif Teori Bağlamında Nasturi-Kürt Sosyal İlişkileri

Öz

Bu makalenin amacı, XIX. yüzyıldan Birinci Dünya Savaşına kadar geçen süreçte, Nasturi ve Kürtlerin sosyal ilişkilerini saha araştırması verileri ile naratif teori bağlamında incelemektir. Çalışmanın temel sorusu: Hakkâri’de birlikte yaşamış Nasturi ve Kürt sosyal ilişkileri tarihsel olarak nasıl bir eksende ilerlemiş ve nasıl bir dönüşüme uğramıştır? Bunun dışında alt sorular, Nasturi ve Kürt toplumunun evlilik adetleri, mistik inançları, günlük yaşam tarzları gibi uygulamaların birbirine beo06Ezeyen ve birbirlerinden farklılaşan özellikleri neler olmuştur? şeklinde olmuştur. Çalışmanın verileri Hakkâri ve ilçeleri ile Kürdistan Bölgesel Yönetiminde yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlarla elde edilmiştir. Saha araştırması ile elde edilen veriler Nasturi ve Kürtlerin bakış açısı ile karşılaştırılıp naratif teorinin ilkeleri ve Pierre Bourdieu’nun ilişkiel sosyolojisi bağlamında analiz edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, yüzyıllarca bir arada yaşamış Nasturi ve Kürtlerin sosyal yaşam pratiklerini her iki topluluğun torunlarının bakış açısı ile ortaya çıkartması bağlamında önem taşımaktadır. Nasturi ve Kürtlerin sosyal yaşamında din, dil gibi farklılıklar olmakla birlikte, genel itibari ile iki topluluğun günlük yaşamı, aşiretsel formasyonları, geleneksel adetleri ve kültürel yaşamları benzer olmuştur. Çalışmada her iki insan topluluğunun ilişkilerinin tarih boyunca dostluk ve komşuluğa dayandığı fakat bölgedeki misyoner ve dış devlet görevlilerinin çalışmaları ile bozulduğu bulgusuna rastlanmıştır. Sonuç olarak Nasturi ve Kürtler tarih boyunca ortak fikir ve düşünceler üzerinde inşa edilmiş değerlere bağlı bir yaşam icra etmişlerdir. Fakat çoğu zaman dış etkenlerin etkisi ile söz konusu değerlerin yerini uzlaşmazlık ve çatışmalar almıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nasturi, Kürt, İlişki, Naratif Teori, Çatışma.

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Abstract

This article aims to examine Nasturi-Kurdish socio-cultural relations by employing the field research data and narrative theory from the 19th century to the First World War. This study examine the axis of the Nestorian and Kurdish socio-cultural relations who lived together in Hakkari, their historical progress and transformation. In addition, this study further explores the similarities and differences between the nasturi and kurdish marital customs, mystical beliefs, and daily lifestyles. The data of the study were obtained through conducting semi-structured interviews in Hakkari and its districts and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The data obtained from the field research were compared with the Nasturi and Kurdish perspectives. Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology and narrative theory were used for data analysis. This study highlights the context of the social life practices of Nasturi and Kurds who have lived together for centuries from the perspective of the descendants of both communities. Although Nasturi and Kurdish religion and language, the daily life, tribal formations, traditional customs and cultural lives differ, these two communities share quate many socio-cultural similarities. This study indicated that the relations of both communities have historically been based on friendship and neighborliness. However, such relations were frequently disrupted by the work of missionaries and foreign influences. Nasturi and the Kurds have upheld shared and common socio-cultural values that have flourished throughout history. However, often with the influence of external factors, these socio-cultural values have been replaced by intransigences and conflicts

Keywords: Nestorian, Kurdish, Relationship, Narrative Theory, Conflict.

Introduction

Christianity, the religion with the largest number of followers in the world, began as a Jewish denomination, whereby in the following decades and centuries the teachings of Jesus Christ gradually evolved and developed (Güngör, Aydın ve diğ., 2013: 172). An evolution from one path to many paths resulted in the emergence of numerous sects and denominations. In this regard, Nesturyism, an ancient sect of Eastern Christianity, came into prominence in 428 CE after the struggle of the Patriarch of Istanbul, Nesturyos against the Patriarch of Alexandria, Kyrillos (Cyrillos) regarding the qualities of Jesus Christ. According to Nesturyos, Jesus Christ is a dual-natured (*diophysite*) person, that is to say, he is a person with both divine and human nature. However, the Church of Alexandria opposed Nesturyos and argued that Jesus is one-natured (*monophysite*) person. Being of a divine nature He is perceived as the Son of God (Akyüz, 2005:206). Due to differences, the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus convened in 431 CE excommunicated Nesturios for his views and deported him to Egypt (Şer, 2006:14-15; Aprim, 2008:43-44). However, Nesturyos (Nesturians) followers continued their work in Urfa and Nusaybin. Since 451 CE, the Nasturis had designated Eddesa (Urfa) as the center of the sect. When the Eddesa School was closed by the Eastern Roman Emperor Zenon in 482 CE, the Nasturis took refuge in Iran (Albayrak, 1997:75). There are several ethnic discourses about this group, which adopts Nasturi as its sect. In some sources, members of this sect are descendants of Aram, Kaldea, and Assyria (Yonan, 1999:20; Aprim, 2008:20-23; Coakley, 2011; Shedd, 1903; Aprim, 2008:32-37; Donabed and Mako, 2009:83-85). Asahel Grant, who conducted field research on the Nasturi people, also claimed that the Nasturis are one of the ten lost Hebrew tribes (Grant, 2015:100-106). Some authors have also claimed that the Nasturi people who live in Hakkari Province are ethnically Christian Kurds. They were living between Mosul and Mount Cudi and they were the ancestors of the modern Assyrians (Polo, 1871:62; Mesûdi, 2005:97; Izady, 2007:290-292). People who belonged to the Nasturi sect have also stated that their ethnicity dates back to the Assyrian Empire (Parhad, 2009:11-12; P1, the interview dated 18.09.2019).

