

# Unknown peoples; Zazas

## Bilinmeyen Halk: Zazalar

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### Özet

*Türkiye’de yaşayan halk kitlelerinden birisi de hiç şüphesiz Zazalardır. Her ne kadar 19. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısından beri batıda üzerlerine oldukça geniş araştırmalar yapılmışsa da Türkiye’de akademik dünyanın ilgisini çekememişlerdir. İlk başlarda yapılan çalışmalar ağırlıklı olarak Zaza dili üzerine yoğunlaşmış ve 1932 yılında Alman dilbilimcileri Mann ve Haddank’ın yaptıkları devrim niteliğindeki çalışma ile Zazaca’nın dünya dilleri içindeki yeri belirlenmiştir. Daha sonraki yıllarda MacKenzie, Windfuhr, Poul, Todd gibi farklı ülkelerdeki dilbilimciler Zazaca üzerine çalışmalar yapmaya devam etmişlerdir. Avrupa’ya göçen Zazalar arasında 1980’lerden itibaren gelişen Zaza hareketi yavaş yavaş batılı bilim adamlarının dikkatini çekmiş bu konuda Arakelova, Kehl-Bodrogi, Bruinessen gibi akademisyenler tarafından çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Batıda Zazalar üzerine yapılan onlarca çalışma olmasına rağmen Türkiye’de maalesef bu konuda çalışma yok derecesindedir. Bu nedenle Zazalar konusunda Türkiye Günlüğü dergisinde yayınlanan makalemin İngilizce gözden geçirilmiş versiyonu olan bu çalışmanın Türkiye’deki akademik dünyadaki eksikliğin giderilmesi açısından önemli bir katkı sağlayacağı umulmaktadır.*

**Keywords:** Zaza People, Zazaki, Ethnic Groups of Turkey, Kurds,

### I-INTRODUCTION

Hüseyin Aygün, a Turkish opposition member of parliament, was kidnapped by militants of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) on August 12, 2012 due to his activities on Zaza language and Zaza people. (Hakan 2012) The motivation of PKK was not conceived by general Turkish public and conspiracy theories spread among people. Reaction of the Turkish public reveals that not only are Kurdish nationalists uncomfortable with Zaza identity, but also general Turkish public is not ready for new ethnic identity.

While Zazas are not known by general Turkish public, western scholars have been aware of this people since the Crimean War. The French, the British and the Ottoman Empires fought against Russia in the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856. Russia captured numbers of Ottoman soldiers from different part of the Turkey. Some war prisoners were from Eastern Anatolia provided first knowledge about unknown language. German linguist, Peter Lerch, published a text of this language without any comment. That text was written in Zazaki, language of the Zaza People. (Leezenberg 2011) The study introduced people who live in Eastern

Anatolia between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Afterwards, western scholars started to analyze this language in order to determine the position of this language among other languages.

After publishing first text in Zaza language (Zazaki), by Lerch in 1857, some other scholars studied Zazaki. Analysis by Wilhelm Strecker, “Mundart Der Duzik in Dersim”, the study into Zazaki at Pulumur districts, was published by Otto Blau in 1862. Afterwards, Austrian linguist Friedrich Müller [1843-1898] analyzed the text by Peter Lerch and published his research “Zaza Dialect der Kurdensprache” in 1864. According to Kar, Müller stated that Zazaki differentiated from Kurmanji based on some essential features. Russian consul in Erzurum Aleksander Jaba (1801-1894) studied Zazas during his post. (Kar 2007) Another German researcher Albert Le Choq published Zaza text which was collected from one Zaza from Cermik district, in 1903 in Berlin. French researcher Clément Huart (1854-1926) published a book in 1909 which affirmed that Zazaki and Astarabadi, one Iranian Language, have strong similarities. (Kar 2008) British researcher Ely Banister Soane, writer of several studies about Kurdish and other Iranian languages, stated that there was a big difference between Kurdish and Zazaki in 1909. (Soane 1909)

Subsequently, the most important analysis of the Zazaki is based on fieldwork of the Otto Mann, whose notes were analyzed, edited and published by Karl Haddank in 1932. Todd (1985) states that their joint work have long been recognized as extremely valuable and scholarly works because of the significance of the historical, cultural and folkloristic contributions, and the detailed comparisons of vocabulary with other Iranian and non-Iranian languages. Their work also was remarkable of the treatment in the syntax which far surpassed the most grammars of that era.

