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# From Janissaries to Leaders: The Continuing History of the Kuloghlis in Libya

*Yeniçerilik'ten Liderliğe: Kuloğullarının Libya'da Devam Eden Tarihi*

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*Abstract*

This article explores the nuanced presence of a distinct Turkish lineage known as the Kuloghlis in the Maghreb region, focusing primarily on Libya. While examining their historical influence on shaping the Ottoman Empire in the region, the article argues that their connection to the Turkish Republic today and their impact on the socio-political landscape persist. Originating from intermarriages between Turkish Janissaries and local women, the Kuloghlis played a crucial role in facilitating Ottoman influence in the Maghreb from the 16th century onward. While their importance waned during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamit II, they maintained ties with Türkiye and experienced a resurgence in prominence after Libya gained independence. Despite the gradually improving literature, scholarly focus lacks in examining the enduring significance of the Kuloghlis, particularly in Libyan politics. Through document analysis and literature review, it illuminates their integral role in Ottoman history and their ongoing relevance in post-independence Libya, where many influential figures can trace their ancestry to this distinctive group.

**Keywords:** Kuloghlis, Libya, Janissaries, Ottoman Empire, Türkiye

*Öz*

Bu makale, özel olarak Libya'da, genel olarak ise Mağribte bir Türk soyuna bağlanan ve Kuloğulları olarak bilinen grubun detaylı varlığına odaklanmaktadır. Soyları Mağribte yerli kadınlarla evlenen Türk Yeniçerilere dayanan Kuloğulları, 16. yüzyıldan itibaren bölge üzerinde Osmanlı hakimiyetini kolaylaştırmada önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Söz konusu grubun Sultan II. Abdulhamit döneminden sonra önemleri azalmış olsa da, Türkiye ile sağlam bir bağ kurmuş olmaları sebebiyle Libya'nın bağımsızlığından sonra yeniden önem kazandıkları görülmektedir. Bu grup hakkında kapsamlı bir literatür olmamasına rağmen, makale, uzun süreli önemlerini vurgulayarak, Libya siyasetindeki sürekli etkilerini vurgulamayı hedeflemektedir. Belge analizi ve literatür taraması gibi nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılarak hazırlanan bu makalede, Kuloğullarının Osmanlı tarihindeki ayrılmaz rolüne dikkat çekilmektedir. Ayrıca Osmanlıdan sonra bu topluluğun Libya'da birçok etkili siyasi figür çıkarmış olması, devam eden önemlerini yansıtmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kuloğulları, Libya, Yeniçeri, Osmanlı Devleti, Türkiye

## Introduction

Historians such as Belhamissi and Abd al Jalil Tamimi offer a nuanced perspective on Ottoman rule in the Maghreb, contrasting it with European colonialism. Unlike European powers labelled as invaders, the Ottoman influence was distinct. Local populations often sought Ottoman protection, demonstrating acceptance and cooperation. Religious solidarity further strengthened Ottoman authority. These factors contributed to a unique administrative structure in the region, including Libya. The "Pax Turcica" concept emphasises this internal peace, pivotal for Ottoman solidarity against external threats. Hence, the presence of the Kuloghlis in Libya can be directly attributed to the characteristics of the Ottoman administration as described. In contrast to numerous other ancestral groups in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region, this article argues that the presence of the Kuloghlis continues to shape the relationship between Libya and Türkiye, widely recognised as the successor to the Ottoman Empire. Prior to delving into the enduring impact of the Kuloghlis from historical times to the present, it is prudent to briefly scrutinise discussions concerning their origins and historical importance.

Regarding their origin, Aziz Samih states that Kuloghlis are individuals who sought refuge in the Maghreb region due to engaging in criminal activities in their state of origin, experiencing mistreatment from their parents, or seeking opportunities due to their combative and daring dispositions.[1] The origins of the Kuloghlis, as highlighted by the prominent Ottoman historian, can be characterised as stemming from a departure motivated by various factors. This scenario may alternatively be interpreted as a recruitment endeavour by the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire's assertion of hegemony over North Africa during the 16th century, initiated by maritime expeditions led by figures like Oruç Reis and Barbarous Hayrettin Pasha, facilitated the relocation of Turkish soldiers to the Maghreb for marine operations and protection of local people against possible threats. This selective utilisation of local populations, notably during the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim, persisted until the latter part of the 19th century.[2] Many of these troops chose to settle permanently in metropolitan regions, leading to a lasting presence of their descendants in the area. The population of Turkish individuals in the region notably increased due to matrimonial unions between these troops and local women. Janissaries, prohibited from marrying during their service, often resigned from their positions to marry. These marriages, forming alliances with esteemed families, gave rise to the social group known as the Kuloghlis, facilitating integration between the two societies.[3] Despite the widespread presence of Kuloghlis, also known as the "Karakol Oğulları," throughout the Maghreb, their historical origins and continued presence remain under ongoing scrutiny, particularly in Libya, a strategic outpost for the Ottoman Empire.[4]

When it comes to the roles and significance of the Kuloghlis, it is possible to state that this group endeavoured to foster a favourable reputation as they traversed various territories in the Maghreb.[5] A significant aspect of their identity involves self-identifying as "murabıt," historically

[1] Aziz Samih İlter, *Şimali Afrika'da Türkler* İstanbul: Vakit Gazete-Matbaa Kütüphane, 1936, 22.
[2] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), "Cevdet Eyalat-ı Mümtaze n.573, N 1171," 1816.
[3] Taoufik Bachrouch, *Fomuition Sociale Barbaresque et Pouvoir a Tunis Au XVI/e Siecle* (Tunisia: Camiatü't-Tunusiyye, 1977).
[4] The phrase "Karakol Oğulları" translates to "Sons of the Police Station". This translation implies that Libya held considerable strategic importance as a key bastion for the Ottoman Empire within the Maghreb region.
[5] Mahmut Naci and Mehmet Nuri, *Trablusgarp* (Istanbul: Tercüman-ı Hak1kat Matbaası, 101AD).

