İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

HISTORY MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

WHITE SLAVES AND CIRCASSIAN SLAVERY FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TO THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

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İSTANBUL

2017

WHITE SLAVES AND CIRCASSIAN SLAVERY FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TO THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU'NDAN TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYET'İNE BEYAZ KÖLELER VE ÇERKES KÖLELİĞİ

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Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih : 11.12.2017
Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 213

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)
1) BEYAZ KÖLELER
2) KÖLE TİCARETİ
3) ÇERKESLER
4) OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU
5) HAFIZA

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)
1) WHITE SLAVES
2) SLAVE TRADE
3) CIRCASSIANS
4) OTTOMAN EMPIRE
5) MEMORY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to the dear memory of my nenej Şinaho Aslıhan Yıldız, who, for the first time, when I first encountered the words "White Slaves" and "Circassian Slavery", explained to me all that she knew and witnessed without dropping the subject or rambling.

I would like to express my gratitude to hundreds of brave people who have agreed to meet with me and face the past despite the ''sensitive'' and ''private'' nature of this subject.

I would like to give endless thanks to Prof. Dr. Bülent Bilmez who assisted me before my thesis and during my subject selection; Assistant Professor Başak Tuğ, whose time I occupied during the thesis writing process, and Assistant Professor Ulaş Sunata who included me in the oral history project which she conducted among Circassians.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my wife Selva Chataw and my daughters Janserey, Simaze and Setenay who have supported me with patience during my oral history studies and thesis writing process.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

CHAPTER I: **CIRCASSIAN SLAVERY ALONG WITH THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CIRCASSIANS**.....11

1.1.Circassian Tribes and Slavery Practices.....12
1.2.Circassian Slavery.....19
1.3.Circassian Slave Classes and the Slaves of the Circassians.....21

CHAPTER II: **WHITE SLAVE TRADE AND CIRCASSIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE 19TH CENTURY**.....27

2.1.Slavery in the Ottoman Empire.....27
2.2.1800-1856 Russo-Ottoman Wars and White Slave Trade.....34
2.3.Crimean War (1856).....40
2.4.Russian Colonialism and Circassian Slavery.....41
2.5.The Effects of the Circassian Genocide and the Circassian Exile of 1864 on Slavery and White Slave Trade.....57
2.6.Circassian Exile 1864 - Treaty of Berlin in 1878.....63
2.7.Treaty of Berlin (1878) - Second Constitutional Era (1908).....78

CHAPTER III: **THE ABOLITION OF CIRCASSIAN SLAVE TRADE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE STUDIES OF CIRCASSIAN UNION AND SOLIDARITY ASSOCIATION**.....87

3.1.The Booklet, "Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında'' by Circassian Union and Solidarity Association.....89
3.2.Petition Published on January 28, 1910 (15 Kanunısani 1325).....96
3.3.Petition Sent to The Ministry of Interior Affairs.....97

3.4.Article Sent to *Sada-yı Milliyet* Newspaper.....98
3.5.Article Sent to *Yeni Gazete* Newspaper.....99
3.6.Regarding The Document Written by the Ministry of Interior Affairs Which Demands Ziraat Bankası to Grant Loans to Circassian Slaves (18 February, 1328).....100
3.7.Mehmet Fetgerey Şöenu and His Attempts 101

CHAPTER IV: **WHITE SLAVES AND CIRCASSIAN SLAVERY ACCORDING TO NARRATIONS FROM ORAL HISTORY**.....106

4.1.Oral History Methodology.....106
4.1.1. Strategy Formulation.....107
4.1.2. Memory and Forgetting.....108
4.1.3. Oral History Process.....109
4.1.4. Generations and Slave Narratives.....115
4.1.5. Social Classes and Slavery Narrations.....117
4.1.6. Being an Insider.. 118
4.1.7. Gender and Slavery Narrations.....119
4.1.8. Memory and Final Remarks.....120
4.2.Circassian Slavery and Assimilation 121
4.3.Circassian Relations with the Imperial Court and the Reflections of the Edict of 1909.....132
4.4.On Sexual Exploitation in Circassian Slavery.....140
4.5.Circassian Slavery and Trafficking of Children.....149
4.6.Being 'White' in Anatolia.....155
4.7.Circassians, Armenians and the Rûm 160
4.8.The Production and Trade of White Slaves.....170
4.9.National Campaign, Ethem the Circassian and the Slaves of the Circassians.....177
4.10. Surname Law, Remembering and Breakage.....180
4.11. Transition from Slave Trade to *'Vase'* (Bride Price).....182
4.12. The Issue of Nobility-Slavery and the Evolution of Slavery.....187