There is no exact information about the Nasturis settlement in the Hakkari mountains and sources give three different dates. According to one opinion, the Nasturis built the Ribat Church in Hakkari in the 5th century CE and migrated to Hakkari (Surma, 2015:16). According to another opinion, the Nasturi, who fled due to the invasion of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, took refuge in the Hakkari mountains. Finally, with the invasion of Timur in 1400, the Nasturi people took refuge in the mountainous areas of Hakkari and Urmia (Heckmann, 2012:53; Arvas, 2010:23). However, according to the general belief, the Nasturi people had settled in the steep and mountainous Hakkari region because of Timur's attacks in the 14th century. In the 17th century (in 1662 which was Patriarch Denha's time), when the patriarchate moved its headquarters from Mosul to Hakkari (Koçanis Village), it became the center of religious and this-

worldly leadership for the Nasturis (Wigram, 2004:311). The Nasturis lived in the Hakkari mountains in the form of five tribes and the groups such as the "*raiyat*", which lived without any tribal affiliation. The Nasturi tribes are: Tiyar, Tuhup, Baz, Dez and Cilo. The tribal Nasturis generally lived in the villages around the Zap Water. Members of the Cilo tribe lived around Oramar (Dağlica), which is connected to Yüksekova. The religious and this-worldly leadership of the Nasturis was carried out by the Patriarch or Catholicos. In addition, the leadership of the Nasturi tribes was carried out by people called "Melik". The main livelihoods of the Nasturis were agriculture and animal husbandry.

Nasturi and Kurds have maintained friendship and neighborliness for centuries without strong ethnic and national animosities. However, the missionaries from England, America, and Russia came to Hakkari and Ottoman lands in the 19th century. Although missionaries focused on religion and education they were also involved in politics in the territory of the Ottoman Empire (Verheij, 2016:79). In addition, the missionaries strongly influenced ethnic and national liberation movements (Bar Mattay: 1996:14-15). As a result, the relationships between the Nasturis and the Kurds gradually began to deteriorate, and conflicts emerged in the beginning of the 20th century. Despite all the precautions by the Ottoman Empire, the Nasturis began to clash with the Kurds. Consequently, in 1915, both Kurds and Nasturi were forced to emigrate from Hakkari. While the Hakkari Kurds migrated to Iraq, the Nasturis first migrated to cities of Urmia, Selmas and Hoy in Iran. However, when the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in Russia in 1917, the Nasturis went to the Hemedan Camps of Iran, Baquba and Mindan Camps of Iraq under the supervision of the British. Both communities suffered a serious life losses on the migration routes. The Kurds began to return to Hakkari in 1917 and the Nasturis began returning after the 1920s but they had to emigrate from Hakkari to Iraq again as a result of the incident of the "*Han Gediği*" in 1924.

Many historical, political and sociological studies were conducted on Nasturis by local and international authors. While there are studies with the historical perspective (Dalyan, 2009; Duman, 2010; Gencer, 2010; Arvas, 2010; Satılmış, 2006; Akgül, 2004; Wigram, 2004; Layard, 2000), there are also the studies with sociological and political perspectives (Kaya, 2007; Anzerlioğlu, 2006; Yohanna, 2006; Grant, 2005). In addition, there are also studies by Assyrian/Nasturi writers, which were written in the form of memoirs (Vartanov, 2005; Griselle, 2016; Aprim, 2008). Our aim in this study is to establish a comparative relationship within the framework of the daily lives of Nasturis and Kurds by interviewing the participants in the study period from both sides. In this regard, the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted by listening to the grandchildren of both communities were written with the principles of narrative theory. In addition, to understand the Nasturi and Kurdish relations that have historically progressed on bumpy ground, Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology was used for a better understanding of the

subject of research. In this context, the subject has been analyzed with a different methodological perspective than the previous studies. Therefore, the novelty of this study is an assessment of comparative relationship of the social relations of a hundred years ago and current perceptions of the grandchildren of the Nasturi and Kurds.

The Methodology of the Research

This qualitative research is based on observation, semi-structured interviews and document content analysis. The study was conducted by two researchers who skillfully combined insider and outsider approaches. The field research data was collected by the first researcher who has actively worked in the field for two and a half years. Since he/she had a social role within the research area, the first researcher has provided insider's views and perceptions. The insider perspective also enabled the collection of data because the researcher was no a stranger to the subject and the research environment. In addition, the first researcher was a native of the region and he/she has effectively used the knowledge of the language and local culture for the collection of the data. The second researcher used an outsider's perspective to conceptualize the research, structure the study, and critically evaluate collected data from the field. In addition, the second researcher also established the theoretical and methodological framework of the study and has ensured semantic consistency. Furthermore, a synthesis of insider and outsider's perspectives led to a more comprehensive understanding of the field research, collected data and conceptualization of the study (Chhabra, 2020; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

The target groups of the interviews were selected from participants who have a certain level of education and a curiosity and knowledge of history. In total, 16 participants (5 Nestorian and 11 Kurds) were interviewed for this study. Interviews lasted between half an hour and one and a half hours. Most of the interviews were conducted in Kurdish, with a small number of them in English and Arabic. Kurdish and English interviews were conducted by one of the researcher while the Arabic interviews were conducted by the support of an interpreter. Then the interviews were deciphered and translated into Turkish.