associated with fulfilling religious responsibilities. Until the late 20th century, Muslims in North Africa and West Africa highly esteemed individuals with this designation. Consequently, the Kuloghlis aspired to be recognised as "murabıts" during the Ottoman Sultanate era.[6] Despite their efforts, these initiatives failed to strengthen their connection with the indigenous population. Locals consistently mispronounced the term "Karakol Oğlu" and incorrectly referred to unmarried janissaries as "Kuloghlis."[7] As noted by Magaly Morsy, individuals of Kuloghlis origin exclusively include former Janissaries who resigned from their positions and married local women.[8] Ahmet Kavas, another researcher, sought to comprehend the historical context of the Kuloghlis lineage. According to Kavas's findings, their diminishing influence within the Ottoman Empire commenced in the 17th century, beginning with Algeria, then extending to Morocco, and eventually encompassing Tripoli (Libya) to a lesser extent. Notably, Kavas highlights the Kuloghlis' remarkable resilience in Tripoli's vicinity, where they have maintained significance not only in the broader Maghreb region but also across the expansive Ottoman Empire and beyond.[9] According to another expert, Tevfik Karasapan, the prominence of the Kuloghlis in Tripoli has remained unaffected. During the transition period marked by the disintegration of the Janissary corps and the subsequent establishment of the Asakir-i Muhammediye corps, Governor Yusuf Pasha of Tripoli took proactive measures. He assembled a battalion composed of individuals from the Kuloghlis social class, assigning them duties previously carried out by the Janissary corps. As a result, Mahmud II bestowed upon him the prestigious title of beghlerbey of Rumelia.[10] Moreover, the importance of the Kuloghlis is evident during Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign. Research conducted by İbrahim Özcoşar and Abdüsselam Ertekin reveals that in 1893, a committee was formed in Tripoli to organise the Hamidiye Regiments. These regiments comprised a specialised and authorised military force operating under Sultan Abdulhamit II's direct authority. Establishing this commission required including a highly skilled gendarmerie unit from the Kuloghlis.[11] According to research by Barış Bolat, the enduring significance of the Kuloghlis in the Libyan region was also evident during the Ottoman-Italian War of 1911-1912.[12] According to records, the standard Ottoman military presence in Tripoli was believed to range from 15,000 to 20,000 soldiers. Yet, it is proposed that this number swelled from 40,000 to 50,000 when factoring in the support provided by the Kuloghlis. The influence of the Kuloghlis extended beyond the military realm, permeating areas like education, architecture, literature, and various other domains.[13] In the years that followed, the participation of Libyan Kuloghli individuals in Anatolia's struggle for independence became apparent. In more recent times, figures like Sadullah Koloğlu, who held the position of Libya's first prime minister,

[6] Ibn Galbun, *Tarih-i İbn Galbıin Der Beyan-ı Trablusgarp* (Istanbul: Ceride-i Havadis Matbaası, 1867).
[7] Naci and Nuri, *Trablusgarp*, 101AD.
[8] Magali Morsy, *Nord Africa: 1800-1900 a Survey from Tlıe Nile Valley to the Atlantic* (London: Longman, 1984).
[9] Ahmet Kavas, "Kuzey Afrika'da Bir Osmanlı Nesli: Kuloğulları (Ottoman Generation in North Africa: Kuloglu's)," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 21, no. 35 (2001): 30–68.
[10] Karasapan Celal Tevfik, *Libya Trablusgarp, Bingazi ve Fizan* (Ankara: Resimli Posta Publishing, 1960).
[11] Luay Hatem Yacoob et al., "Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in Jeostratejisi ve Mirası Uluslararası Sempozyumu (International Symposium on Sultan Abdulhamid II. Geostrategy and Heritage)," in *Faculty of Social Sciences East and African Reseach Institution*, ed. Enver Arpa (Ankara: University of Social Sciences, 2018), 253–71.
[12] Barış Bolat, "Osmanlı İtalyan Harbi'nde (1911-1912) Çanakkaleye Asker İhracına Karşı Alınan Savunma Tedbirleri (Defensive Measures Taken Against the Export of Soldiers to Çanakkale in the Ottoman-Italian War (1911-1912))," *AVRASYA International Research Journal* 10, no. 32 (2022): 271–93.
[13] BOA, *Y.EE 122/03*

underscore the enduring collaboration between Türkiye and this specific faction within Libya.[14] Presently, it is still common to come across surnames such as Kologlu, Kuloglu, or even Köroglu with notable frequency. It is precisely at this point that the literature appears to be lacking in investigating the ongoing influence of the Kuloghlis today. Thus, this article argues that the impact of the Kuloghlis from the past to the present persists. These claims aim to present findings by tracing the existence of the Kuloghlis chronologically up to the present day.

## 1. The Path of the Kuloghlis towards the Maghreb

By the late 15th century, the Mamluks of Egypt, primarily Turks, sought Ottoman assistance to strengthen their naval power against Christian adversaries.[15] In the 16th century, fears of Ottoman dominance limited collaboration between the Mamluks and Ottomans. Sultan Selim I's campaign against the Mamluks was portrayed as freeing the Arabs from Mamluk rule and defending Islam against Christian threats, gaining Arab backing. Arab historian Taghribirdi documented widespread Arab support for Ottoman victories against Christians, including the conquest of Istanbul, celebrated across the Muslim world.[16] This historical path demonstrates the diverse impact of Ottoman influence in North Africa, shaping political landscapes and fostering cultural exchanges across centuries.[17]

After the conquest of Egypt, Sultan Selim I's expansion automatically added the lands from the Benghazi area to the Red Sea coast into the Ottoman Empire. Simultaneously, Selim forged alliances with influential regional powers such as the Sharif of Mecca and the ruler of Yemen, seeking protection against Portuguese encroachments. In 1519, Tripoli sent a delegation to Istanbul seeking aid against Spanish aggression, leading to Ottoman fleets intervening. Similarly, the ruler of Gujarat in India sought Ottoman protection, resulting in Ottoman fleets aiding both regions. Over time, the Ottoman Empire received numerous pleas for assistance from territories as distant as present-day Indonesia, showcasing the widespread influence of the Ottomans. This appeal stemmed from the perception of Ottoman lands as the primary sanctuary against aggressive Christian rulers, valued not only by Muslims but also by Jews. Scholar Sauvaget's analysis highlights the formidable power of the Ottoman Empire, with vast territories, robust financial resources, efficient administration, disciplined military, advanced artillery, and naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. These capabilities elevated the Ottomans to a position of importance in European geopolitics, shaping dynamics of the era.[18] The Ottoman Empire's initial involvement in North Africa was prompted by a reason for aid from Spanish Muslims. In response, the Imperial Navy, under Kemal Reis, launched attacks on Spanish coasts and islands in 1487. Kemal Reis revisited the region in 1510 and conducted further voyages, possibly establishing contact with Moroccan Arabs. These early interactions were not geared towards territorial expansion but rather paved the way for subsequent Turkish navigators. The strategic importance of these relations lies in their role in laying the groundwork for future Ottoman engagement in North Africa, paving the path for broader

[14] Orhan Koloğlu, *Arap Kaymakam* (İstanbul: Aykırı Publishing, 2001).
[15] Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire the Classical Age 1300-1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).
[16] Taghri-Birdi, *History of Egypt 1382-1469* (University of California Press, 1960).
[17] Orhan Koloğlu, *500 Years in Turkish-Libyan Relations* (Ankara: SAM Paper, 2007).
[18] Jean Sauvaget, *Introduction à l'Histoire Du Monde Musulman* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1942).

interactions and influence in the region.[19] In response to growing maritime activity, Turkish sailors undertook expeditions in the Western Mediterranean. Notable among them were the brothers Oruç, Hizir, and İlyas, collectively known as the Barbarossas. Engaging in a range of activities from trade to privateering, these sailors traversed the 16th century Mediterranean waters.