Subsequent to the study of the Mann-Haddank, some prominent experts of Iranian languages defined the position of Zaza language based on fieldworks. Russian diplomat and brilliant scholar, Minorsky who included Zazas in the Gurani group stated that Zazas and Guran group are distinct languages and ethnic group based on linguistic and ethnological reasons. (Minorsky 1943) Another significant expert on Iranian languages, Mackenzie, declared that Zaza language is a separate language and geographically originated from northern Iran. (Mackenzie, 1961) In addition to these authors, Todd (1985), Windfuhr (2009), Paul (1998), Selcan (1998) have made significant contributions to the Zaza Languages recent years.

While majority of the studies about Zaza people have focused on Zaza language, quiet a few studies have been conducted on other issues. Arakelova (1999) emphasized new political factors of the Zazas. Kehl-Bodrogi (1999), Bruinessen (1994, 1997) Paul White (1992) analyzed and described construction

of Zaza identity and its relation with other identities. While these studies make great contribution about some aspect of the Zaza people, they do not analyze the political attitude of the Zaza people. In this vein, providing basic information about Zazas and analyzing the political attitude and identity become main purpose of this paper.

## **II-HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE**

### **A-Origin and history**

There is not enough information about the early history of the Zaza people but linguistic evidence reveals that Zaza people originated from Northern Iran. Scholars emphasize two northern Iranian groups, Daylamites and Parthians, concerning the origin of the Zazas. Mackenzie stated that Zazas are known to have originally come from Daylam region on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. (Mackenzie, 1961) People of the Daylam (deylamities) had already lived in the south of the Elbruz Mountains area, closer to Kazvin and Tehran, just beginning of the Sassanid Empire. Since they were known as a skillful warrior, Abbasids and Sasanids recruited huge number of Deylamities to their armies. Consequently, after Muslim conquest, Daylamite dynasties controlled majority area of the contemporary Iran and Iraq. During the Daylamites expansion, Zaza and other Daylamites groups migrated to the west. (Madelung, 1995)

Linguistic evidence demonstrates that Zaza people are one of the closest groups of the Parthian people, who established the empire and governed all Iran before the Sassanid Empire. Windfuhr (2009), expert of the Iranian languages and Iranian historian and Kaveh Farrokh (2007) stated that Zaza people has a strong connection to the Parthian people and the closest form of Parthian language is spoken by Zazas.

Furthermore, genetic research and tribal names also support northern Iranian thesis. One tribe in Afghanistan, eastern neighbor of historical Parthia, is called Zazai. Interestingly, Boghlan, old name of the Zaza populated Solhan district in Turkey, is very close to Baghlan phonologically, province name in Afghanistan, where Zazai tribe also lives. (Naval Postgraduate School, 2011) Moreover, genetic research revealed that Zaza Group closer to Iranian from Tahrán, located in northern Iran, which Parthian and Deylemian controlled and lived in, than the Kurds of Turkey, while Kurds and Zazas are geographically neighbors. Fascinatingly, Iranian Kurds are closer than Kurds from Turkey genetically. (Nasidze, Quinque, Ozturk, Bendukidze, & Stoneking, 2005) This information also supports Sherefhan's (1971) statement on Iranian Kurds because Şerefhan stated that Iranian Kurds called Goran, are linguistically the closest relatives of Zazas, at 1597.

Bruinessen (2004), outstanding expert on Kurds, acknowledged that Gurans are different from Kurds based on their culture, language and physical appearance. McDowall (2007) states that in Sulaymaniyah, people believe that certain peasant group known as a Guran has a different origin from tribal Kurds. He also mentions that Zaza and Gurani speakers are already in Zazgros region and they are pushed westwards to Anatolia. (p. 10)

French academician Lecoq (2006) acknowledged that northern migration of the Kurdish tribes whose original homeland is approximately in the North of Fars and on the West of Esfahan, or maybe the very region of Esfahan diminished Gorani-Zaza speaking areas. Kurdish scholar Izady (1992) also affirmed that continuous northwest flow of Kurdish tribes from the south Iran. Based on early Islamic, Roman, Greek, Armenian and Syriac sources (pp. 89-92) Based on linguistic evidence Kryenbroek (2000) and Mackenzie (1961) also stated that migration of the Kurdish tribes to the north displaced Zazas and pushed them to their current places. Another scholar, Joyce Blau (2000), from France, stated that Zazas and Gurans originated from the same origin and the majority of them were assimilated by Kurds and Zazas and escaped from assimilation, migrating to their current regions.