CHAPTER V: **CONCLUSION**.....198

Bibliography:.....202

Interviews.....209

ABSTRACT

This study elaborates on the Circassian slaves and white slave trade, which have been increasingly influential in the Ottoman lands throughout the 19th century, during the historical progress. In addition, we aim to elaborate on the Circassian slaves and white slave trade, which were increasingly influential in the Ottoman lands throughout the 19th century, during the historical process. Additionally, we put emphasis on the experiences of the Circassians who struggled to establish a new life in the Ottoman territories following the Circassian Exile of 1864. In particular, this genocide which has occurred in the Caucasus and hunger, poverty and misery during this exile caused Circassians to sell the slaves which they had brought with them and many free-born Circassians to become slaves in order to sustain their own and their family's lives. The Ottoman administrators did not intervene in the conflicts between the Circassians lords and their slaves at first. However, they began to step in when these events reached the point of threatening the peace and security of the society. The Ottoman government first targeted the peace between the two sides, later worked on formulas that would allow slaves to be released in order to break the power of the Circassian lords. As a result, the Circassian lords were given public land in exchange for the freedom of the Circassian slaves by the use of *mukatebe* system. Additionally, the slaves who had been liberated were given a part of this property in order to provide a source of income for them. The Republic of Turkey inherited the issue of Circassian slavery and white slave trade from the former Ottoman administration. Although there is no official evidence supporting this argument, we can conclude from the oral history narrations, which make up the most authentic section of this study, that Circassian slavery and white slave trade were practiced informally until the 1940s. Additionally, the oral history narrations reveal the ways in which the attitudes and behavior towards the slaves and slave families in the Circassian society took effect throughout the 20th century. This study differs from the studies conducted in this field so far due to the oral history discussions it contains and comes to the forefront with the provided 'inside information' by being 'the voice of the slaves'.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Çerkes köleliği ve Beyaz köle ticareti konularını aydınlatmayı hedeflemektedir. 19. yüzyıl boyunca Osmanlı topraklarında etkisi giderek artan Çerkes köleleri ve beyaz köle ticaretini tarihsel süreç içerisinde ayrıntılı bir şekilde ortaya koyan bu çalışma, özellikle, 1864 Çerkes Sürgünü'nün ardından Osmanlı topraklarında kendilerine yeni bir yaşam kurma mücadelesi veren Çerkeslerin yaşadıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle, Kafkasya'da yaşanan soykırım ve ardından bu sürgün sırasında yaşanan açlık, yoksulluk ve sefalet Çerkeslerin yanında getirdikleri köleleri satmasına sebep olmakla birlikte; pek çok hür Çerkes'in kendisi ve ailesinin yaşamını sürdürebilmek için köle olmayı, köle olarak satılmayı kabul etmelerine neden olmuştur. Osmanlı yöneticileri, ilk başta Çerkes beyleri ile köleler arasında yaşanan çekişmelere müdahil olmaya pek yanaşmasalar da daha sonra bu tip olaylar toplumun huzur ve güvenliğini tehdit eder vaziyete gelince, kademeli olarak müdahale etmeye başlamıştır. Önce iki tarafın arasını bulmayı hedefleyen Osmanlı idare, daha sonra, Çerkes beylerin gücünü kırmak amacıyla kölelerin serbest bırakılmalarını sağlayacak formüller üzerinde çalışmıştır. Bunun sonucunda uygulamaya konulan mukatebe yöntemi ile Çerkes kölelerin özgürlükleri karşılığında Çerkes beylere hazine arazileri verilmiştir. Ayrıca özgürlüklerini kazanan kölelere de yaşamlarını devam ettirebilmek amacıyla bu arazilerden dağıtıldığı görünmektedir. Çerkes köleliği ve beyaz köle ticareti meselesi, Osmanlı idaresinden Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne miras kalan bir konudur. Her ne kadar resmi olarak böyle bir şeyin varlığından söz edilemezse de bu çalışmayı değerli kılan, sözlü tarih anlatıları dikkatle incelendiğinde, Çerkes köleliği ve beyaz köle ticaretinin 1940'lı yıllara kadar gayri resmi olarak varlığını devam ettirdiği görülmektedir. Ayrıca, Çerkes toplumu içerisinde köleler ve köle sülalelerine karşı olan tutum ve davranışların 20. yüzyıl boyunca etkisini ne şekilde sürdürdüğü de yine bu sözlü tarih anlatıları yardımıyla ortaya konulmaktadır. Bu çalışma, özellikle içerdiği sözlü tarih anlatıları nedeniyle şu ana kadar bu alanda yapılan çalışmalardan ayrışmakta ve "kölelerin sesi" olarak "içeriden" verdiği bilgilerle bir adım öne çıkmaktadır.

"We used to live in central Samsun in 1987. One day, a man and his family came to our house to ask for my aunt's hand in marriage. However, it felt more like a funeral. When I asked my grandmother why she was so sad, she said, 'What else would I be sad about? These people are slaves!'', and refused to see the guests. Little did she know that the woman sitting in the living room was a white woman who looked nothing like Slave Isaura..."[1]

INTRODUCTION

Slavery is as old as the history of mankind and has been practiced in various ways, geographies and periods. Today, it continues to be practiced under various names. This study aims to shed light on the stages of the Circassian slavery, which constituted the greatest source of white slavery in the Ottoman Empire, from the beginning of the 19th century to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the influence of Circassian slavery on the Ottoman social structure, the dark period after the abolishment of Circassian slave trade in 1909.

Three main characteristics differentiate this from previous studies. This thesis was built upon the following three points:

The most significant of these points; while previous dissertations and books usually rely on archival resources, this thesis uses data gathered in oral history narrations with the aim of shedding light on the history of white slaves and Circassian slavery and especially the period following the edict of 1909. The interviews on the Circassians and Circassian slavery, which I started in 1996, continued until 2017 with certain intervals. I have conducted private interviews with 232 speakers in this frame. The selected data gathered from all of these interviews are given on Chapter VI and discussed in detail on the axis of recall, space and repression. I speculate that the initiation of a discussion about this subject, which has proved to be 'sensitive' and 'private' during all of the interviews, will

[1] 1987, Samsun, ''My oldest memory of slaves.''

contribute to the literature of confrontation and attract other researchers to study this matter.

Another distinctive feature of this thesis is that the oral history studies were done by a member of the same group. In the year 1996, it was unlikely for an outsider researcher to study the subject of slavery, which was avoided and ignored by Circassians. In addition to the reserved social life of Circassians, the fact that slavery was perhaps the last subject they would want to talk about made it even more difficult for an outsider researcher to conduct a study. During the interviews, I used remarks such as, ''I know what you mean even though you are not telling me directly...'' in order to encourage the speaker to provide information regarding slavery. I can also indicate that nowadays, Circassians are more enthusiastic when it comes to speaking about 'sensitive' matters including slavery.

Finally, the third distinguishing feature of this study is that it opens up the term 'Circassian slaves' to debate; it is the first time that the problematic use of this term has been addressed. It has been stated several times in this study that 'Circassian slave' is a problematic use to refer to this group which was based in the Caucasus but consisted of many Russians, Kazakhs, Ukranians, Nogays and Georgians. We have discussed that a better term for these slaves would be 'white slaves' or 'the slaves of the Circassians' in the light of archival sources and oral history data. These white slaves, abducted from foreign communities in the Caucasus such as Russians, Kazakhs and Georgians, were produced by the addition of children and women which were kidnapped in various ways from the Bulgarian, Serbian, Armenian and Rûm settlements in some areas following the Exile of 1864, especially in times of military conflict. Apparently, the Circassian 'white slave' production mechanism of some Circassians who practiced slave trade continued in some areas under the pretext of various events after the exile. The sale of all these white slaves produced by traders as 'Circassian slaves', caused confusion in the researchers. The fact that slaves acquired from the Circassians were sold in the slave market does not make all of these white slaves Circassian or appropriate the usage of the term 'Circassian slaves' for this group. Circassian slavery as a basic

mechanism that fed the so-called white slaves has been explained generally. We have briefly mentioned the debate which tried to select a correct usage between the terms 'Circassian slaves' and 'the slaves of the Circassians'. Additionally, we have used the term ' white slaves' in many instances to describe this group.