The activities of the Barbarossas and their peers played a pivotal role in shaping maritime trade and politics in the Mediterranean during this era. The Libyan coast, strategically located, was a common stop for ships. Piri Reis, in "The Book on Navigation," detailed Tripoli, Misallata, Barca, Tobruk, and Sellum, highlighting their significance. Under Sultan's orders, Kemal Reis and his nephew Piri Reis sailed in Libyan waters. While returning to Istanbul, news arrived of Tripoli's plea for a governor due to instability, but before Ottoman response, Tripoli fell to Spanish occupation. These events underscored the region's volatility and the Ottoman Empire's challenges in controlling its North African territories.[20] The arrival of the Spaniards in Tripoli diverted caravan routes, causing significant economic losses from trade in gold powder and slaves. This downturn affected not only Tripoli but also surrounding settlements, prompting Tripolitanians to seek Ottoman aid in 1519. Subsequently, the Ottoman administration sent naval and military forces to Tadjura. Conflict persisted across the Maghreb until the Ottoman conquest of Tripoli in 1551, led by figures like Turgut Reis, who later aligned with the Ottomans. The conquest boosted Ottoman control in the Mediterranean, disrupting the Knights of Malta's base and strengthening Ottoman dominance. Braudel highlighted Tripoli's strategic importance as a military stronghold and a crucial link with the Barbary States, reinstating the city's significance in the African interior. The Odjaklu, young Turkish men from Anatolia, formed the primary military force in the Maghreb during the Ottoman period. Aziz Samih İlter, author of "Turks in Şimali Africa," offers a unique perspective on North Africa during this time, highlighting how individuals seeking refuge from crime or family discord often found their way to the Maghreb in the first half of the 16th century, driven by a rebellious and adventurous spirit. Recruiters from Western Odjaks, based in cities like Istanbul, Izmir, and Antalya, would gather volunteers for service in coastal forts, promising an easy life and honourable death. Once enough recruits were assembled, they were dispatched to the Mediterranean. Becoming a Janissary in North Africa required meeting specific criteria, notably being Turkish, granting even the lowest-ranking Janissaries higher status than local elites.[21] Unlike the recruitment of Christian children into the Janissary corps, the systematic recruitment of Odjaks occurred every two to three years in Izmir, Anatolia's main port. Between two and three thousand recruits were sent to the three Odjaks in the Maghreb. This strategy aimed to keep soldiers detached from local intrigues. Odjaklu primarily served as warriors on battleships and were forbidden from marrying. Approximately 2500 Odjaklu were stationed in Tripoli, under strict discipline.[22]

The ruling class in the Maghreb consisted mainly of Turks, aiming to counteract any pro-European Christian sentiments among local rulers. Christian pirates who converted to Islam could join the Odjaklu, seeking refuge. Their recruitment was based on their skills in seamanship, although worries about desertion remained. Known as "becoming Turks," their conversion reflected their self-interest. Even members of the clergy renounced their faith, emphasising the appeal and prestige

[19] Yılmaz Öztuna, *Büyük Türkiye Tarihi* (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 1979).
[20] Piri Reis, *Kitabı Bahriye Vol. II*, ed. Senemoğlu (Boyut Yayınları, 2020).
[21] İlter, *Şimali Afrika'da Türkler*.
[22] Jean Pignon, "Cahiers de Tunisie," *Revue de Sciences Humaines* 1, no. 1 (1953): 319.

associated with the Odjak.[23] Despite the marriage ban for the Odjaklu, many disregarded it and wed Arab women, leading to the rise of a population known as "Kuloghli," or "sons of the sultan's employees". The increase in the Turkish population in the Western Odjaks was not mainly due to soldiers transferring from Anatolia, but rather through marriages with local women, resulting in children. Those unable to marry while serving as Janissaries/Odjaklu were permitted to do so upon leaving military service. Through marriages with respected families, their social status expanded, giving rise to a new class known as the "Kuloghli's" between the two communities.[24] Initially, the new generation emerging in the Western Odjaks in the early 16th century was known by the name "Kuloghli." Janissary children born in regions outside these areas were also initially referred to by this title. However, as they moved away from these communities, they couldn't form a distinct group due to their changing status.

The Kuloghli class in Libya, stemming from the Janissary tradition, initially resembles counterparts elsewhere. However, what sets them apart is that their mothers are not "Turkish." Unlike older Janissaries from various Ottoman territories who could marry freely within their regions, those stationed in the Western Odjaks were required to marry local women due to the challenge of finding a Turkish spouse or noble concubine.[25] Children born from marriages with Turkish individuals or concubines were not considered Kuloghli. Over time, a distinct generation emerged, persisting as a separate class from Kuloghli in other Ottoman territories. The dispatch of sailors and soldiers to the Western Odjaks and provincial centres played a vital role in maintaining these important cities and regions. Soldiers, primarily recruited from various Anatolian regions, were tasked with safeguarding these cities. While many soldiers were of Turkish descent, they were gathered from different places for a specific period, integrating into urban life until the end of their service term. Most recruits hailed from Western Anatolian cities like Antalya, Muğla, Aydın, İzmir, and Manisa. Despite diverse ethnic backgrounds present due to recruitment in Istanbul, sources generally agree that many recruits were of Turkish descent, particularly noting their Turkish fathers.

The majority of Kuloghlis in the region, due to their non-Turkish mothers, speak Arabic as their native language.[26] While it is generally true that many in this community primarily speak Turkish, there are individuals who are proficient in their fathers' language. Additionally, they identify as Turkish and use the term "Kuloghli," which is Turkish. The term "Kuloghli," meaning "son of the servant," refers to the offspring of an Ottoman soldier, suggesting recognition of all those serving in military or civil capacities as "the Sultan's servants."[27] It is spelled differently in Turkish, English, and French due to the use of the Arabic script, despite its Turkish origins.[28] Mahmud Naci refers to the "Native Turk" class as descendants of soldiers who captured Tripolitania, along with their children and grandchildren. As already mentioned, they gained local status through marriages between Anatolian immigrants and local women.[29] In archival records and texts, descriptions often