Interviews were conducted individually and detailed interviews were also conducted with participants who are also experts in the field. The identity of the interviewees was kept confidential in terms of scientific ethics. Instead of the name, participant 1 (P1), participant 2 (P2) etc. coded as such.. The research sample and the number of interviews were limited because the low number of participants had information and knowledge about events that occurred about a century ago. The questions in the interviews were not asked by using the categorical or list method because it was difficult for interviewers to record the answers to the questions asked. To overcome this difficulty, the questions were asked in a chatting mood after information was given about the nature of the

subject and the interview permission was obtained. Thus, the chance to obtain the desired information was achieved in the course of a dialogue with the research respondents. The participants stated that they heard the information they gave us from their parents and grandparents. Generally, the participants were asked, “*How have Nesturians and Kurdish people social relations historically progressed?*”. Although interviews were conducted through this basic question, various questions related to the subject were often asked. The interviews were conducted from 2019 to 2021. The interviews conducted in Hakkari and its districts were completed timely because of availability of the interviewers. However, the interviews in Northern Iraq lasted longer due to access conditions and the restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 disease.

The interview findings were analyzed in the theoretical part of the study with the principles of narrative theory. Then, to understand social relations within the place, time, space, the findings were analyzed by employing the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology and the concept of “*habitus*.” Audio recordings of all interviews obtained for this study were transcribed and passed through three separate reading processes with a holistic approach. In order to comprehend the events with a holistic understanding in the first reading, all deciphers were read without any intervention. In the second reading, common topics in the interviews were determined and these common topics were combined in a single word document. Thus, the main issues that the interviewers focused on were determined. In the third reading, the subject files were handled and the correlation between the subjects and events mentioned between the lines was tried to be determined.

Theoretical Framework

Narrative theory and relational sociology have been used in different studies. The narrative theory allows the transmission of social and political events that occurred in the past. They are retained in the human memory and experience and could be obtained in the form of data through systematic conducting of the interviews. For instance, the narrative theory gained momentum with the development of structuralist theories in France and the studies of Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes, Claude Bremond, Gerard Genette and Mieke Bal. Then, Barthes and his colleagues argued that narrative theory is useful for the analysis of stories in the media and other fields. Narrative can also support cognitive activities in conversations, courts, arts, dance, etc., (Herman ve diğ., 2005:4). According to Todorov, a human being as a unique rational being proves his/her existence by transmitting his/her historical past and experiences through narrative (Todorov, 2002:128). Another theorist argued that the main purpose of the narrator is to take the listener to the time of the narrative event, which is described and presented in a hypothetical but specific chronological order rather than a real one (Genette, 1980:37). According to Bal, the narrative is an interdisciplinary concept and is more used in cultural studies. In this regard,

the narrative should not be referred to as a genre, but as a model or a force within a culture (Bal, 1990:728).

By employing the narrative theory this study explored historical events from different perspectives to establish factual relationships between them. The purpose of the narrative is to reveal the strong links between the time of the event being described, the way it occurred and its purpose. Human experience and life are subjected to analysis but as well as to a prediction and a thought. According to Ludwig, it is “*more story, less theory*”, in other words, many stories should be told and a few theories should be included. Theoretical abstractions can become illustrative thanks to stories and at the same time, cross-examinations of living conditions can be made through stories (Bochner, 2001:132).

The narrative theory explores the past stories and that is why in this research, we have collected data based on narratives' testimonies. The reliability and consistency of the narratives were explained by the principles of the theory. Since the data of the study is based on the perceptions of the past, the findings obtained were analyzed within the framework of the narratives' views and perceptions of the events.

Since the links between Bourdieu's concept of relatedness and Nasturi and Kurdish social relations will be explained, first of all, the concept of “relatedness” should be defined. Bourdieu rejects objective and essentialist³ approaches to social sciences and instead uses a relational methodology in analyzing social life and human relations. In this way, the thinker forms a broad view of events (Mohr, 2013;1-2). According to Bourdieu, the main phenomenon in social relations is not the essences, but relations. Bourdieu's main concern is to describe the interaction between differences in human action through empirical observation of different practices. Relationality is defined within the framework of personal preferences and value judgments. Thus, people as social actors are visible by building relationships with each other. In addition, social identity and differences can only be analyzed and understood in a relational way (Schultze and Papilloud, 2018:343-344). Bourdieu named the field in which social relations develop and take shape as “*habitus*”. *Habitus* is the place where the social world is represented and the life practices of this world are produced. *Habitus* is what makes all the practices of an actor systematic since it is a product of the application of identical patterns. *Habitus* is what distinguishes all the practices of one actor from those that form another lifestyle at the same time according to a certain system (Bourdieu, 2017:254-255). In addition, *habitus*, as a location where individuals were born and grew up, is an area where the common culture, behavior, attitudes, social accumulation and tendencies are maintained collectively. According to Bourdieu, every person has a “*habitus*”. This *habitus* is

³ Essentialism is an approach suggesting that the essence of a phenomenon or an object, even if it has undergone changes, remains unchanged.

the world in which a person lives economically, socially and culturally. In addition, habitus is the natural environment in which a person has lived since birth and the actions that he/she has created in this environment (Özkan, 2019:70; Polat, 2016).