In this context, this study consists of four main parts besides the introduction and the conclusion. Circassian tribes, historical background of Circassians, the exile and genocide in the year 1864, social characteristics and class structures of Circassians, Circassian slavery and Ottoman slavery system are among the subjects discussed in this chapter. The thesis deals with the process from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day, in this context I chose to give information about Circassians and Circassian slavery by comparing them with Ottoman slavery. Since the sources of many related subjects that we discussed in the following sections of the thesis go back to the early 19th century, their historical background has been started from this date.

The second part deals with the white slave trade in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and its historical background. We first mentioned the Russian-Circassian Wars of 1800-1856, and we talked about the effects of these wars on the white slave trade and Circassian slavery. I especially wanted to discuss how the prisoners of war, one of the most fundamental sources of white slave acquisition, were influenced by wars during the 19th century. Then we talked about the period between the Crimean War of 1856 and the Circassian Exile of 1864, and the reflections of the developments in this period to the white slave trade. In the next section, we discussed in depth the effects of the Circassian Exile of 1864 on slavery and slave trade. We discussed the ways in which the thousands of children and women who survived but lost their relatives in the aftermath of the Circassian massacre, which occurred prior to the Russian colonialism and the Exile of 1864, were involved in the white slave trade and how the genocide fostered slavery. We later discussed the lives of the Circassians in the Ottoman territories during the period between the Circassian Exile of 1864 and the Berlin Treaty of 1878, and its influence on the Circassian slavery and white slave trade. We have been extensively

involved in discussions of the conflicts of the Circassians with the local peoples during the resettlement and integration, and the feeding of the white slave production mechanisms of these conflicts. The period between Treaty of Berlin (1878) and the Second Constitutional Era (1908), also known as the period of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, is also broadly presented in this section. Although the Circassian concubines in the imperial harem, which formed the foundations of Circassian relations with the imperial court, have been discussed in this chapter, it has been addressed once again in the final chapter along with the data gathered from oral history narrations.

In the third chapter, we emphasized the efforts of the Union of Progress and Progress and the Circassian Union and Solidarity Association to ban Circassian slavery and trade during the Second Constitutional Era. Another issue mentioned in this chapter is the booklet entitled *"Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında"*, published by the Circassian Union and Solidarity Association, and articles published by the same society in the Ottoman press in order to be heard in the public opinion. The imperial edict, published in 1909, forbade the Circassian slave trade but did not end 'Circassian slavery'. Although this edict forbade the trade of white slaves officially, it failed to put an end to this practice and turned into an underhanded business.

The fourth chapter of this thesis consists of narrations of oral history which distinguish the research from its counterparts and demonstrate its unique features. This chapter sheds light on Circassian slavery and slave trade according to oral history narrations. These studies have been conducted on the axis of recall, space and repression and examined under twelve different themes. At this point, we provided examples to discuss the double-sided assimilation that the white slaves from various ethnicities had to experience by acquiring a 'Circassian' identity, and that they experienced a false identity acquisition process, and that later on they became Turkicized in the houses to which they were sent. Then we explained the reactions to the imperial edict published in 1909, which prohibited Circassian slave trade along with the Circassians' relations with the imperial court, which started

from the mid-19th century and became stronger as time progressed. We have discussed the ways in which sexual exploitation, present in all of the slavery systems, and its results on men and women by giving various examples. Another issue addressed in this chapter is the sale of children, which is said to be quite common among the Circassians. We also provided examples to discuss whether the children who were being sold belonged to Circassian slaves or Circassian families or both. The expression used in some books which states that Circassians' have a bizarre tradition of selling their children is also discussed in detail within the scope of this chapter. Under the title 'Being White in Anatolia', we tried to put emphasis on the obsession of Ottoman slave trade market with white slaves in addition to whiteness as a prerequisite of Circassian beauty. I also tried to discuss the ways in which white slaves, Circassians and whiteness were preserved in the collective Circassian memory by providing comparisons to studies conducted by orientalists. We also discussed the relations between the Armenians and the Rûm, two minorities which met each other after their migration to Anatolia, their conflicts and their results especially during World War I. We tried to trace the children and women who were found, abducted or abandoned by their families during the Armenian genocides of 1894-95 and 1915. We put emphasis on this group also referred to as 'Circassianized Armenians' and their relationship with Circassian slavery. In this context, we have provided examples from various interviews in order to demonstrate the white slave production mechanisms maintained by Circassians after their migration to Ottoman territories. We discussed the presence of this group which joined the slaves as prisoners of war during the minority revolts. The attitudes of the Circassians during the National Campaign (1919-1922), the revolts of Ethem the Circassian and the behavior of the Circassian slaves are among the topics covered in this chapter. I believe the fact that Ethem the Circassian's emergence in a discussion regarding slavery will interest researchers who conduct research on Ethem. The 'Surname Law' has been mentioned in the interviews as a major breaking point following the establishment of the Turkish republic. I tried to touch upon the surname acquisition problem experienced by slave families during this process. The oral history narrations about the transition from slave trade to the

application of '*vase*' (bride price) have been included in this chapter. The narrations stating that Circassian lords used to sell their daughters in exchange for 'bride price' when they ran out of their slaves were significant since they also included various discussions regarding Circassian women. Finally, we have explained the social stratification among the Circassians, the class distinctions and their effects on Circassian slavery through the oral history accounts. Lastly, social stratification and class discrimination among Circassians and their effects on slavery are among the focus points of our oral history narrations. We also tried to provide examples related to the evolution of Circassian slavery in order to discuss questions regarding what happened to white slaves at the end of this process which lasted from early 19th century to the present day, whether they became totally detached from their slave identities and confront their background as slaves.

We aim to conduct this study comparatively by making use of publications such as '*Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında'*,[2] petition written by the Circassian Union and Solidarity Association to Meclis-i Avam in 1909, in addition to major books written on the subject by Ehud R. Toledano [3] and Y. Hakan Erdem.[4] In addition, publications such as Guaze [5], Diyane[6] and New Caucasia, published by the Circassians during the Constitutional period and later during the Republican period, are among the resources. Although the first two chapters of the study are

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[2] I would like to thank Fatih Gide, who translated the petition named "Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında" from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish, for his contributions.