[23] Jean Monlau, *Les États Barbaresques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973).
[24] Bachrouch, *Fomuition Sociale Barbaresque et Pouvoir a Tunis Au XVI/e Siecle*.
[25] Magali Morsy, *Nord Africa: 1800-1900 a Survey from Tlıe Nile Valley to the Atlantic* (London: Longman, 1984).
[26] Mehmet Hıfzı, "Osmanlı Afrikası (Mukaddeme - Ahval-i Tabiiyye - Teşkilat-ı Arziyye - Ahval-i İktisadiyye - Ahval-i Tarihiyye)," *Donanma,* 2 (17), 1911, 211–16.
[27] Brown Cari, *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey 1837-1855*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, 53.
[28] Kavas, "Kuzey Afrika'da Bir Osmanlı Nesli: Kuloğulları", 46.
[29] Mahmut Naci and Mehmet Nuri, Trablusgarp, İstanbul: Tarihçi Kitabevi, 2012, 59-60.

mention Janissary contingents organised by Turgut Reis, accompanied by groups of craftsmen, along with the collective known locally as "Kuloghli," who are tax-exempt." [30] The Kuloghlis gained influence in the Ottoman provinces of Tunis and Tripoli from the early 18th century. Their involvement in governance in Algeria became increasingly challenging from the mid-17th century onwards, despite being the province where the Kuloghlis class originated from.[31] While there may be a noticeable decline in their numbers in whole Maghreb, the central argument of this article posits that the influence of the Kuloghlis within the Ottoman Empire, and subsequently in Turkish-Libyan relations, is evident across various administrative periods in the region. Between the 18th and 19th centuries some notable families from this class in the Maghreb included El-Gullt and Bu-Şlagtm in Constantine, as well as the family of Muhammad b. Osman al-Kebir in Yelıran.[32] The Karamanlı dynasty within the Kuloghli elite in Tripoli (1711-1835) and certain beghlerbeys from this family have held important positions in the region's history.[33] Indeed, in early 18th century, Ahmed Karamanlı, a Kuloghli military figure, seized control of Tripoli, and it was not until ten years later, in 1722, that he received the title of Pasha from Istanbul. The periods of Ahmed Bey (1711-1745), who served as beghlerbey for an extended period from this family, Ali Bey (1754-1793), and the last beghlerbey Yusuf Bey (1794-1832) are notable. The Karamanlı family's prolonged governance was strongly supported by the Kuloghli, class and influential families in Tripoli. In the subsequent period, important administrators of Kuloghli origin such as Mehmed Pasha (November 4, 1745 - July 24, 1754), Ali I Pasha (July 24, 1754 - July 30, 1793), Ali Burghul Pasha Cezayrli (July 30, 1793 - January 20, 1795), II. Ahmed (January 20 - June 11, 1795), Yusuf Karamanlı (June 11, 1795 - August 20, 1832), Mehmed Karamanlı (1817, 1826, and 1832), Mehmed ibn Ali (1824 and 1835), and Ali II Karamanlı (August 20, 1832 - May 26, 1835) ruled in cooperation with the Ottoman Empire in Libya. The main source of revenue during this time was external, particularly privateering activities in the Mediterranean, which surged in 1711 and again between 1794-1805. Captives and their ransoms were crucial to provincial revenue. Indirect sources included tributes paid by European states for the safety of their trade ships in the Mediterranean, contributing to the province's income. Trade between Tripoli and the Mediterranean, centred around Fizan under Tripoli's control, played a vital role in the economy.[34] During Yusuf Bey's reign (1796-1833), the province increasingly relied on external borrowing as privateering declined and the trade monopoly weakened. Despite these challenges, his power endured through the enforced taxation of the population, backed by the support of the Kuloghlis, ensuring his continued rule.[35] During Yusuf Karamanli's reign, the army consisted of approximately ten thousand Kuloghli, a number that grew to thirty thousand by 1830. In 1881, Tripoli alone housed 1,200 cavalrymen and 2,800 Kuloghli irregular infantry, increasing to 4,000 infantries by 1885 while the cavalry remained stable. This demographic shift highlighted the substantial presence and influence of Kuloghli within the military

[30] Hasan Safi et al., Tarih-i İbn Galbıin Der Beyan-ı Trablusgarp, (Yayına Hazırlayan: A. Kavas, İstanbul: ORDAF Yayınları, 2013, 94.
[31] Mohamed Hédi Chérif, "Tunisie et Libye: Les Ottomans et Leurs Héritiers", *Histoire de l'Afrique*, 5, 1992, 318.
[32] Chérif, 319.
[33] Morsy, *Nord Africa: 1800-1900 a Survey from Tlıe Nile Valley to the Atlantic*, 42.
[34] Chérif, 319.
[35] Andre Martel, "L'armee d'Ahmed Bey d'apres Un Instructeur Français", *Revue Lnternationale d'Histoire Militiare,* 18, 1956, 39.

framework of the region.[36] The Kuloghli, consisting of 200 cavalrymen in Homs, served under the command of the Bashagha until the position was abolished in 1900. Their duties included ensuring public and road security, as well as tax collection, in exchange for tax exemptions. This arrangement endured into the early 20th century. As gleaned from the aforementioned information, the presence of the Kuloghlis held significant sway for the Ottoman Empire from their inception through the 20th century. They constituted a strategically important group, even possessing administrative rights in the Maghreb. While their influence permeated throughout the entire Maghreb region, this article focuses solely on the Libyan contingent, contending that only those in Libya maintain a continuous impact in the present day. Hence, during the early 19th century, despite awareness of European partition plans, the Sublime Porte maintained a decentralized structure, permitting regional autonomy until the mid-19th century.

## 2. The Hamidiye Regiments

To observe the enduring influence of the Kuloghlis, which persists albeit undergoing transformations, another pivotal juncture in Ottoman history is the reign of Sultan Abdulhamit II. During his era, the Sublime Porte's connection to the territories under Ottoman control diminished, as Sultan Abdulhamit believed that reasserting Ottoman power globally necessitated maintaining ties with all Muslim nations. However, Sultan Abdulhamit pursued diverse approaches to realizing this vision. In Libya, he engaged with the Sanusi and the Kuloghlis, highlighting the profound strategic significance of this group in the region. From 1835 onward, Tripoli underwent integration into the Ottoman Empire, resulting in the abolition of the odjak system and necessitating the establishment of a novel relationship between the government and the populace. This transitional phase aimed at modernising and expanding state control. During this period, it is imperative to comprehend the interplay between the concept of Islamic Union and the Hamidiye Regiments. Between 1870 and 1920, the notion of "İttihad-ı İslam" (Islamic Union), extensively deliberated in Muslim-majority regions such as Cairo, Bombay, Istanbul, or Singapore through European and American press outlets, garnered support not only from individuals attuned to Islamic principles in social life but also from segments lacking such Islamic inclinations, as a form of anti-imperialist stance. It is noteworthy that a diverse range of figures, spanning from Mithat Pasha to Mustafa Kemal, advocated for the notion of İttihad-ı İslam at certain junctures of their lives and under specific circumstances, without necessarily aligning with Islamist ideology. In this framework, Ottoman sultans were perceived as leaders of the Islamic world by Muslims residing under European colonial dominion between 1900 and 1922.[37] It is notable that the concept of İttihad-ı İslam emerged within a context where political and intellectual discourse was primarily focused on efforts to preserve the state, with few issues taking precedence. This idea is posited to have arisen in response to the pervasive influence of Pan movements during the 19th century, notably the German and Slavic movements, following unsuccessful attempts to safeguard the state. İttihad-ı İslam is thus argued to have stemmed from two principal sources: firstly, a conservative reaction that surfaced, particularly within Ottoman public opinion, following the Tanzimat reforms; and secondly, the growing significance of the caliphate within the Muslim world, coupled with heightened appeals for