In sum, ancestors of Zaza people who originally lived in northern part of Iran settled Zagros Mountain before or just after the Islamic conquest. Gradually Kurdish tribe, who migrated from south Iran to North, pushed them north and Zaza people eventually settled in their current lands.

The earliest sources which mentioned about Zaza people were dated from the 13th and 14th centuries. One genealogy which were written in 13th century and found in Dersim (Tunceli) talk about Zaza ( زازا ) tribe. (Selcan 2004) Turkish poet Kaygusuz Abdal (1341-1444) talked about Zazas. Interestingly, he differentiated Zazas and Kurds. Ottoman traveler Evliya Chellebi (1611-1682) and Danish traveler Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815) also mentioned Zaza people (Kar, 2007).

After migration to the Eastern Anatolia, Zazas organized as tribes or principalities. Swidi, Melkişi, Pazuki, Mirdasi ect. principalities governed the Zaza populated areas during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, we do not have specific information about these Zaza organizations. Kurdish historian Serefhan does not mention Zaza people or language. He mentioned only Gorans, who were the closest relatives of Zazas and Dinbillis, one of the synonym usage for the Zazas. He stated that Iranian Kurds were known as a Goran include Siyah Mansur, Cengi, Zengine, Pazuki principalities. (Şerefhan 1971, p. 15) He also stated that prince of Brodost was a Goran (p.330) and Kelhur tribes known as Goran. (Şerefhan 1971, p. 354) Furthermore, Şerefhan talk about

Dinbilli, Dinbili tribe was lived in Buhtan and then they moved to further north and east. They controlled Hakkari region and Kurds pushed them to Hoy.

History of the Zaza or Goran principalities was determined by the advance of Ottoman Empire to the east. Before the Ottoman rule started on the Zaza and Goran dominated areas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Zazas and Gorans controlled bigger areas than the Kurds. However, gradually they lost their areas to the Kurds because Kurds allied emerging big power, the Ottoman Empire, since they are Sunnis while most of the Zazas and Gorans followed heterodox Shiite sects. Consequently, most of the Zaza or Goran principalities lost their whole territories and their languages. Currently, a quiet few or none people are able to speak Zaza or Goran languages at the Iran and Iraq.

The Zazas were not in perfect relation with the Ottoman Empire and new republic because their long history shows that they have problem with centralized power and authority. During the reign of the Sultan Abdulhamid (1876-1909), there was not Zaza tribal “Hamidiye Cavalry Regiment” while Arab, Kurdish and Turkish tribes joined the regiments at end of the twentieth century. (Kodaman, 1979) Just after the establishing of the Turkish republic, they revolted against the new republic two times at Seyh Said and Dersim rebellions in 1926 and 1937. Moreover, Zazas of the Bingol were the least supporters of the 1982 constitutional referendum which is labeled most authoritarian constitution. (TUİK, 2011)

### **B- Zaza language and Zaza Literature**

Zazaki is an Iranian Language, part of the Indo-Iranian European subgroup of the Indo- European (Todd 1985) and Zazaki and Gorani are the least innovative in relation to Parthian language. (Windhfuhr 2009) Paul (1998) indicated that closer Iranian languages to the Zazaki are Talishi, Iranian Azeri and Gorani (Table 1). (Pth.-Parthian, Gor.-Gorani, Az.-Iranian Azeri, Zaz.-Zaza, Tal.-Talish, Semn.-Semnani, Casp.-Caspian, CD-Central Dialect, Bal.-Baluch, Kd.-Kurdish, Pers.-Persian)