Findings

Nasturi-Kurdish Social Relations

By employing narrative theory in the research it is important to scientifically examine the past events, transmitted from generation to generation and as such brought to the current time. Conducting research on the social life of the two communities, based on the perceptions of Nasturi and Kurdish grandchildren rather than the literature review on the subject, contributed to the gathering of interesting data. The Nasturis and the Kurds sometimes reconciled and sometimes moved away from each other with regards to their practices of tribal life in Hakkari Province. For example, while the Kurdish Ertushi tribes and the Nasturi Tiyar tribe were in close relations with each other; these tribes were not in close relations with the Kurdish Pinyanish and Nasturi Tuhup tribes. The important reason underlying this situation included geographical proximity, the establishment of social relations, nesting of sheep herds, etc. P2 explained the issue as follows:

We, Kurds and Nasturi were living together in the Tuhup area, we were sharing the same upland, and we were handling the affairs of good and evil things together all the time. My grandfather, Yusuf (Isivê Cole) was a merchant and he was selling the goods he brought from Mosul to the Nasturis. In this sense, our relations had always been very close (P2, the interview dated 03.05.2021).

According to P3's grandmother, Nasturi and Kurdish social relations mostly developed on good ground. For example, the Nasturi people participated in special occasions such as condolences and weddings of the Kurds under the leadership of their melik (tribal leader) (P3, the interview dated 06.07.2021).

Both communities had respected each other's language and religion. Most of the time, the Kurds invited the Nasturis to their special days, as well as the Nasturis invited the Kurds to their special days. According to the Kurdish P4, the Kurds invited Nasturi leaders on special occasions such as Eid al-Fitr and al-Adha and gave banquets in their honor. In the same way, the Nasturis also called the Kurds to the days of Şanedêr (festival). While inviting the Kurds to their special days, the Nasturis let the Kurdish butchers⁴ slaughter the sheep of the Nasturis to offer the Kurds meat (P4, the interview dated 01.05.2021; P3, the interview dated 06.07.2021). The mentioned Shanedars were organized in places

⁴ Kurds slaughtered animals with double nails according to Islamic practices by reciting basmala; however, Nasturi's animal slaughtering customs have been different. In this regard, the Nasturis let the Kurds slaughter the animals such as sheep, goats, steers so that the Kurds could eat Nasturi treats with peace of mind in their ceremonies.

such as Mar Shalita Church in Kochanis Village (Konak), Mar Abdisho Church in the Tal Village (Oğul), Dirha Beroji Church in Güzereş Village (Cevizli) (P5, the interview dated 05.03.2019). According to P6, one of the important pieces of evidences that Kurdish-Nasturi religious relations were good before the war was the existence of the Holy Qur'an in the house of Danyel, one of the pastors of the Baz tribe. Sometimes this priest was reading the Holy Qur'an (P6, the interview dated 05.05.2021). Such examples are one of the most important foundations of religious respect and tolerance between the two communities.

There have been similar and diverging aspects of the familial relations of both communities. For example, the Kurdish culture and tradition strongly promoted arranged marriage, whereby the young people see each other a few times before the marriage. The Nasturi promoted and accepted both arranged marriage and love marriage. Then, the Nasturis sometimes gave their daughter to one of their relatives to keep strong kinship relations (P6, the interview dated 08.08.2021). So-called girl-kidnappings for a marriage often occurred in both communities. But the act of divorce was subjected to strict rules in both communities that were rarely observed. Nasturi and Kurdish youth did not marry each other, perhaps due to religious differences (P7, the interview dated 04.10.2021). The age of marriage in both communities was in the range of 12 to 15. Marriage ceremonies in Nasturi were performed in the presence of pastors and *shamashees* (assistant pastors) accompanied by some rites in churches, while Kurds only performed marriage solemnizations in the presence of *imams*. Apart from this, the wedding customs and *halays* were similar to each other (P5, the interview dated 05.03.2019). The wedding of the Nasturi youth was made possible when positive answers to the questions such as “şaşek lê, seqetek lê, korek lê te qebuley lê?” which means “do you like each other in a squint, disability and blindness?” are received. (P7, the interview dated 04.10.2021). The rite of Baptism is performed on the Nasturi children when they are eight days old. With Baptism, long life is wished to the newborn child and gratitude is offered to Jesus Christ. At the moment of Baptism, Priests and Deacons with crosses, censers, Bibles and candles in their hands are present, and the baby is anointed in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Surma Hanım, 2015:19-20). There is a similar Kurdish tradition too. The Kurds recite the call to prayer (*adhan*) in the ears of the newborn child and give him a name that evokes religion. In addition, the daily routines were similar because the daily lives of Nasturi and Kurds had been intertwined. For example, both a Nasturi and a Kurdish woman had a similar program in the sense that she got up in the morning to light a fire, cook, meet the daily needs of their wives and children. In addition, the expenses became common during the weddings without making any distinctions between Nasturis and Kurds. At weddings, a meal called Gulul, consisting of yogurt, rice and oil, was served to the guests. This meal was most often brought to the wedding house by guests (P7, the interview dated 04.10.2021).

Ethnic and national distinctions between Nasturi and Kurds were not articulated before missionary intrusions in the region in the 19th century. The Kurds used the concept of “*file*”, which means farmer, for the Nasturis. According to P8, some of the Nasturis (*file*) and Armenians living in the Çatak region were rich, and sometimes the Kurds became their farmers. In other words, both groups of people served each other (P8, the interview dated 23.06.2021). As far as the author heard from the elders, there was a place called Zewiya Suka (which we translated as “grocery stores field”) in Xenanis Village (Otluca), this place was a market or shopping center. The ownership of the Zawiya Suka was in the hands of the Nasturis, or, as they were called locally, the “files”. The Kurds, who already resided in Xenanis, were not as rich as the Nasturis. According to Asuri P9 Nasturi (Assyrian) explained the Kurdish relations as follows:

The relations of the Assyrians (Nasturi) and Kurds who lived in Hakkari were generally good because both communities lived their lives on similar life forms. In this regard, there were Kurdish Assyrians who became Kurdish although they had been Assyrians before, as well as people who identified themselves as Assyrians although they had also been Kurdish before. Both peoples considered themselves as the same nation (P9, the interview dated 16.07.2019).