[36] İlter, *Şimali Afrika'da Türkler*, 21.
[37] Cemil Aydın, "İmparatorluk ve Hilafet Vizyonları Arasında Osmanlı'nın Panislâmist İmajı", 1839-1924 İstanbul: Türkıye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Sempozyum Tebliğleri, 2013, 47–69.

assistance from the Ottoman Empire due to the colonisation of Islamic territories.[38] The assessment underscores the predominant influence of political and contextual factors in understanding the significance attributed to the Ottoman caliphate by Muslims residing under colonial rule. It suggests that this importance should not be misconstrued as indicative of a surge in religiosity or a resurgence of traditional values, particularly considering the ongoing processes of globalisation and Europeanisation within these societies. In this context, Pan-Islamism can be delineated from ideologies seeking to Islamise or revive Islam in response to perceived threats from Western modernity. Instead, it can be viewed as an endeavor to reinterpret Islam in light of its original sources, aiming to restore its authentic characteristics amidst evolving socio-political circumstances.[39]

In this context, the political orientation of İttihad-ı İslam, often seen as a precursor to Islamism, arose not primarily from a theoretical framework but rather as a response to the exigencies of prevailing conditions. It stemmed from a notion of Islamic unity stirred by the collective suffering experienced, a sentiment believed to have originated with the loss of Crimea. Subsequent invasions and colonial ventures in the Islamic world further fueled the emergence of İttihad-ı İslam as a natural anti-imperialist alternative. It is crucial to underscore that İttihad-ı İslam, despite its modern characteristics, possesses a distinctiveness that challenges the secondary, subjective role typically ascribed to the Ottoman political elite when viewed beyond the Eurocentric lens of the modernisation paradigm.[40]

The aforementioned explanations aim to illustrate that a political stance often closely associated with the personal characteristics of Abdulhamid II was in fact more deeply rooted in the prevailing circumstances of the time than solely attributable to Abdulhamid himself. However, this does not negate the role of Sultan Abdulhamid as a pivotal figure influencing this process during his reign. On the contrary, within the broader context, Abdulhamid II's policies played a significant role in catalysing and advancing the İttihad-ı İslam concept within the Islamic world. The significance of Abdulhamid II's policies in relation to the İttihad-ı İslam notion lies in his adeptness at carving out maneuvering space amidst increasingly restrictive conditions.[41] One of Abdulhamid II's pivotal strategies involved reinvigorating the symbolic language associated with the sultanate and caliphate, coupled with the restructuring of instruments within the Islamic world. His aim was to implement strategic policies by establishing a covert and overt global network, leveraging world Muslims as conduits for his initiatives. Approaches that primarily concentrate on the Hamidiye Regiments, predominantly composed of Kurds, often overlook the overarching strategy behind their formation. Consequently, regiments formed or attempted to be formed in other regions are often neglected. In addition to Abdulhamid II's İttihad-ı İslam policy, the dire state of the army and the intense imperial encirclement of Ottoman territories can be identified as primary factors motivating the establishment of the Hamidiye Regiments. The military vacuum resulting from the inability to control the army

[38] Gökhan Çetinsaya, *İslâmi Vatanseverlikten, İslâm Siyasetine. Cumhuriyet'e Devrede Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001, 95.
[39] Ergün Yıldırım, "İslâmizm, İslâmlaşma ve İttihad-ı İslâm", *Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Sempozyum Tebliğleri*, İstanbul, 2013, 1–27.
[40] Nadir Özbek, "Modernite, Tarih ve Ideoloji: II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Tarihçiliği Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Talid* , 2(1), 2004, 71–90.
[41] Selim Deringil, *İktidarın Sembolleri II.Abdülhamid Dönemi 1876- 1909,* İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002, 88.

during Abdulhamid II's reign represented a significant weakness of the İttihad-ı İslam strategy. Not only was the army deficient in technical capabilities and equipment, but also a substantial segment within it opposed Abdulhamid's policies. We can thus posit that the İttihad-ı İslam policy harboured an anti-imperialist stance, which evolved into a strategy co-developed with the populace, transcending its mere adoption by the state in regions susceptible to imperial interventions.

On February 19, 1892, Şakir Pasha, the Commander and Governor of the Vilayet of Tripolitania, received a telegram highlighting concerns regarding the inadequacy of the Gendarmerie and the Kuloghlis in maintaining security amidst the prospect of a potential foreign attack. Consequently, it was proposed that these forces undergo inspection by a military commission. Concurrently, Şakir Pasha, actively involved in organising the Hamidiye Regiments in Anatolia, presented a report to Abdulhamid II proposing the establishment of a similar structure in Tripolitania. The rationale behind this proposal was grounded in the imperative to safeguard the territory from external threats and occupations, enhance the overall strength of the Ottoman Empire, and potentially garner benefits by rallying African support around the caliphate. Upon approval of this proposal by Abdulhamid II, Şakir Pasha was entrusted with the task of organising the Hamidiye Regiments in Tripolitania. Subsequently, efforts commenced towards the establishment of these regiments in the region.[42]

Throughout this process, a commission was established in Tripoli tasked with organising the Hamidiye Regiments. This commission initially decided to commence the formation of the Hamidiye regiments concurrently with an esteemed gendarmerie regiment comprising members of the Kuloghlis. Additionally, the commission drafted a memorandum, which was dispatched to Tripolitania accompanied by an imperial decree for public reading. According to this memorandum, a commission was constituted in Tripolitania, comprising members from various strata of society including the municipal council, imams, muhtars, the head of the Kuloghlis, sheikhs, and the commander of the imperial army along with military officials.[43]The commission in operation formulated a draft regulation consisting of 46 articles and submitted it to the Sultan for consideration.[44]