IE	Pth.	Gōr.	Āz.	Zaz.	Tal.	Semn.	Casp.	CD	Bal.	Kd.	Pers.
*k/*g	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	s/z	h/d
*k(u)pal	-ž-	-ž-	-ž-	-j-	-ž-	j,ž	-j-	j,ž,z	-j-	-ž-	-z-
*g(u)(h)pal	ž	ž	ž (y-)	j	ž	j,ž	j (z-)	j,ž,z	j	ž	z
*kw <sup>29</sup>	?	sip	isb	esp	asb	esp	s	esb	?	s	s
*tr/*tl	hr	(ya)r	(h)r	(hī)r	h(*r) <sup>30</sup>	(h)r	r	r	s	s	s
*d(h)w	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	d(?)	d	d
(OIr.) *rd/*rz	r(δ)/rz	l,r/rz	r/rz	ī/rz	r/rz	l/l(rz)	l/l	l/l(rz)	l/l(?)	l/l	l/l
*sw	wx	w	h	w	h	x(u)	x(u)	x(u),f	v	x(w)	x(u)
*tw	f	u	u	w	h	h	h	h (u)	h	h	h
*y-	y-	y-	y-	j-	j-	j-	j-	j- (y-)	j-	j-	j-

Table 1:

While Zazas have a rich oral literature, written Zazaki literature appeared approximately in last two centuries in Arabic script. The first known written document in Zaza language, a Alevi religious manuscript which present information about Alevi sect, was found in Diyarbakir dates back to around 1798-1831 (Dehkan 2010). Approximately half century later Ahmede Xasi (1867-1951), Mufti of Lice, wrote the first Zazaki book, Mevlid Nebi, which was printed in a lithographic printing shop in Diyarbakir in 1899. The second book in Zaza was written in 1906 by Osman Efendîyo Babij (1852-1929), Mufti of Siverek, and published in Damascus in 1933. (Lezgin 2009)

After some sixty silent years since first Zazaki publishing, Roja Newe magazine which include Zazaki section and which was the first Zazaki literature in Latin script was published as only one volume in 1963. Then, some leftist magazines published Zazaki sections between 1974 and 1980. (Selcan 2004) However, Zazaki literature revival occurs mainly in Europe in the late eighties. This period was called “renaissance of Zazaki”. It is stated that “Zazaki only became popular in the diaspora after meager efforts, in Sweden, France and Germany at the beginning of the 1980s. This was followed by the publication of magazines and books in Turkey, particularly in Istanbul. The efforts of Zaza intellectuals to advance the comprehensibility of their native language by alphabetizing were not fruitless: the number of publications in Zaza increased by the multiple. The rediscovery of the native culture by Zaza intellectuals not only

caused a renaissance of Zaza language and culture, it also triggered feelings among younger generations of Zazas (who unfortunately, rarely speak Zaza as a mothertongue anymore) in favor of modern western in the Zaza language, and thus their interest in the most important inheritance of their ancestors. In diaspora a limited amount of Zaza-language broadcasts are realized.”(Zazak and Zazaki 2011) During this period Piya, Ayre were Published by Ebubekir Pamukcu in Sweden. Then two new magazines, Desmale Sure and Ware published in Europe. These magazines argue that Zazas are separate ethnic group and Zazaki is not a dialect but a language. Their message reached few people at the beginning. However, increased use of the Internet and fierce reaction of Kurdish nationalists expands their influence among the Zazas. (Kar 2007) Later, many Zazaki magazines and books have been published. On the other hand, Pro-Kurdish nationalist groups also published Zazaki magazines and the internet sites. (Zazaki net)

### **C-Geography of Zazas**

Most of the Zaza people live in the central eastern part of the Turkey. They are majority in only Bingol and Tunceli provinces. Arakelova stated that

*“The Zazas live mainly in Dersim (present-day Tunceli), between Erzincan in the north and the Murad-su river in the south, in the far west of historical Upper Armenia, as well as in Bingol, Mush, the province of Diyarbekir, Siverek, Sivas etc. Rather a big Zaza diaspora - about half a million people - live in Europe, mainly in Germany”* (Arakelova, 1999-2000, p. 397)

Selcan (2004) assert that Zaza language is spoken traditionally in the Euphrates region of Eastern Anatolia and constituted united territory between 37,8°- 42° latitudes and 37,8°- 40° longitudes. Roşan Lezgîn (2009), Seyîdxan Kuriş (2010) and Keskin (2011) provide detailed information about geographic distribution of the Zaza population. Zazas are found in these provinces and districts:

- 1-Adıyaman Province; Gerger district,
- 2-Aksaray Province; Ortakoy district,
- 3-Ardahan province; Gole District,
- 4-Bingöl Province; Central, Adaklı, Genç, Karlıova, Kiğı, Solhan, Yayladere and Yedisu districts,
- 5- Bitlis province; Mutki Districts,
- 6- Diyarbakır province; Central, Çermik, Çınar, Çüngüş, Dicle, Eğil, Ergani, Hani, Hazro, Kocaköy, Kulp and Lice districts,
- 7- Elazığ Province; Karakoçan, Maden, Arıcak, Palu , Kovancılar, Sivrice and Alacakaya districts,

- 8- Erzincan Province; Çayırılı, İliç, Kemah and Tercan districts,
- 9- Erzurum Province; Aşkale, Çat, Tekman, Karayazi and Hınıs districts,
- 10-Gumushane province; Kelkît, Şiran districts,
- 11-Malatya province; Poturge and Arguvan districts,
- 12- Mardin Province: Derik districts,
- 13- Kars province; Selim District,
- 14-Kayseri province; Sariz District,
- 14) Muş Province; Varto district and western parts,
- 15) Siirt Province; Baykan district,
- 16) Sivas province; Kangal, Zara, Ulaş, İmranlı and Divriği districts,
- 17) Şanlıurfa province; Siverek district,
- 18) Tokat province; Almus district,
- 18) Tunceli province; Central, Çemişgezek, Hozat, Mazgirt, Nazimiye, Ovacık, Pertek and Pülümür districts.

In addition, Selcan stated that 10000 Zazas lived in Kazakistan. (Selcan, 2004)

#### **D-Population**

There is not an exact number for Zazas because ethnicity is not asked at the Turkish censuses. Another challenge for estimating Zaza population is originated from the difficulties from huge number of the diaspora because more than half of the Zazas migrated from their original homeland as a result of economic and political obstacles. Therefore, varied estimates circulated about Zaza population. Estimates are varied from one million (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) up to to 6 million (zazaki.de, 2011). But most of the scholars like Izady estimated 3-4 million Zaza population (Izady, 1992)

#### **E-Religion**

Religion: Zazas are divided into religious groups based on their affiliation. First group, Alevi Zazas, who live in northern parts located in Kocgiri (Sivas), Dersim (Tunceli), Erzincan, North-Bingöl, Varto, Hınıs, Tekman, Çat, Sarız, Göle, Selim, Gumushane, Almus. Sunni-Hanefi Zazas mainly lives in western part and in Cermik, Çüngüş, Siverek, Gerger ve Aksaray. Shafi Zazas live in Eastern parts and in Elazığ, Bingöl, Genç, Solhan, Hani, Kulp, Lice, Ergani, Dicle, Eğil, Silvan, Hazro, Mutki, Baykan. (Keskin, 2011)



### III-IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY

Zaza identity and formation of the Zaza ethnicity is determined by three competing ideologies, which are 1-Zazas are Kurds 2-Zazas are Turks 3- Zazas are Zazas. Organized Kurdish nationalist groups unanimously support the first thesis. Moreover Turkish State, general Turkish public opinion also supports this opinion. Second view was used to support by Turkish government and some Zazas. The last and recent idea states that Zazas are distinct ethnic group and Zaza language in its own right.

#### A-Kurdish nationalist thesis and discourse

While quarrelling on various issues, all fractions of Kurdish movement unanimously argue and dictate that Zazas are part of the Kurdish nation and they speak one of the Kurdish dialects. Kehl-Bodrogi summaries Kurdish nationalists' attitude towards the Zaza people. "*Kurdish nationalism, on the other hand, regards the Zazas as having the same ethnic origin and speaking the same language as the Kurds. To support this thesis, Zazaki once again had to be declared a dialect, this time a Kurdish dialect. Until recently, Kurdish nationalists vehemently refused to accept linguistic studies which declare Zazaki a language in its own right and accuse every effort in this direction of separatism. To accept that Zazaki is not a dialect but a language is the same for them as to refuse to consider the Zazas a part of the Kurdish people.*" (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1999)

In order to prove kurdishness of Zazas, Kurdish nationalist mentioned historical Zaza figures as Kurdish heros. Kurdish nationalists argue that Seyit Rıza and Shaykh Said fought for Kurdistan and they are pure Kurds. (Roşan Lezgîn, 2010) Conversely, Zazas movement argue that Sheyh Said and Seyit Rıza are Zazas and Kurds cooperated with neither Seyit Rıza nor Shayh Said and Kurds collabared with state. (www.zazakide.org, 2011)