In the First World War, first of all, the great states, in the direction of their interests, separated and conflicted these communities based on their religions. The centuries-old neighbors and friendships of Muslim and Christian communities deteriorated as a result of the politicization of religion by such states as Great Britain, Russia, the Ottoman Empire. The main truth behind the alienation and conflict of the peoples who lived in Hakkari was that religion was used for certain purposes (Asuri P10, the interview dated 27.07.2021).

The above-mentioned interview indicates that ethnic distinctions such as Kurdish, Nasturi or Turkish partially shaped ethnic relations but neighborliness and the common culture and values, created over the centuries, were more important in determining humane and socio-cultural relations. According to the interviewer who used the P11 nickname;

Nasturi and Kurdish merchants trusted each other in a way that they were able to lend goods to each other without guarantors and keeping records of the loans. When the states that followed imperialist policies came to the region, they planted seeds of grudge and hatred among Nasturi and Kurdish people and set them against each other (P11, the interview dated 27.07.2019).

According to P7, the relations of the Nasturi people with the Kurds had changed since 1912. The most important reason for this was that the Russian influence (hevayê Urisi) was thoroughly felt in the region. In this respect, the old social relations were replaced by religious conflicts (P7, the interview dated 03.10.2021). According to Mirella Galletti, a Kurdish proverb summarizes the relations between Kurds and Christians: “There is a distance between the Assyrians (Nasturis) and the Kurds as long as a hair's breadth, and between the Armenians and the Kurds as long as a mountain...” (Galletti, 2016:35). In this regard, although the religions of the Armenians and Nasturis were the same, their relations were strained. However, Nasturi and Kurdish social relations were stronger because they were built on solid historical and socio-cultural foundations.

Mystical beliefs, life experiences, perceptions about natural events in Hakkari were also similar to Nasturi and Kurds. The Kurds believed that their expectations could be realized by going to the Nasturi churches and praying to eliminate some diseases and to realize the desired fortunes. According P12, who was interviewed;

A Kurd named Mehemedê Azê, who was from the Kurdish Dûmbili family, living in the city center of Hakkari, was not able to have a child. This person went to the Mar Abdisho Church located in the village of Tal and prayed. In the following years, Mehemed, who had a child, made a vow to the mentioned church every year (P12, the interview dated 01.05.2021).

In addition, Nasturi and Kurds took people with psychological disorders to the Mar Qiryakos Church in the Dêz Valley, called Dirha Dina (Church of the Insane People) (Arvas, 2010:41).

Commonalities bring together diverse societies that have lived together for centuries to the same melting pot, which in effect significantly reduce the possibility of discrimination based on religion, race and nationality. According to Andrew Heywood, a nation is a social union formed by people who speak the same language, have the same religion, common past, and feelings (Heywood, 2014:202). So, a nation requires other elements that are effective in social life besides blood ties and common language. The Kurds have the following idiom: “*Civakên ku bi heft nifşan pêkve jiya bin ji heman geli/miletî ne*“ which means “if people in a community have lived together for seven generations, they are now of the same nationality”. In addition to the idiom above, the following interview further illustrates similar idea:

Nasturi and Kurds are the same nation where everyone has their own religion. Apart from incidents such as herd decimation and simple theft, there have been no significant events among the people mentioned. The Kurdish tribes of the region were poor, and

they had commercial activities besides neighborly relations with the Nasturis. For example, the Kurds improved their relations by selling the products they brought to the Nasturis from the Iraq region. (P13, the interview dated 29.06.2019).

The Impact Of Missionaries On Social Relations

Towards the end of the 19th century, internal tensions emerged among the Nasturi tribes. There were occasional conflicts between the Nasturi people living in the Tuhubenav and Mezri villages living in the Tuhup region and the Nasturi Tiyar tribe over highlands and grasslands. The following couplet was used for this situation. “*Kevîja me yê tijî bîyî*” which means our union was broken and this situation will bring us significant disasters (P3, the interview dated 06.07.2021). Then, the missionaries in this region introduced Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant distinctions among the Nasturis, which further caused the deterioration of the relations of Nasturi and the Kurds.

Although Nasturi-Kurdish relations were generally good until the end of the 19th century, these relations deteriorated as a result of the goals of the imperialist states. As the P14 said (the interview dated 18.09. 2019) “the conflicts of interest of the great states have been the disaster of the local people”. However, despite the alleged negative situations, the relations of some Kurdish and Nasturi tribes were positive even during the war. P15 explained the Kurdish-Nasturi relations as follows:

Although the Tuhup tribe was more numerous than us, Kurds, in quantity, they never committed acts such as cruelty and bullying to us. In the First World War, we were afraid of the Russians, and the Nasturi were afraid of the Ottoman Empire. Even on the eve of the war, we, the people of Güzereş village, settled in the villages of Bê, Bêlat, and Bêrewil, which were connected to Chukchi and where the Nasturis were living, and the Nasturis in the mentioned villages also settled in our village of Guzeresh.. The reason for this exchange was to ensure our security against the Russians and to ensure the safety of the Nasturi against a danger that might come from the Ottoman side. Another reason for the mutual change was to stay closer to our religious colleagues. (P15, the interview dated 13.11.2019).