The establishment of the Hamidiye Regiments entailed a procedural framework involving the preparation of reports, memoranda, commission decisions, and regulations. However, amidst these administrative processes, the disposition of the Kuloghlis towards the Hamidiye Regiments emerges as a crucial aspect of consideration. In the latter half of the 19th century, the Kuloghlis population in Tripolitania numbered approximately thirty thousand individuals. Entrusted by the state with various governmental roles akin to a constabulary, they bore the responsibility of safeguarding the territory against internal and external threats. Historically, the Kuloghlis enjoyed exemptions from taxes and mandatory services. During the establishment of the Hamidiye Regiments, discontent among the Kuloghlis arose in response to the Sultan's decree for their dissolution and the allocation of land titles, which encroached upon privileges they had long enjoyed. This discontent culminated in a rebellion, with approximately two thousand Kuloghlis protesting these decisions around government buildings. The unrest reached a critical juncture prompting a telegram to the Minister

[42] BOA, *YPRK.BŞK.25/43*
[43] BOA, *Y.EE 122/03*
[44] BOA, *Y.MTV.166/36*

of War, warning of the potential intervention by foreign states with nationals in the region and the risk of Muslim bloodshed should the situation deteriorate, seeking guidance on appropriate action. In response to these developments, another telegram was dispatched to the Governor and Commander of Tripolitania, directing the temporary suspension of the decision to dissolve the Kuloghlis and instructing that no further action be taken until a military commission is convened and arrives at the scene.[45] Subsequent years witnessed conflicts between the Kulgholis and the officials tasked with registering their lands for titling. Following a day-long confrontation, the Kuloghlis overwhelmed by the state's military intervention, capitulated. Ten prominent members of the Kuloghlis were subsequently exiled to Benghazi. Land and population surveys were conducted thereafter. Consequently, impediments to the establishment of the Hamidiye Regiments were resolved, facilitating the progression of the initiative.

According to a telegram dated March 6, 1898, dispatched by Namık Bey, the Governor of Tripolitania, regiments had been established by that time. The telegram indicates that training had commenced for 14 infantry battalions and 5 regiments of Hamidiye Local Cavalry. Additionally, it mentions the formation of 70 infantry battalions and 18 cavalry regiments.[46]

As per a document authored and dispatched by the mutasarrıf (governor) and commander of Benghazi Sanjak in 1901, it is reported that the inhabitants of Tripolitania have committed to the establishment of seven Hamidiye Regiments, comprising twelve thousand soldiers from the infantry and cavalry divisions. This commitment has been duly acknowledged by the military commission. Furthermore, it is indicated that the formation of these seven regiments, encompassing both infantry and cavalry units, is pending approval from the Sultan.[47]

The archival document BOA. Y.PRK. UM. 41.22 delineates the quantity and composition of the indigenous Hamidiye Infantry battalions and cavalry regiments established within the Tripolitania Province. Through examination of this document, it becomes evident that Kuloghlis began to actively serve in the Hamidiye Regiment subsequent to this period. Similarly, a corresponding document was prepared for Benghazi, as evidenced by BOA. Y.PRK. ASK.175/43, suggesting the potential active involvement of Kuloghlis in serving within the Hamidiye Regiment within this province as well.

### 3. Encountering Kuloghlis Post-Libya's Independence

Upon investigating the presence of the Kuloghlis during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamit II, it becomes evident that the connection between Turkish Turks and Libyan Turks has persisted without interruption. There is a significant gap in historical knowledge on the fate of the Kuloghlis between World War I and World War II. During the colonial era in Libya, the interaction between the Kuloghlis and Turkish nationals appeared to be relatively passive. Concurrently, Türkiye grappled with its own challenges of attaining independence and establishing the new regime of the Turkish Republic. The nascent Turkish government focused its efforts inwardly on rectifying administrative, economic, and social issues, thereby diverting attention away from Turkish descendants elsewhere in the region and, notably, from the Ottoman legacy. Nevertheless, despite these circumstances,

[45] BOA, *YPRK.BŞK.25/43*
[46] BOA, *Y.PRK. UM.41/22*
[47] BOA, *Y.PRK. ASK.176/95*

Türkiye, widely acknowledged as the successor to the Ottoman Empire, rekindled ties with the Kuloghlis following Libya's decolonisation. The impetus for this renewed engagement stemmed from the historical alliance between the Sanusiyyah and the founding figures of the Turkish Republic. Both in Libya and Anatolia, the Sanusiyyah and the Turkish Republic's founding team shared a camaraderie forged through their joint struggle. Sheikh Ahmet Senussi, the leader of the Sanussiyah movement, personally participated in the Kuvayi Milliye and fought alongside Turkish nationalists. Despite limited available information on the Kuloghlis during this period, evidence suggests the Senussiyah's inclination to collaborate with them and other Turkish descendants. During Libya's transition to independence, as the United Nations sought to facilitate the establishment of a new constitutional framework, delegates representing Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Fezzan were tasked with formulating a constitution for the nation. These representatives were to convene and engage in collaborative deliberations within a National Assembly setting.[48]

Among the individuals selected to represent Libya during its transitional period, Ali Assad al Jerbi stands out as a notable figure from Cyrenaica. Born in Derna in 1901, he hailed from a family with ties to the local administration under the Turkish Administration. Al Jerbi pursued his education in Istanbul from 1911 to 1923, focusing on medical studies during this period. From September 1949 to July 1950, Al Jerbi held the position of Minister of Transport in the Cyrenaica emirate. Subsequently, he assumed various roles within the provisional administration led by Mahmud al-Muntasir. Notably, he served as the foreign minister from March to December 1951, health minister from March to April 1951, and minister of justice from April to December 1951. During his tenure, Al Jerbi prioritised the establishment of the Libyan Army by leveraging remnants of the Senussi army, which had actively participated in combat against the Western allies during both World Wars. To this end, he facilitated military scholarships for aspiring recruits, enabling them to undergo military training in Iraq and Türkiye. Additionally, Al Jerbi played a pivotal role in the establishment of a military institution situated in Benghazi.[49] Following Libya's independence, the enduring connection between local Libyans and the Turkish presence, particularly associated with the Sanussiyah movement, remained palpable. Upon Libya's establishment as a sovereign nation, Sidi Muhammed İdris El Mehdi es-Senusi, also known as King Idris, ascended to the throne. Notably, King Idris chose to collaborate with a Turkish president who was simultaneously a Kuloghli. This decision led to a revitalisation and evolution of the relationship between this specific group and the Turkish state following Libya's independence. Sadullah Bey, born in Derne during the Ottoman era, embarked on his career as a deputy clerk, later assuming roles as district governor in various locations. His service extended across regions such as Hassa, Buldan, Pınarhisar, Vize, Saray, and Maçka. Post the proclamation of the Republic, he continued his administrative duties in districts including of, Sürmene, Kadınhanı, İznik, Karacabey, and Çatalca. During his tenure in Rumelia, Sadullah Bey confronted challenges such as banditry, Bulgarian insurgency, and resistance against Greek occupation. Upon relocating to Ankara, he joined the Kuvâ-yi Milliye (National Forces). In 1922, he assumed the role of district governor of Maçka, where he vigorously combated Rumelia banditry, facilitated exchange policies, suppressed reactionary movements, advocated for women's rights, and spearheaded urban development and

[48] UN, "Report of Sub-Committee 17 to the First Committee, Resolution 289 (IV)", 31.