Kurdish nationalists use various techniques and tactics in order to fight against Zaza movement. Blaming external enemies is one of the Kurdish nationalist tactics. The Kurdish nationalists blame Turkish State and Armenian scholars for their "Zaza problem". Kurdish nationalists generally argue that Zaza nationalism created artificially by the Turkish State. Abdullah Ocalan, founder of the PKK, also claimed that Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (Milli İstihbarat Teskilati – MIT) is behind the growing political and cultural activities of the Zazas in Turkey: "The MIT is behind this. They are doing this to stop the development of Kurdish national consciousness." (White 1992; from Wilgenburg, 2009) On the other hand, some Kurdish nationalists blame Armenians because some Armenian scholars study Zazas, (Karakteran 2010) They also argue that these scholars try to separate Zazas from Kurds in order to make Kurds weak. (Aslan 2010)

The Kurdish nationalists also try to hinder academic and cultural activities about Zaza people. Kurdish nationalist Celadet Bedirhan tried to prevent Haddank's research about Zaza people in 1930s. (Selcan 2004) Moreover, the Kurdish nationalist group protested against teaching of the Zazaki at Tunceli University. (Üniversite öğrencilerinden protesto, 2010) Kurdish nationalists also protested symposium on Zazaki at Bingol University (Lezgin, Kurij 2011). In some case they use physical force in order to prevent activities of the Zazas. Sait Çiya Stated that, Kurdish nationalists killed Kamer Ozkan because they believed that he supported Zaza movement and he was a "Zazacı", derogatory usage of the Zaza movement by Kurdish Nationalists. In addition, he affirmed that Kurdish nationalist attacked to the Zaza festivals and cultural activities by force at Europea and they did not allow to speak Zaza participant at Euroepan Union minority group meeting in İstanbul (Çiya, 2007). The PKK also threatened Zaza movement in Tunceli by dispatching papers. (ANF 2009)

Besides conspiracy theories, Kurdish nationalists mention various reasons in order to explain Zaza separatism. At first, they blame themselves because some Kurdish Nationalists gave the impression on Kurmanci alone represented the Kurds thereby excluding the Zazas. Secondly, they emphasize collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in which the dream of establishing an independent socialist Kurdistan vanished, has created space for regionalism and Zazaism. (Lezgîn 2010)

To prove the Kurdishness of the Zazas Kurdish nationalists mostly used internal and oriental sources. One of the Kurdish nationalists stated that "*Neither the intellectuals of the Turkish, Arab and Persian neighboring nations nor their governments, have ever, in any period of history, distinguished Zazas from Kurds*" Only in the last 15-20 years have few people promoted their ideology of "we are not Kurds" and are identifying themselves as Zazas. (Lezgîn, 2009)

Turkish official state view also support Kurdish thesis. For instance, TRT, state owned television, declared that Zazaki is a Kurdish dialect same as the PKK and other Kurdish nationalists.(Kaçar 2009) In addition Muhammed Dara Akar, employee of state owned TRT, stated that Zazaki is not a language but dialect. (Bariç 2010) Even prime minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, stated that Zazaki is a dialect of Kurdish as a Sorani. (Erdogan 2009) Moreover, State and Kurdish nationalist jointly argue that Dersim and Seyh Said rebellions are Kurdish rebellion while Zaza movement declared they are not Kurdish but Zaza. Selcan stated that, "*For example, the Dersim uprising, they say it's a Kurdish uprising. It's wrong history; you must correct it. And they're making propaganda around it. They are saying the Sheikh Said uprising is a Kurdish uprising, and they are making nationalist propaganda around it - in exile, in the country itself. This is not right. The Dersim uprisings - there were a series of them, from the*

*1820s to the 1930s which never ceased, you see.*” (White 1992) In sum, there is not big difference between Kurdish nationalists and Turkish state opinion about the Kurdishness of Zazas.