[3] Toledano, Ehud R. (2000). *Osmanlı Köle Ticareti 1840-1890.* İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları. ve Toledano, Ehud R. (2010). *Suskun ve Yokmuşçasına İslam Ortadoğusu'nda Kölelik Bağları.* İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press.

[4] Erdem, Y. Hakan. (2004). *Osmanlıda Köleliğin Sonu 1800-1909.* İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi.

[5]For quotations from the publication *Guaze*, Gide, Fatih. (2011). *1911-1914 Yılları Arasında İstanbul'da yayınlanan Guaze (Rehber) Gazetesi Işığında Osmanlı Devletinde Yaşayan Çerkeslerin Siyasi ve Sosyo-Kültürel Faaliyetleri.* Master's Thesis. We have utilized the thesis tagged under Nevşehir University Institute of Social Sciences.

[6] For quotations from the publication *Diyane*, Aksoy, Elmas Zeynep. (2008). *Circassian Organization In The Ottoman Empire (1908-1923).* M.A. Thesis. Boğaziçi University. Department of History.

centered on resources, we aim to examine the difference between the theoretical and practical definitions of Circassian slavery problem, its historical evolution and present. We intend to conclude the progress of Circassian slavery during the Republican period, especially with the support of oral history studies.

'Oral history', one of the new trends in history researches, is not an alternative to classical history understandings, but a way to present new opportunities for better understanding of history. Oral history not only includes the views of people which do not enter into official records into history, but it also helps to break down some myths that document historians have created. Oral history is inspired by the premise, ''Every person's life is a historical research if you know how to listen to them.' As a result of interdisciplinary cooperation, oral history benefits from all the possibilities of human sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and geography.

Paul Thompson describes oral history in his book '*The Voice of the Past*': ''Oral history is history built around people. It allows heroes not just from the leaders, but from the unknown majority of the community. It makes for contact - and thence understanding- among between social classes, and between generations. And to individual historians and others, with shared meanings, it can give a sense of belonging to a place or in time. Equally, oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgment inherent in its tradition. It provides a means for a radical transformation of the social meaning of history. It brings history into, and out of, community. It thrusts life into history itself and widens its scope.''[7]

Because oral history studies are conducted on the axis of memory, they are closely related to the experience and psychology of the person whose views are recorded. Because memory is a subjective memory recording device in which the past is always being shaped by the current and personal psychology of the person.[8]

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[7] Thompson, Paul. (1999). *Geçmişin Sesi*. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

[8] Acun, Fatma. (2008). *Yakın Dönem Tarihi Metodolojisi*. Ankara: Hacettepe University Press.

To put it briefly, corner stones of oral history are: Oral tradition passed on from the previous generations about the past, oral biography of events which happened to the person and statements of eyewitnesses about an event.

While recording the oral history narratives in this study, I have benefited from the methods I have tried to mention above. I tried to talk about the people I interviewed, especially about the period. I have tried to visit the geographical regions where the events took place and I have made observations by taking into account the circumstances of the past. I have observed that the narrations became more emotional while talking about deep subjects. I witnessed some people curse and elderly people cry.

The narrations related to the Circassian Exile (1864)[9] the Ottoman and Republican periods were waiting to be revealed in the subconscious of the speakers. The memories of the Circassians relating to the wars, which lasted for close to two hundred years in the Caucasus, were as fresh as if they were experienced yesterday. It was 1996. We had the opportunity to meet some elderly people who were born in 1910. The fact that the Circassians led relatively long lives enabled us to record many memories that could otherwise be lost.

Some interviews have stated that their own grandfathers and grandfathers experienced the Exile of 1864. Most of those who witnessed the exile passed away in the late 1950s, but their children and grandchildren grew up with their stories. Although *'Xabze'*, the Circassian etiquette, did not encourage Circassians to talk

[9] This study also includes a terminology study which discusses the settlement processes of Circassian refugees who were exiled from their native lands as a result of Tsarist Russian attempts to declare war against Circassians since the early 19th century. This discussion is provided within the scope of Circassian slavery. The concept used to describe the treatment to which Circassians were exposed proposes a significant methodological discussion. it has been found as a result of the oral history researches that majority of Circassians prefer the term 'exile' and that the term 'migration' is seldomly used. In addition, it has been determined that the term 'genocide' is becoming increasingly common. We will also use the term 'Circassian Genocide and Exile' due to its common usage.

about bad memories, the society was now more eager to talk about these things. Slavery was placed in a crystal *vase* and locked up in a case. It had been waiting for the day it would be released. Because of the sensitive and private nature of the subject, many people were unwilling to talk about it and some were even offended when asked about it. As a result, I started to initiate my interviews by common acquaintances and relatives. However, similar narrations that I heard from people from different regions and characteristics made me realize once again that despite all the differences in tongue and families, Circassian community is the collective child of a singular disaster. While they learned to live side to side among different ethnic and cultural groups in Ottoman territories to which they were complete strangers, Circassians left many untold story behind them. Similar stories I had heard from different regions and people have made me realize that the Circassian people, despite the differences between the languages and clans, are the children of a common suffering. The Circassians had left behind thousands of untold memories while they gained the ability to live together with different ethnic and cultural groups at different parts of the Ottoman territories.

I started my oral history studies within a certain plan. I did not want to direct the speaker during the interviews and paid special attention to open the space for them in which they could speak freely and avoided going into private topics. I focused on discussing the subject by providing the names of the cities and the reported incident and avoided revealing details such as person, family line, tribe and village. Once they were certain of the confidentiality of their private information, speakers started to tell their experiences more easily and even initiated discussions.

I was interested in all kinds of historical, political, social and cultural events that were engraved in the collective memory of Circassians from the Exile of 1864 to the present day. While listening to all the statements, I tried to examine the reactions given to the events by way of the concepts of conscience and justice. I have examined the humanistic, social and political traces of the effects of this period on the Circassians, the reflections of these effects on the present day and the ways

in which the Circassian society of today associates itself with the past. I tried to conduct all of the interviews within the scope of contexts regarding the social class, region/country, ethnic/religious/denominational identity, gender and their effects on the shaping of the collective memory of the Circassias and the ways in which the relationship between events of the past and today's world finds expression among various localities.