[49] "باقات ليبية", "علي إبراهيم الجربى ...أحد بناة الدولة الليبية", https://baqatlibyah.blogspot.com/2011/06/blog-post_20.html. (10.02.2024)

agricultural innovations. Proficient in Arabic, Persian, and French, Sadullah Bey earned the moniker "Arap Kaymakam" (Arab District Governor). In 1947, he travelled to Benghazi to address his family's affairs, where Emir Sunusi, with whom he had prior acquaintance, offered him the position of Prime Minister of Benghazi (later transitioning to Libya). Returning to Türkiye, Sadullah Bey sought approval from President İsmet İnönü, ultimately securing permission in 1949. As Prime Minister of Benghazi, Sadullah Bey played a pivotal role in Libya's statehood emergence. He facilitated the education of young cadres in Egypt, contesting British governance and personally funding the travel expenses of students. Despite his significant contributions, Sadullah Koloğlu, who later became a senator in the Libyan Parliament, passed away in 1952, with minimal personal wealth. He was interred in Libya, having governed the commonwealth with distinction for years.[50]

In addition to Sadullah Koloğlu, there were numerous other individuals of Kuloghli background who contributed to the newly established Libyan government. Muhammad Sakizli, born in 1892 and of Turkish descent, held significant governmental positions in the region of Cyrenaica and later in Libya during the mid-20th century. Following Emir Idris's declaration of the 'independence' of the Emirate of Cyrenaica on June 1, 1949, a new government needed establishment despite the prevailing British influence. After an interim administration led by Omar Pasha El Kikhia, Sakizli assumed office as Prime Minister in March 1950. However, this autonomy was largely nominal, given the substantial British influence. Upon King Idris I's declaration of Libya's independence on December 24, 1951, Sakizli's title transitioned to 'Governor' of Cyrenaica until May 1952. Subsequently, he served as Minister of Education in the Libyan federal government starting May 1952 and later as the Chief of the Royal Bureau from September 1953. In February 1954, Sakizli was tasked with forming a government, albeit briefly. Following the dissolution of the federal system in Libya, he resumed his role as Governor of Cyrenaica from December 26, 1962, to April 26, 1963. Muhammad Sakizli passed away on January 14, 1976.[51] Another name was Ahmed Muaytik, of Kuloghli Turkish descent, serving briefly as the Prime Minister of Libya in 2014. One of the most prominent politicians is Fayiz es-Serrac of the GNA. Serving as the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord, established on December 17, 2015, under the Libya Political Agreement, he previously held the position of Chairman of the Libyan Presidential Council from 2016 to 2021. Es-Serrac has also been a member of the Tripoli Parliament. Born on February 20, 1960, in Tripoli, he hails from a prosperous family with Kuloghli heritage, renowned for their commercial enterprises and extensive land holdings.[52] Fayez al-Serraj, who claimed Turkish descent, disclosed that his father, Mustafa al-Serrac, held a ministerial position during the era of the Libyan monarchy. Educated as an architect, Fayez al-Serraj served in the Ministry of Housing during Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime. In 2014, he assumed the role of Minister of Housing and Public Utilities in the Muaitik Cabinet of the General National Congress (GNC). In early October 2014, Bernardino León, the United Nations envoy to Libya, proposed the formation of a national unity government for Libya. This proposed government was to be spearheaded by Fayez al-Sarraj's Presidential Council, comprising three members from the eastern, western, and southern

[50] Ali Osman Çetin et al., *Arap Kaymakam: Sadullah Koloğlu'nun Hayatı ve Libya'daki Başbakanlık Dönemi*, Bilkent University, 2016, 3-19
[51] Mustafa Ben Halim, *Safahat Matwiya Men Tarikh Libia as Siyasi*, Misr: Matabe' al-Ahram at Tejariya, 1992, 32.
[52] Ana Pouvreau, "Les Ressorts de l'engagement de La Turquie En Libye", https://fmes-france.org/les-ressorts-de-lengagement-de-la-turquie-en-libye (14.01.2024).

regions of the country, in addition to two ministers.[53] Serraj functioned as the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord from its inception in December 2015, pursuant to a United Nations-led political agreement, until its dissolution on March 15, 2021. Before his initial arrival in Tripoli in March 2016, Serraj narrowly escaped two separate assassination attempts. In the subsequent years, the Government of National Accord encountered challenges in asserting its legitimacy as the country's authority, contributing to Libya's continued division. The proposed cabinet of ministers for the GNA faced rejection by the House of Representatives (HoR), prompting Serraj to form a government without the HoR's vote of confidence. Internal conflicts among militias escalated, and Libyan citizens grappled with economic hardships, including inflation, corruption, and smuggling, leading to the depletion of the country's cash reserves. Later in 2017, a UN Security Council meeting in April warned of the looming risk of renewed conflict in Libya, highlighting the government's struggle to deliver essential services while combating terrorism, illegal migration, and oil smuggling. On April 10, 2019, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres expressed his hope at the UN headquarters that they still aimed to avert "a bloody war for Tripoli."[54] This statement was issued two days after forces aligned with Khalifa Haftar initiated their advance toward the capital. Subsequent to the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, Serraj relinquished his powers in March 2021.

Fathi Ali Abdul Salam Bashagha, born on August 20, 1962, of Turkish descent, is a prominent Libyan political figure who previously held the position of interim Prime Minister of the Government of National Stability. He also served as the Minister of Interior from 2018 to 2021. Bashagha's political trajectory notably includes his selection as prime minister-designate by the Libyan House of Representatives based in the eastern region on February 10, 2022.[55] However, his appointment faced opposition from Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh of the Government of National Unity (GNU), who insisted on relinquishing power only after a national election. Notably, Bashagha received support from Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army. Subsequently, on May 16, 2023, the eastern-based Libyan parliament suspended Bashagha from his duties and delegated them to the Finance Minister, Osama Hamada.[56] In addition to the above-mentioned names, in 2012, Muhammed Sawan, a Libyan Islamist politician and activist, is known to have been elected as the leader of the Justice and Development Party, which he founded with the support of the Muslim Brotherhood in March 2012.Furthermore, Abdulrahman Sewehli, alternatively spelled as Abdel Rahman al-Suwayhili, is a notable Libyan statesman and the principal figure of the Union for the Homeland party. His ascendancy to the position of chairman of the High Council of State on April 6, 2016, underscores his pivotal role in Libyan politics. Noteworthy is his lineage, being the descendant of Ramadan Asswehly, a prominent Tripolitanian nationalist revered for his