The Kurdish and Nasturi peoples who had lived together for centuries emigrated to different countries in 1915. But the “de facto” law they created between them has continued. The Kurds who emigrated to Iraq and then came back have not lost their hope from their former neighbors, the Nasturis. The following interview constitutes the main basis of this claim.

My grandfather and his relatives, who returned to Hakkari from Iraq, lived in a neighborhood called Bajêr (Biçer). This neighborhood is located far from the city center. During the Republican Period, the land registry officers of the state wanted to give my grandfather land in the city center called Pagan. However, my grandfather said that the lands mentioned belonged to the raiyat, Nasturi people who lived there before the First World War, and that these people emigrated from Hakkari without fighting the Kurds. Therefore, my grandfather had the hope that his former neighbors would return to Hakkari. (P12, the interview dated 01.05.2021).

According to P14, “The Nasturi were victims of the interests of great states such as Britain, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. *These states set them against each other by introducing religious distinctions between peoples such as Kurds and Nasturis.*” (P14, the introduction dated 20.09.2019).

Melik Berxo ez wiha nakim	Melik Berxo, I can't do this
Qesrê Çelê xirap nakim	I can't destroy Çukurca Castles
Mala axayî bê nav nakim	I can't lower the dignity of the Ağa Family.
Ji Hekaretê xilas nakim	I can't deprive them of Hakkari.

(P3, the interview dated 06.07.2021).

The three-verse couplet expresses the incident that Berxo, one of the Meliks of Tiyar, did not want to organize an expedition to the Çukurca Fortresses despite the insistence of Melik Henne of Tuhuplu, one of the Nasturi elders who were in the same region again in the First World War. In the couplet, it is revealed that the Nasturi and the Kurdish people did not despair of each other and had an unshakable historical law. The couplet shows that an event that is likely to happen varies according to perception and it shows the historical connection of the Nasturi people to the Çukurca dignitaries before the First World War.

Discussion and Analysis

Although readers are intellectually and emotionally moved by written stories, they take shape and become meaningful in the narrative process. These stories emerge and evolve within interconnected and interrelated time, content and context. Through these complementary and discursive elements, the individual adds meaning to his/her life narratives and others add meaning to the narratives about him/her. In this regard, the person is the author of the story, the narrator and the lead actor (Akbulut, 2020:114). The Nasturis and Kurds interviewed in this study are the grandchildren of people who had lived in social unity several generations ago. Therefore, the perceptions and views of the participants in this study were affected by former generations of Nasturis and

Kurds. As a Kurdish researcher living in the area, the person who conducted the field research was often emotionally volatile in his role as an insider. As he identified himself more with the Kurdish interviewers, he realized that the depths of his mind were taking a questioning approach to what the Nestorian interviewers were saying. At this point, the role of the other researcher as an outsider began to come to the fore, and her questions enabled a more distant view of the events and a more objective view of the information given by both parties.

A thorough literature analysis has indicated that Nasturis and Kurdish relations have been examined from different perspectives. However, these relations must be narrated from the point of view of members of both societies, which is the main research focus of this study. These relationships have been transmitted from father to son from language to language and have come until today in the format of a story. In the study, it was found that Nasturi and Kurdish social relations were based on mutual respect. The Nasturi people respected the Kurdish tribal leaders, and the Kurds respected the Nasturi patriarch and princes (*meliks*). Functional social relations contributed also to peace and social reconciliation. For example, Sheikh Abdulsalam, one of the leaders of the Kurdish Barzani tribe, escaped from the prosecution of the Ottoman State with some accusations made against him in 1910 and took refuge in the Nasturi Tuhup tribe. The Tuhup tribe welcomed the Kurdish Sheikh by expressing kindness and hospitality and did not hand him over to the state (P2, the interview dated 03.05.2021). Many such events took place between both communities, and they have survived to this day as narratives. In addition, both communities have respected each other's sanctity, which ensured good social relations in the last centuries.

The narrative is based on personal experience and feelings, whereby it enables an ingrained dialectical relationship between life and narrative. But despite this, the narrative is an important part of social life (Ellis ve Bochner, 2016:312). There have been no distinctions between the Nasturis and Kurdish communities, but regarding the religious differences. Their daily customs, special occasions, tribal leadership styles, social lifestyles have always been the same. In this regard, narrative studies explain how events are formed and driven by social identity and, therefore, social action. The relationship between identity and action, within the narrative method, questions the textual and theoretical representations that make up the ontological understanding of life (Miller, 2005:19). Instead of the ethnic and religious identities of the Nasturi and Kurds, their tribal identities and common cultures related to a common history came to the fore, which significantly contributed to social harmony and solidarity. A proper understanding tribal identity is at the forefront of Nestorians and Kurds. This was an important factor for the researcher, who did field research as an insider, to understand why the Kurds still care about the tribal issues.