There are various reasons for supporting Kurdish nationalists thesis against Zazas by Turkish state. At first, state is not ready for new thesis and new ideas because they believe that new ethnicity means that new ethnic problem. When Zaza movement declared its thesis, Turkish newspaper write that, “and now Zazaistan problem.” Moreover, low intellectual capacity of the Turkish high ranking bureaucrats, especially governors and army officers, hinders accepting Zaza reality because generally they do not need to improve their intellectual capacity for promotion. For example, while Iranian governors and generals wrote a scientific book about Kurds and their Kurdish problem, there is not any scientific research or book from their Turkish counterparts. Lastly, well organized Kurdish nationalists do not allow new debate about Zaza people.

### **B-Turkishness of the Zazas**

Some Turkish nationalists argue that the Zazas are the Turks. These writers generally represented former official state view. Hasan Reşit Tankut argue that origin of the Zazas is the Turk and “Zaza” word was originated from old Turkish word “sak” (stone) and this word used for people who located mountainous areas. (Tankut 2000) Sevgen also repeated same view try to prove Turkishness of each Zaza tribes from Dersim region. (Sevgen, 1999) This view was also supported by some Zaza writers. M. Sherif Fırat, Alevi Zaza from Varto, claim that Zazas left Iran during the Arab invasion and gradually lost their Turkish language. (Fırat 1981) Another Zaza Hayri Başbuğ also argues that Zazas are originated from Subar Turks who had controlled eastern Anatolia short time period. (Başbuğ 1984)

### **C-Zaza Movement and Emerging Zaza identity**

Emerging Zaza identity is quite a recent idea which challenges traditional view towards Zazas. Traditionally, eastern sources identified Zaza people as a branch of the Kurdish group. Translation of the western sources, migration to the Europe, collapse of the Soviet Union, increased Kurdish broadcasts, exclusion of the Kurdish groups, democratization of the Turkey are significant reasons for the polishing Zaza identity.

As mentioned above, emerging Zaza identity is a recent idea and fact which started primarily in Europe. Wilgenburg stated that *“Zaza nationalism grew primarily in the European Zaza diaspora where the differences between the Kurmanci and Zazaki dialects became more visible due to the freer environment. In Europe, migrants from Turkey were not forced to learn Turkish, but could*

*choose between Kurmanci and Zazaki as a “mother language.” This resulted in Zaza-nationalism in some cases. Another factor was the opposition of some Kurdish nationalists to Zazaki publications. Currently Zaza “nationalism” is still largely a matter of exile politics and seems to be a marginal phenomenon, but it is also starting to influence the debate on ethnic identity in Turkey.*” (Wilgenburg 2010) Ebubekir Pamukcu is the one of the most important person in the Zaza movement. He was born on 02.04.1946 in Buderan village, located in the Cermik, Diyarbakir. His father served as teacher, imam and mufti. Ebubekir thought Turkish Karahallı, Erzincan, Geyve, Sile, Ovacık (Dersim). After the coup d’état, he was imprisoned. In 1989, he immigrated to Sweden and he published Ayre and Piya before he died (CIME 2005).

In addition, thanks to the migration to Europe, the Zazas had a chance to reach former linguistic source about Zazaki and other Iranian languages. Selcan, one of the important figures in the Zaza movement, declared that after making research at university, he realized that Zazaki was not a Kurdish dialect and Zazas were not Kurdish. (White 1992)

The collapse of the Soviet Union also effected the Zaza movement. The Zazas, especially Alevi Zazas, were very active in the leftist movements. They supported the PKK because they believed that the PKK is a socialist organization. However, after the collapse of Soviet Union, socialism gradually lost weight in the PKK movement while nationalism became more apparent. Consequently, the PKK and Kurdish movement become less attractive for the socialist, internationalist and anti-racist Zazas.

Revival of the Alevism also affected the Zaza movement since more than a quarter of the Zazas are Alevi while a quite few Kurds are Alevi. Since the early 1990s, a considerable number of Alevis have joined the newly established Alevi associations, while others have continued to support diverse left wing and pro-Kurdish organizations, such as the powerful PKK.

Increased nationalism among the Kurds also produces reaction along with the Zazas. Kurdish scholar Hassanpour (1998) stated that *“It is well known that the idea of “one nation, one language” is an ideological, clearly nationalist, position. Nationalists in Kurdistan, as elsewhere in the world, envision their people as a linguistically, culturally, ideologically and politically united entity.”* Zazas began to feel being attacked by Kurdish nationalist who emphasize Kurmanji-Kurdish as main language and thereby excluding the Zazas. (Lezgin 2010)

Brutality of the Kurdish nationalism also increased sensitivity and national consciousness among Zazas. They killed important Zaza figures and civilians because they were labeled as the collaborator of the state. For example, they killed respectful local figure Ali Rıza Polat, grandson of the Zaza hero Sayyid

Rıza. For that reason, Selcan (2008) labeled Kurdish nationalist PKK as an occupying force in Dersim.