[53] "UN Proposes Unity Government to End Libya Conflict," Al Jazeera, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/9/un-proposes-unity-government-to-end-libya-conflict (14.01.2024).
[54] UN, "UN, Still Time' to Stop a 'Bloody Battle' for Libya's Capital, Insists Guterres," https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036481 (12.01.2024).
[55] "Libya: Parliament Names Fathi Bashagha as Interim Prime Minister", *Middle East Eye*, 2022, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/libyan-bashaga-named-interim-prime-minister (14.01.2024).
[56]"Libya Parliament Suspends Rival Eastern-Based PM Bashagha", *Al Jazeera*, May 16, 2023, https://web.archive.org/web/20230901172244/https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/16/libya-parliament-suspends-rival-eastern-based-pm-bashagha (12.01.2024)

foundational contributions to the establishment of the Tripolitanian Republic.[57] This list could be expanded extensively; however, for the purposes of this article, the selection suffices to underscore a significant historical heritage between two strategically important regional nations. All individuals mentioned share a Turkish lineage and have enjoyed, or currently maintain, amicable relations with Turkish dignitaries, exemplified notably by figures such as Fayyaz al-Sarraj.

## 4. Kulouglis Today

Today, the city of Misrata in Libya stands as a place where Turks reside in a cohesive bloc. Situated at the midpoint between the two shores of the Mediterranean in Libya's heartland, Misrata ranks as the country's third-largest city in terms of both geographical area and population. The Kuloghli/Köroğlu Turkish clan holds sway in this city. Previously, Muammar Gaddafi made extensive efforts to eradicate this city and its Turkish inhabitants. Even today, remnants of the former regime, Arab supremacists, and Western sympathizers purportedly strive to obliterate Misrata solely because of its Turkish population. Ali Hammuda asserts, "*We have never denied our lineage, and we will never do so. We will never be ashamed of it or anything associated with it. There is nothing in it that will harm us, disturb us, or embarrass us. Furthermore, it represents the esteemed will of Allah."*[58] Due to fear and mistrust, Gaddafi refused to enrol almost all Misratis in military academies and prohibited them from holding leadership positions in military security institutions. Additionally, he densely settled Bedouins who supported him in Misrata and assigned them security leadership roles in an attempt to neutralize the Turkish population. Today, Libyan Turks continue to engage in a significant struggle for freedom, akin to their counterparts in Iraq and Syria. The present-day potential of the Kuloghlis to constitute an armed force stands at approximately 20,000 individuals up to the age of 25, and around 40,000 when individuals up to the age of 40 are included. However, due to certain domestic political dynamics, they are not permitted to actively support their country's struggles, as deemed necessary. According to field surveys conducted in the region, the Kuloghlis currently do not possess fluency in Turkish; nonetheless, they are aware of their Turkish identity and sustain their presence through organized associations and various civil society organizations. The Kuloghli Turks define themselves as Turks residing in the Trablusgarp province of the Turkish homeland. Remaining steadfastly devoted to their national identity, the Kuloghlis, candidates for heroic deeds throughout history, recently expelled Haftar's armed group from Misrata by providing political and military support to the legitimate government.[59] This information as well, underscores the contemporary manifestation of a historical legacy, indicating a need for comprehensive exploration and analysis.

[57]Ronald Bruce St John, *Historical Dictionary of Libya*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014, 316.
[58]Nurullah Çetin, "Libyada Türk Varlığı (Turkish Existence in Libya)," 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20190911184105/http://www.yenimesaj.com.tr/libyada-turk-varligi-H1237671.htm (14.01.204)
[59] Stratejik Ortak, "Libya'da Bir Türk Gücü: Kuloğulları", https://stratejikortak.com/2020/06/libyada-bir-turk-gucu-kulogullari.html (28.12.2024)

## Conclusion

Providing all details above, it can be concluded that the historical narrative surrounding the Kuloghlis in Libya offers profound insights into the intricate tapestry of Ottoman influence, historical legacies, and the evolving dynamics of post-independence Libya. Originating from the strategic integration of local populations by the Ottoman Empire, particularly during maritime and military endeavours to safeguard North African territories, the Kuloghlis emerged as a pivotal element within Libyan society over time. Their integration spanned various spheres, including governance, military affairs, and cultural domains, showcasing a remarkable adaptability and endurance amidst shifting political landscapes. Notably, in regions like Tripoli, the Kuloghlis retained significant influence, navigating and often shaping the complexities of changing geopolitical dynamics. Scholars and historians continue to delve into their origins, identities, and multifaceted contributions, shedding light on their historical legacy and ongoing relevance in contemporary Libya. The enduring collaboration between Türkiye and the Kuloghlis underscores deep-rooted connections and shared histories between the two nations, further enriching our comprehension of the complexities inherent in Maghreb history and its interconnectedness with broader regional dynamics. This collaboration not only highlights historical alliances but also underscores the enduring bonds that transcend time and geography. As Libya charts its course amidst present challenges and aspirations for stability and prosperity, the legacy of the Kuloghlis remains intricately intertwined with the nation's historical narrative. It serves as a testament to the resilience and contributions of diverse communities within the region, reflecting the enduring spirit of collaboration and shared destiny. Individuals such as Ali Assad al Jerbi, Sadullah Koloğlu, and Fayez al-Serraj exemplify the deep-seated connections between Türkiye and Libya, forged through historical alliances, shared struggles, and familial ties. Their roles in shaping Libya's political trajectory, from its early days as an independent nation to its contemporary challenges, underscore the lasting impact of individuals from Kuloghlis backgrounds. However, the influence exerted by the Kuloghlis on Turkish-Libyan relations, spanning from historical epochs to contemporary times, has been notably undervalued. Hence, the intended objective of this article is to offer a scholarly examination that elucidates the significance of this particular group within the context of bilateral relations between Türkiye and Libya. Moreover, the collaboration between the Sanusiyyah movement and Turkish nationalists, epitomised by leaders like Sheikh Ahmet Senussi and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, underscores the historical bonds between the two regions and their shared aspirations for independence and self-determination. As Libya navigates internal divisions, external pressures, and economic challenges, the legacy of individuals from Kuloghlis backgrounds serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience, diversity, and interconnectedness of the Libyan people. Their contributions to nation-building efforts, diplomatic endeavours, and political leadership underscore the importance of inclusivity, diversity, and collaboration in shaping Libya's future trajectory. In essence, the narrative of Kuloghlis individuals in Libya encapsulates more than just personal achievements or political influence; it represents the enduring bonds between Türkiye and Libya, grounded in shared histories, struggles, and aspirations for a brighter future. As Libya continues its journey, these bonds will undoubtedly continue to shape its political landscape and collective identity in the years to come, serving as a guiding beacon amidst the complexities of modern geopolitics.

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