The information received from the interviewees was collected by specifying the place, time and location. For example, Kurdish interviewees, when describing the social relations of the Nasturi and Kurds, mentioned the names of villages such as Mezri, Güzereş, Gundik, as well as about the people living at that time. Thus, the consistency of the narrative is ensured. In narrative theory, events that seem to be disconnected from each other are integrated and made consistent. The events that were in the minds of both Nasturi and Kurdish interviewees were deciphered with different stories and made meaningful by establishing a connection between these stories. For example, the Nasturi Tiyar tribe and the Kurdish Ertushi tribes met and collaborated at certain times. This situation was the result of coexistence between the two tribes and the common culture. When the Nasturi Tuhup tribe clashed with the Kurdish Ertushi tribe, the Nasturi Tiyar tribe took a stand in favor of the Ertushis. The same situation was observed in the coexistence of the Nasturi Tuhup and the Kurdish Pinyanish tribes. This culture, created by past generations, could become an exemplary for social relations in the future by being transmitted in a story format. Despite the difference in religion and language, the Nasturis and the Kurds were not historically drawn into ethnic and national animosities and conflicts. However, the daily life of the communities living in Hakkari was free from discrimination practices. For example, in the days called Zibare (which means collective and voluntary work), the residents of the village helped each other. In the last century, which is within the scope of our research, the vital solidarity of societies with two different religions attracted our attention. Thus, the researchers argue that similar solidarity could not be exhibited with the same strength today. Although solidarity exists today its dimensions had changed. Solidarity towards the Syrian refugees who came to Turkey could support our claims. However, how the sustainability of this new solidarity can be ensured remains a question that needs to be answered.

Although Nasturi and Kurdish relations proceeded historically on a good basis, the communities had a closed lifestyle in the Hakkari mountains. Therefore, an external influence (such as mission activities) could cause the relationship between the two communities to change. On the other hand, the religious influences made by the states in order to achieve their goals in the First World War also reversed the old perceptions of these relations. For example, Russia and the United Kingdom belong to the same religion as the Nasturis and make some promises to them, such as living independently of the Ottoman State (Abdulla, 2009:386-389) changed the perception of the past. In addition, the ancient point of view of the Kurds towards their neighbors, the Nasturis, changed due to the influence of the religion of Islam. In the field study, the narratives conveyed by the narrators were obtained on this basis. Narrators explain their feelings by adding them to narratives, but confirming these narratives from different people, giving them in harmony with time and space creates logical realities. According to the Nasturis, the reason for the

deterioration of relations with the Kurds is the “Holy Jihad” issued by the Ottoman State; however, according to the Kurds, the reason for the deterioration of relations was the harmful activities carried out by countries such as Britain and Russia.

The background of the societies is inevitable for the creation of an environment for co-existence. Then, social memory, which is an accumulation of the human experience, is important in transmitting the events of the past to future generations. In this regard, the narrative theory also provides the transmission of important events that occurred in the past. The Nasturi and the Kurdish community lived with a common national consciousness in the territory of Hakkari under the influence of common values. Events that have settled in the subconscious of a person are removed from consciousness by the method of narration. In addition, the transmission of the social relations described above by means of *stran* (song), *serpihati* (maxim) and *chirok* (story) also provides the interpretation of the political and social structure. For example, both communities used to invite each other to their religious and worldly ceremonies and observe each other there, which contributes to the sociological resemblance of the two communities. While there are more similarities in ceremonies and routines that do not have a religious effect, ceremonies such as baptism, circumcision, and religious education, initiation ceremonies differ in religious-based ceremonies. According to Pierpiaoło Donati, society rises through constructed structures and cultural codes. Therefore, the society sustains its continuity with the mentioned codes (Demir, 2020:18). The events that took place in Hakkari in 1915 couldn't let both Nasturi and Kurds forget their past life practices, as well as the negative situation that occurred with the war. They have retained their place in the social memory of those who participated in the interview. In other words, both the close social relations before the war, the events that occurred with the war, and the relations that were alienated from each other, were able to retain their place in social memory. Thus, the memory can be interpreted as a result of historical transmission. According to the interviewers, situations in which both communities act together in a time of good and evil, respect each other's sacred values, can continue to co-exist in the Kurdistan Regional Government. There is a proverb in Kurdish that exemplifies this situation: “*dostên baba di bine dostên lawa jî; dūjminên baba na bine dostên lawa*” which means that the friend of the fathers is the friend of the sons; besides, the enemy of the fathers becomes the enemy of the son. This perception of friends and enemies has been conveyed through the narrative as a result of social memory.

When members of the Nasturi community visit Hakkari today, the first places they visit are the churches built by their ancestors. Sacred places are also structures that establish a relational connection between the past and the future. According to Muammer Ak, religious buildings ensure the survival of the values which were formed in the past by keeping the cultural heritage alive by

serving as a bridge between the past, the present and the future by building consciousness in society (Ak, 2018:13). In the same way, past life and common accumulations, based on social relations, ensure that the social future is built on solid foundations by transferring the social memory from generation to generation. According to Pierre Bourdieu's relational theory, subject-object, individual-society, structure-actor are not elements against each other rather they guide the study of social relations (Özkan, 2019:70). The daily actions of Nasturis and Kurds have an important mission in protecting social relations and structures. For example, Nasturis and Kurds living in the Tuhup region came together periodically. The notables of both sides met from time to time to make and implement decisions about village life. These meetings were generally held in Tuhubenav village. The decisions taken and the issues agreed upon at the Dirha Miskin (Miskin Church) in the village of Güzereş are the expressions of the commitment of the two communities of people to each other. (P6, the interview dated 18.06.2021). Thus, according to Bourdieu, since the social world is interdependent, subjectivist and objectivist points of view are associated with each other (Wacquant, 2007:61).