I also tried to follow academicians who contributed to oral history literature and conducted studies on the subject. Leyla Neyzi [10], an academician who published many articles and books on memory, belonging and identity, encouraged researchers like myself to conduct oral history studies. Ayşe Gül Altınay,[11] known for her work on Islamized and orphaned Armenians, published many interesting oral history studies along with Fethiye Çetin - although I am not sure if the archives would provide information regarding these sensitive subjects. Finally, being a part of the first and most comprehensive 'Circassian Oral History' project[12] conducted by Ulaş Sunata[13] under the auspices of TÜBİTAK has been a great contribution to me. I conclude from all these studies that we have to continue all kinds of historical, social and cultural studies related to the Circassians, one of the hidden memories of this country..

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[10] Neyzi, Leyla. (2004). *Ben Kimim?: Türkiye'de Sözlü Tarih, Kimlik ve Öznellik*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.; Neyzi, Leyla. (1999). *İstanbul'da Hatırlamak ve Unutmak: Birey, Bellek ve Aidiyet*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

11 Altınay, Ayşe Gül - Çetin, Fethiye. (2014). *The Grandchildren: The Hidden Legacy of "Lost" Armenians in Turkey*. (Translated by: Freely, aMaureen). New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers; Altınay, Ayşe Gül - Çetin, Fethiye. (2009). *Torunlar*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

[12] Sunata, Ulaş. (2015). *Diasporanın Sosyo Kültürel Hafızası Olarak Çerkes Köyü*. Ankara: Kafdav.

[13] Ibid.

CHAPTER ONE

CIRCASSIAN SLAVERY ALONG WITH THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CIRCASSIANS

The homeland of the Circassians, an ethnic community of North West Caucasus origin, lies within the borders of the present Russian Federation. The Circassians live within the boundaries of three different republics called Adyghe, Karachay-Cherkess and Kabardey-Balkar in the Russian Federation. The Circassians are called Adygheis, Circassians, Shapshugs and Kabardians in their homeland. Each of these communities call themselves Adyges and are known as Circassians.[14]

Because of its strategic position, the Caucasus caused endless conflicts between Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Iran for centuries. Thus, it has become very difficult to determine the boundaries of Circassia in the Caucasus. Circassian lands are bordered by Abkhazia and Georgia in the south, and Ossetian, Ingush and Chechen lands in the south by the Sunja River. The Nogays live near the Kuban River in the north and the Black Sea in the west. Circassian lands in the eastern region are called Kabarday. The Circassian lands in the eastern region are called Kabarday. The people living in this region have been separated from the Circassians who live in the western region and have brought a different political, administrative and geographical structure, albeit not in a cultural and ethnic sense. In this context, Western Circassia is called 'Circassia / Çerkezistan' in Turkish resources, and 'Kabarday' in Russian and Western resources.[15]

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[14] Besleney, Zeynel Abidin. (2016). *Türkiye'de Çerkes Diasporasının Siyasi Tarihi*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press. p. 41.

[15] Ibid. p. 42.

1.1 Circassian Tribes and Slavery Practices

Major tribes include; Abzakh, Shapsugh, Kabardian, Wubıh, Bjedugh, Hatkoy, Besleney, Kemirguvey, Mahush, Natukhach and Jane.[16] Among the tribes of North Caucasus, called Circassians, classes and slavery were also different. At the beginning of the 19th century, there were no aristocratic and feudal princes in the Shapsugh, Abzakh and Wubygh tribes. These locals destroyed the princes during the wars. Apart from some prominent families among them, they were not possessed of title. The Abkhazians, neighbor and a relative the Circassians, had a king and princes and feudal lords who were subject to this king. Every Abazin prince had at least three noble families, many farmers and slaves who were dependent on him. The feudal lords who were subject to the prince had their own lands, farmers and slaves.[17]

Slavery was a rooted institution and a part of the culture in the Caucasus. Whether or not there were princes or feudal lords in the tribes, many free-born peasants were able to own slaves on the grounds of domestic or external use. The slaves were made up of Circassian or non-Circassian people who were employed in a number of houses according to the economic and social status of the people. An Abazin mother prayed for her son, who went to pillages to get a slave; "May God help you find many slaves and grant you a grand pillage." Such prayers were spoken by many mothers of other North Caucasian nations.[18]

Abzakh society fought feudalism and feudal lords in the first quarter of the 18th century and put an end to feudalism. For these reasons, it was stated that the Abzakhs were more democratic tribes than the other Circassian tribes. The feudal influence and class differences are now less pronounced, but this statement expressed not the slavery, but the relationship between the prince, the nobility and

[16] Habiçoğlu, Bedri, "Kafkasya'dan Anadolyu'ya Göçler ve İskanlar", 1993, İstanbul, p. 26
[17] Açba, Harun. (2007). *Kadınefendiler 1839-1924.* İstanbul. p. 11.
[18] Iberieli, Sandro. (2015). *Gürcistan ve Güney Rusya'dan Osmanlı ve Arap Ülkelerine Beyaz Köle Ticareti.* İstanbul. p. 31.

the free-born peasants."[19] Even if the influence of the feudals was little, it did not mean that there was no slavery among the Abzakhs, because slavery was a structure that emerged within the economic and social needs and could disappear when these needs were alleviated.

As in the Western Caucasus, in the 19th century, the name *'pşıtlı'* was given to the slave class who had no rights or jurisdiction in the Kabarday region of the North Caucasus. The men and women punished for their inappropriate life style and unmarried and orphaned girls were integrated to this class. These also belonged to households.[20] The integration of those who committed shameful crimes into slave status was a common practice in Caucasia. These slaves were either utilized in Caucasia or sold to the Middle East via slave merchants. Thus, the society was considered to be cleared from these criminals.

In many of the oral history interviews I have conducted, the narrative of 'social cleansing' by means of slavery and slave trade was mentioned several times by Circassians who also pondered this subject.

In Wubyghs, which initially lacked a feudal structure, the land-owning lords and slave traders established a kind of relationship among themselves and were the favorite partners of the Ottoman slave traders. The tribes with an archaic democratic structure, such as Natukuay and Shapsugh tribes, held public councils. According to some sources, only a quarter of the Wubyghs, one tenth of the Abzakhs, and one in twenty Shapships were slaves.[21] However, 'Circassian slave' meant the enslaved Circassians while 'the slaves of the Circassians' were describing the captured and enslaved people of many different nations.