#### **IV-ZAZA IDENTITY AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR**

The Zazas have not been subject to any study for the analysis of their political attitude while they are the third biggest ethnic group in Turkey. It can be said that Zazas have a peculiar political behavior when compared to other groups, based on election results and other political incidents. Firstly, as mentioned before, the Zaza history shows that Zazas have a problem with centralized authority and power. Their political behaviors have been affected by this factor. For example, they revolted two times against the new Turkish Republic and they supported leftist revolutionary movements during the Cold War era. Moreover, they supported the PKK, most prominent Kurdish nationalist organization, when it was weak but they do not support after it became an authority and oppressive power. Secondly, Zazas are very active and devoted members and leaders of political organizations which they affiliated. While Zazas are small group, two political party leaders in Turkish assembly, Selahattin Demirtas and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, belong to Zaza ethnic group.

Moreover, political behavior also is not uniform among Zazas. Especially religious affiliation affects intensely. While Alevi Zazas supported to the leftist parties predominantly, Sunni Zazas supported rightist parties chiefly. Right-wing parties gained less than 10 percent from Alevi Zaza districts in Tunceli province. On the other hand, the leftist parties achieved less than 3 percent in almost all Sunni Zaza districts.

Furthermore, election results show that Zazas prefer other parties to pro-Kurdish parties. Whereas their political affiliation was determined by their religious sect, they did not support the pro-Kurdish nationalist parties as much as Kurds. According to Table 2, the votes of pro-Kurdish nationalist parties drop between %20- %50 in Zaza intense districts.

Table 2: Kurdish Nationalist Parties and Zazas in Zaza populated Areas. (Districts in *Italic*, *Karhova*, *Silvan* and *Mazgirt* have a highest Kurdish ratio in the province itself) (Bozbuga, 2013)

Province	District	1995 %	1999 %	2002 %	2007 %	2011 %
<b>Bingöl</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>
	Genç	4	5	8	7	12
	Solhan	2	7	15	6	13
	<i>Karhova</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>42</i>
<b>Diyarbakir</b>		<b>46</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>59</b>
	Çermik	9	9	22	10	19
	Çüngüş	7	8	14	6	12
	Dicle	28	32	39	28	54
	Eğil	25	13	28	16	34
	Hani	24	19	44	31	46
	<i>Silvan</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>78</i>
<b>Tunceli</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>
	Hozat	13	14	28	44	15
	Nazimiye	7	2	25	17	17
	Ovacık	6	9	19	28	19
	Pülümür	2	3	12	9	7
	<i>Mazgirt</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>37</i>
<b>Elazığ</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
	Palu	2	2	4	1	0
<b>Şanlıurfa</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>
	Siverek	6	10	15	9	16
<b>Bitlis</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>
	Mutki	1	1	5	3.6	9
<b>Adiyaman</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
	Gerger	3	5	6	1	3

On the other hand election results do not reflect Zaza identity affecting voting behavior due to the lack of pro-Zaza parties in Turkey. However, Zaza identity has partial effects on the elections. Especially, pro-Zaza candidate, Hüseyin Aygün, provided massive support in Tunceli province where pro-Kurdish nationalist party lost the election in 2011 election. Moreover, solid proof for the effect of Zaza identity is low percentage of votes for pro-Kurdish nationalist parties in Zaza populated areas.

## **CONCLUSION**

In sum, while the Zazas are the third biggest ethnic group, they have not been an important, independent political and social power and figure in Turkey. However, recent Zaza revival has presented new opportunities and new probabilities for the Zazas. It can be assumed that attempts for creating a separate Zaza identity will not be successful, they will be assimilated in the long term.

On the other hand, Zaza identity will probably be a new political factor in Turkey. However, emerging Zaza identity has demonstrated some signs for Zaza revival. On the other hand, Zaza revival will contribute to peaceful character of the Zaza movement and will provide a peaceful third way for Turkey and Turkish democracy.

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