Habitus, as the embodiment of society and social functioning through the process of socialization, is what makes the world exist as a certain space. It seems that social reality proves its existence internally and externally, in minds and things, in habitats and spaces (Özkan, 2019:71). The habitus is the embodied and internalized predispositions in each human being. In fact, this is the way of life, which is both static and dynamic. This habitus is actions that are in action, not in discourse, embodied as well as it is cognitive, and that are permanent, productive, adaptive, that can be passed down from generation to generation (Swartz, 1997:146). When a person gives up habitus (his habits – in other words in Turkish), he/she fall into a social and psychological void. When approached from this point of view, although the Nasturi were subjected to migratory events in different time periods, their main habitats were Hakkari and residential areas close to here. Therefore, the Hakkari region has been the habitat of both Nasturi and Kurds. According to Bourdieu's understanding, social accumulations and the space on which they are located together constitute social capital (Wacquant, 2007:62). Historical and cultural values that ensure the coexistence of societies provide them with social capital. According to Bourdieu, social capital is based on the common mutual interests, such as mutual protection, recognition, and trust for the individual or society (Palabıyık, 2011:134). A person is a product of the culture in which he/she was born and grew up. Bourdieu considers the concept of habitus as a mental unity, formed as a result of the culture or subculture in which a person necessarily lives (Bourdieu, 1996:169-170). Habitus is historicity built on past experiences and acquired knowledge. In other words, people have the opportunity to produce from the social conditions in which they live and this is a necessity and it is becoming constant, therefore, this stage is habitus (Palabıyık, 2011:129). Nasturi and the Kurdish peasants have created a

habitus together for centuries in a format that is not alien to each other at a certain standard of living. In this habitat, there has been a structure based on the common space, from daily habits to social events. Space-based togetherness has been formed around the "sense of us" and has continued. For example, the decisions made by the Nasturi princes (*meliks*) and the Kurdish tribal leaders played an important role in the continuation of the habitat or habitus. One of the determinants of the non-deterioration of social unity is the possession of the habitual life form (habitus). Without external influence, the life form has been reproduced and maintained for centuries, especially in Hakkari. After external influence (for example, missionary activities and religious discriminations) became visible in the region, the habitus to which the Kurdish and Nasturi communities were socially connected turned into an alienating format and was deconstructed.

Conclusion

People can find solutions to their current problems by considering their past experience. In this way, the individual or society dominates their social behavior (Ellis ve Bochner, 2016:313). The correct perception and knowledge of the past ensure that the future is placed on a solid foundation. In this regard, it is important to explain historical events from different perspectives and to establish factual relationships. The purpose of the narrative is to reveal the strong links between the time of the described event, the way it occurred and its purpose. In addition to the field research conducted in this study, it was found that the social relations of the Nasturi and the Kurds, who have a history of about 520 years in some sources (Heckmann, 2012:53; Arvas, 2010:23; Kaplan, 2020:254), and however, who have a longer history in some other resources (Coakley, 2011:285-286), were generally based on friendship and neighborliness. These relations lasted until the end of the 19th century, feeding on common life and in parallel with the common history and culture. Accordingly, both human communities abstained from unwanted acts of oppression, cruelty, etc. against each other. Although simple tribal conflicts occurred between some Nasturi and Kurdish tribes, this situation did not bring any serious religious or other conflicts within the society. On the contrary, both societies approached each other's religious values on the basis of respect, and also developed a culture of reconciliation.

At the end of the 19th century, religious and ethnic differences were brought to the fore by the work of foreign missionaries. On the one hand, the Ottoman Empire also made efforts to resolve the disputes and animosities between the Nasturis and the Kurds based on reconciliation. On the other hand, the attempts of Russia and Great Britain to keep the Nasturi people with them caused the old order to change at the beginning of 19th century. To achieve its goals in the Eastern Anatolia region, Russia shifted a large number of Nasturi to the Orthodox Community (Yonan, 1999:66). In addition to decoupling between

the Patriarchs to use the Nasturi people for their hegemonic purposes in the region (Kaplan, 2020), England played an important role in the deterioration of the Kurdish and Nasturi social/political relations (P16, the interview dated 18.09.2019).

The data obtained in this study were compared thanks to the interviews with different participants and the consistency of narratives experienced in the past was ensured. The first way to get reliable data is to solve the events on the spot and by talking to their respondents. In this respect, the Nasturi-Kurdish relations were narrated from the point of view of the grandchildren of the two human communities ensured that the narrative was reliable. The findings obtained in this study were also transferred one after another for generations and a "tevatür⁵" was created. During the interviews conducted in Hakkari and Northern Iraq, statements of the interviewees confirming each other were found. For this study to make a difference in the scientific sense, Bourdieu's relational sociology and habitus concepts were used. In this aspect, the study and explanation of historical processes with modern theories allow the studies to be both multi-disciplinary and to conduct cross-theoretical and cross-conceptual researches. It was significant to pour as much of the past events, which remained in the human memory, into the scientific language with the narratives theory. In addition, the blending of the areas and forms of relations, where Nasturi and Kurdish relations were born and developed throughout the study, with the concept of habitus also gave an original look at the issue. The researcher who was born and raised in this region, while conducting the field study experiences emotional changes and transitions. Since his ancestors were research subjects his interest in the research has intensified. Consequently, he could visualize and connect past and present events. At the same time, exploring a history as an insider by using an academic approach has opened him new dimensions in the world of meaning. Thanks to this research, the researcher's prior knowledge about the subject, which was transferred verbally, has changed and has reinforced his belief that the issues should be looked at more objectively and from different dimensions. Thanks to the research, his knowledge and perception about the events of a century ago in Hakkari have improved. At this point, researchers once again understood the importance of conducting a research in tandem one insider and the other outsider, in field studies, to analyze the event academically. Finally, the approach to this study in the context of Narrative Theory has led to the provision of classical and verbal information at an academic level.

⁵ It is the style of kalam and fiqh in the sense that the transmitted similar information is said many times by different people thus, it is accepted as verified (TDF Islamic Encyclopedia, access, 08.07.2021).

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