Bjedugh Prince Pshikhuy, who was famous for his performance in his resistance against Russia in 1830, with the help of the Abzakhs, could hardly

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[19] Bahiçoğlu, Bedri. (1993). *Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Göçler ve İskanlar.* İstanbul. p. 31.
[20] Iberieli. (2015). İbid. p. 35.
[21] Grassi, Fabio L. (2017). *Yeni Bir Vatan Çerkeslerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na Zorunlu Göçü 1864.* İstanbul: Tarihçi Kitabevi. p. 32.

suppress the slave uprising supported by the rebellious and free peasants.[22] At the beginning of the 19th century, the Circassian tribes were struggling with their own class struggles and slave uprisings while fighting Tsarist Russia. The free peasants who formed the majority of the Circassian people remained in the midst of these conflicts.

In 1846, a year before the Crimean War, Hatukoy and Shapsugh *fekhols* (liberated slaves) rebelled and confiscated fifty thousand slaves which belonged to the feudal lords. It is very significant that a total of fifty thousand slaves were seized in the Hatukoy and Shapsugh regions only. Tsarist Russia intervened with the Caucasus by using slavery and class conflicts as a pretext. The revolt of fekhols in Bjedugh region in the year 1856 was suppressed with the aid of Russians. However, the same feudal authorities were at war with Russians and Kazakhs. In 1864, the Kabardian feudalists revolted against the Russians trying to end the feudal system in the Caucasus and lost the slave war named *'Psitl Zave'*.[23] What is noteworthy in these revolts is that the Circassian feudal lords did not hesitate to seek help from Tsarist Russia from time to time in order to preserve their social status. In 1866, the Kabardians who remained in the Caucasus after the Circassian Exile demanded that the practice of freeing Russian slaves would be done according to their old customs. In the 1860s, the Tsarist Russia had removed serfage and the peasants were liberated. The Kabardian region, now a part of Russia, sought to free their slaves according to their own customs. When the Tsar accepted this request, manumission charges were set and slavery was grudally abolished in Kabarday. Following the exile of in 1864, 90% of the Circassian population was forcefully migrated to the Ottoman Empire. Circassians brought with them their old feudal class structures and Circassians who were officially citizens of the Empire had to wait for another fifty years in order to get rid of slavery.[24]

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[22] Tosun, Murat Dursun. (2015). *Arşiv Belgelerinde Kafkasya'dan Göçler İskanları Köle ve Cariyeler*. İstanbul. p. 64.

[23] Ibid. p. 64-65.

[24] Akay, Tolga. (2009). *Kafkasya'dan Uzunyayla Havalisine Göçler ve İskan*. Kayseri. p. 23.

In the 18th century, Kabardian and Abazin societies had formed feudalism with all its elements. The feudal system and class hierarchy reached their peak in this period. This process continued throughout the 19th century. Even in the early 20th century, Kabardian and Abazin tribes were more insistent than other Circassian tribes on slavery. In the 18th century, Kabardian and Abazin societies had formed feudalism with all its elements. The feudal system and class hierarchy reached their peak in this period. This process continued throughout the 19th century. Even in the early 20th century, Kabardian and Abazin tribes were more insistent than other Circassian tribes on slavery. We have seen in the oral history studies that these tribes were the last to end slavery after the Exile of 1864.

The establishing of feudalism based on landownership in Caucasia enlarged the gap between classes and even brought prohibitions interfering with matters of marriage. According to these prohibitions, marriage between different social classes met harsh objections.[25] We have found in our oral history narrations that even hundred and fifty years after the exile of 1864, persons from slave families are often prevented from marrying someone from a free-born Circassian family.

The lack of a government with diplomatic authority in Circassia caused conflicts between independent tribes and created many opportunities for pillage and plunder. It was also stated that a part of the community living in the northeast coastal regions of Caucasia used rowboats named 'Haçepa' to plunder nearby villages and sailors. In 1778, these pirates named Haçepa were seazed suddenly, robbed of their belongings and enslaved by some boatmen when Gazi Hasan Pasha and Canikli Ali Pasha arrived at Soğucak Castle. Despite the warnings of the Ottoman state, another merchant ship going to Anapa Port was plundered by the same Haçepa pirates.[26]

The slavery in Circassia was not entirely hereditary; although slaves could be liberated after a long and harsh process, they could not detach themselves from

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[25] Tuna, Rahmi. (2009). *Adige Xabze Adige Etiği ve Etiketi.* İstanbul. p. 155.

[26] Gökçe, Cemal. (1979). *Kafkasya ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Kafkasya Siyaseti.* İstanbul. p. 58.

their slave backgrounds and therefore chose to live in other countries over remaining in Caucasia even if this meant that they would be sold once again. Additionally, free-born Circassians could be enslaved during disputes between tribes or as a punishment in the event of committing shameful crimes.

In addition to Circassians, Abazins, who were mentioned quite often among white slaves, would often attack and plunder the people living near the castles in the Black Sea coasts of the Caucasus which was controlled by the Ottoman government. Anapa Castle was among the plundered castles. In addition, Nogays, which were settled around this castle, were robbed of their goods, family and children.[27] The Caucasus' coasts along the Black Sea was plundered frequently by human-trafficking gangs and witnessed attacks from gangs in local Caucasian tribes. As a result, public order in these regions collapsed entirely.

Some local Caucasian tribes and gangs made a habit of raiding such places and attacking castles under Ottoman control in addition to territories under Russian invasion. It was clear that the Circassian tribes which coexisted in peace for centuries were seriously damaged by the struggle of influence between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. These raids were considered by local Circassian tribes to be a fight for freedom since they did not see much difference between the castles of the Ottoman Empire and castles of the intruder Russia. Similar to Circassians, Abazins also had a tradition of plundering. Russian territories were plundered in the same mindset and the consequences were met by the Ottoman Empire since it was considered to be the owner of those lands.[28] Kemal Gökçe conveys the following information from the primary sources he uses in his work related to this subject:

> *"In the transcript acquired from Abdullah Pasha the guard governor of Anapa on February 3, 1825, it is stated that when the Circassians crossed the border and usurped the Russian locals, they answered in the same manner. As a result of the battle between Seyyit Ahmet Pasha and the Russian deputy Yermelof, Ahmet Pasha was*

[27] Ibid. p. 185.
[28] Ibid. p. 186.

taken as captive in order to prevent the Circassians from incursion. However, the Circassians started attacking once again since Ahmet Pasha released these captives following the dismissal of his guardianship of Anapa. This situation caused many complications. Russian General Minof declared that the Russians' usage of arms was caused by Kabardian tribes and ensured that Russians would not go past Kuban River if the Kabardians returned the goods and slaves they had acquired from Russians.''[29]

Before the Great Exile, administration in Circassia was handled by a *public council* called *hase*. In *hase,* which was held publicly and theoretically provided each individual with right of speech, the general audience was formed by the public while princes, the nobility, clergymen, elderly, notable persons, leaders and people who possessed the gift of rhetoric were also among the participants. Liberated Circassian communities who lived in Western Circassia required the unanimity of votes in *hase* when it came to making significant decisions.[30] Despite the presence of a public council, the feudal authorities of high social class were the dominant party in this council. This situation leads us to speculate that the general public did not have an effect on administration. However, there were also tribes among Circassians in which feudal authorities played a lesser role.

Habze is the whole of the non-written rules of conduct that have guided the social life of the Circassians for centuries. The application of the habze, which is the backbone of Circassian identity, is carried out under the supervision of the elderly. In addition to their behavior in the everyday life of the Circassian society, *Habze* also organized military affairs, courts, blood cases, interactions between social classes, marriage, and male-female relationships. The ones who disobeyed *habze* by committing minor offenses were excluded from the society as a punishment while major offenses such as adultery were penalized by enslavement

[29] Ibid. p. 216.
[30] Ibid. p. 47.

or exile overseas in the era before the Great Exile.[31] *Habze* enabled Circassians to protect their identities and maintain the unity, solidarity and order of their society in the places to which they had emigrated. The narration which goes as *''Neither the Sharia laws of the Ottoman period nor the civil law of the Republic was not practiced in Circassian villages until the 1950s!''*, is maintained in the collective memory of Circassians. Additionally, the presence of *Habze* and its uncompromising application impeded the assimilation of Circassians in their new regions of settlement. The tradition of *thamades*, which is regarded as respect for old people, is one of the main principle of *habze*. The title *thamate* was given to those who demonstrated leadership skills in the times of peace and war and managed to combine maturity and wisdom in their personalities. Although *habze* has undergone significant changes in the local adaptation processes following the diaspora, some parts of it are still accepted and practiced by Circassians all over the world.[32]

Almost all of the Circassians in the world today are Sunni Muslims. However, the Islamic identity of the Circassians is weaker than both the Chechens and the Dagestanis in the Caucasus, and the Turks and Arabs. The probable cause of this is that the Circassians converted to Islam relatively late.[33] The Circassians' conversion to Islam took place in a more recent period, between the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Before this, the Crimean Khanate influenced some Circasians who became Muslim, but the majority continued practicing their ancient religions, i.e. paganism.[34] The expansion of Islam among the Circassians began in late 18th century when Ferah Ali Pasha was designated as the governor of Anapa Castle. Islam expanded quickly among the Circassians due to the many *ulemas* brought from İstanbul thanks to the efforts of Ferah Ali Pasha.[35]

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[31] Ibid. p. 48.

[32] Ibid. p. 49-50.

[33] Ibid. p. 50.

[34] Saydam, Abdullah. (2000). *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri 1856-1876.* Ankara: Turkish Historical Society. p. 23.

[35] For detailed information see also. Tosun, Murat Dursun. (2015). *Arşiv Belgelerinde Anadolu'ya Kafkas Göçlerinin İskanları, Köle ve Cariyelik Sorunu*. İstanbul.

1.2 Circassian Slavery

In addition to being a tradition that goes back thousands of years in their history, slavery in the Circassian society formed one of the largest economic income in the Caucasus. Kefer, Azov, Taman, Anapa, and ports as Sohumkal were the centers of the slave trade. Before Ottoman control was established in the Black Sea costs, slave trade was in the hands of the Genoese.[36] Circassian slave trade was handled by the Venetian and the Genoese until the 15th century. Female and male slaves were sent to Europe via Italian harbors. Later on, slavery fell into the hands of the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars as they gained dominance on the Black Sea. The Circassian slaves were always considered among the most expensive goods. Dating from the 17th century, the number of Circassian slaves and their significance in the 'white slave' trade surpassed that of Europeans and continued increasingly in the Ottoman slave market.[37]

In the early 19th century, slave merchants in the Caucasus and Abkhazia utilized 60 small harbors built in areas to which rivers flew the Black Sea in order to practice 'white slave' trade.[38] Circassians used to kidnap boys and girls from other Caucasian tribes and sell them to Ottoman slave traders.[39] Although Circassian society is said to be notorious for kidnapping children in many works written on slavery, this was practiced by some Circassian slave merchants who did business with Ottoman slave merchants. While it is true that 'abducting horses' is a deep-rooted tradition in some Circassian communities, they do not have a tradition of 'abducting children.' Apart from this, the cases of abducting and selling children in extraordinary situations such as war and exile continued in some regions in a separate manner. Circassians are known for being horse thieves and often take pride in this. According to the narrations of Evliya Çelebi, the Circassians refused to give their daughters to young men who had never abducted a horse. Fabio Grassi states

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[36] Yağcı, Zübeyde Güneş. (2011). 'İstanbul Gümrük Defterlerine Göre Karadeniz Köle Ticareti (1606-1607)'. *History Studies.* Vol .III/2. p. 375.
[37] Grassi. (2017). İbid. p. 31.
[38] Iberieli. (2015). İbid. p. 45.
[39] Erdem. ibid. p. 66.

that abducting the horses of the troops of the Tsar and Kazakhs was considered to be a matter of honor for young Circassian men during the extensive wars between Circassians and Russians, and even a significant prerequisite for marriage.[40] Besides, abduction of children was neither a tradition nor a reason to boast. Just because 'child abduction' was practiced by slave merchants and related gangs, it should not be attributed to the entire Circassian society.

In addition to being captured by slave-owning Circassian lords as booty, the slaves and concubines were also sold by slave families. According to some resources, while the selling of daughters was a usual practice, male children were also sold in the times of war, famine and epidemic.[41] However, resources do not provide details in whether these children were slave children who were sold by Circassian lords, members of free-born families who were sold by free-born peasants called *fekhol* or slave children who were sold by their families. The generalization of this situation and the usage of expressions such as 'Circassians used to cell their own children' may cause deficient information and misunderstanding. In addition to wars between Circassians and Russians in the Caucasus, the wars between the Circassian tribes also resulted in the abduction of captives.[42] The exhausting combat conditions in the Caucasus fed the resources of slavery as well as triggering slave trade as a means for purchasing weapons. Abkhazians, who played a significant role in slave trade, had similar strife and wars similar to those of other Circassian tribes. Abdullah Saydam explains this subject by quoting the following statements from the work of Emrullah Effendin's 'Yeni Muhitü'l Maarif' in his work titled 'Migrations in the Crimea and the Caucasus'. *''According to their archaic traditions and social behaviors, Abkhazians would abduct persons during wars between tribes and export them as slaves. They also had a tradition of exporting condemned culprits as slaves. The slave trade received*

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[40] Grassi. ibid. p. 34.

[41] Yakubovskiy, A. Yu. (2000). *Altın Ordu ve Çöküşü*.Ankara: Turkish Historical Society. p. 96-99.

[42] Kuran, Ercüment, *"Laurance Oliphant'ın, The Transcaucasian Campaign of the Turkish Army Under Omer Pasha, Başlıklı Eserine Göre 1855 Yılında Doğu Karadeniz Kıyısında Siyasi ve Sosyal Durum"*, İkinci Tarih Boyunca Karadeniz Kongresi Bildirgeleri, Samsun, 1990, p. 100.

great demand among Abkhazians because of the sturdiness of their men and the beauty of their women. In fact, Byzantine historians often mention this nation, which they called Abazic, in relation to their occupation of slavery.''[43]

The practice of slavery in the Caucasus was supported by four distinct resources. These resources can be classified as abduction, criminals, volunteers and special production. 'Abduction', the first and the most common resource, was the integration of persons to slavery by means of kidnapping. Because of the lack of a strict political and military authority the Caucasus, the human-smuggling gangs would often kidnap Circassian, Abkhazian and Georgian girls during times of conflict. These gangs consisted of men from various nations, outlaws, bandits and persons from the nearby tribes. Similarly, it was impossible for outsiders to enter the Caucasus without the support of local tribes. The second resource of slavery consisted of 'volunteers'. This group also included members of slave families, widows, orphans and the poor. These people would often participate in slavery with the hopes of finding a better future for themselves in Istanbul. Because these poor people rarely survived in the Caucasus, this volunteering activity provided them with a chance to start a new life. The undending wars in the Caucasus kept adding even more people to this group of volunteers. The third resource of slavery was the predetermined and hereditary slavery often referred to as 'special production'. Some of the rich Circassian lords would breed female and male slaves, and the product of this coupling would fall directly into the possession of the slave-owning lord. Then, the Circassian lords would select some of these children and send them to Istanbul where they would be sold by slave merchants.[44]

1.3 Circassian Slave Classes and the Slaves of the Circassians

Circassian community in itself has been divided into four social classes; *Pshı* (Prince), *Vork* (Noble), *Fekhol* (Public-free Peasant), *Wune'ut*[45] / *Pşıtl* (slave).

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[43] "Emrullah, Yeni Muhitü'l Maarif, Istanbul, 1328-1330, p.156" in Saydam. Ibid. p. 22.

[44] Saz, Leyla (2000). *Anılar 19.Yüzyıl Saray Haremi*. İstanbul. p. 52.

[45] Karataş, Ömer. (2012). "19. yy. İkinci Yarısında Osmanlı Devleti'nde İskan Olunan Çerkes Toplumunda Sosyal Sınıflaşma ve Kölelik". *Avrasya İncelemeleri Dergisi*. I/2. İstanbul. p. 110.

The free-born Circassians were classified in three groups except for the slaves. A strict cast system was applied among these groups. For centuries, Circassian tribes had to deal with class struggles and wars between these classes of free-borns. The free Circassians were called *fekhol* and constituted more than 90% of the Circassian population. The English travelers who visited the Caucasus referred to the *fekhol* as 'freemen'. It was also stated that marriage between distinct classes was rare. Additionally, the *pşı* and the *vork* avoided forming marriage relations with the *fekhol* families while there were some *fekhol* families who allowed marriages to *pşı* and *vork.*[46]

Circassian slaves were also divided into two categories, the first class had no right and were bought and sold with their children like a commodity, and were left as a legacy, they were so-called 'Wune'ut' prisoners of war and their generations. Second class, so-called 'Pşıtl', like the serfs in Europe, who were connected to fields and live in the guardianship of their Master's.[47] This group mostly consisted of Russian, Kazakh, Nogay and Georgian captives who were acquired during the wars between the Circassian tribes. This class had two subgroups called *Wune'ut,* servants who had no rights, and *Pşıtl* who worked as sharecroppers.[48] According to Lucy Garnett, who wrote many books on women and domestic life in the Ottoman Empire, the Circassian society consisted of two distinct races and one of them was superior to the other:

> *''The people comprised under the name of Circassian in reality consist of two distinct races – the tribesmen, and their hereditary slaves or serfs; and this fact may account for the very contradictory descriptions given of them, especially of their women, by Eastern travellers. The tribesmen are true aristocrats in the correct sense of the term. ... These high-class Circassians are, as a race, rather above the middle height, slenderly-built, and quick and*

[46] Baj. (2000). ibid. p. 93.
[47] Baj, Jabagi. (1969). *Çerkesyada Sosyal Yaşayış Adetler.* Ankara. p. 113-117.
[48] Aydemir, İzzet (1988). *Göç, Kuzey Kafkasyalıların Göç Tarihi.* Ankara. p. 119.

vivacious in every movement. They are clear-skinned, the colour of their eyes ranging from black to grey or blue, and of their hair from black to chestnut or light brown. ... The serf class are, on the other hand, of an inferior type, and belong no doubt originally to a race subjugated and enslaved by the tribesmen, who thereafter lived by their labour. Their faces are disproportionately long and narrow, and their complexions of a dull leaden hue.''[49]

While travelers referred to physical differences between the free and the slave classes, they also noted the existence of two different classes within the slave class. Spencer, another traveler who visited the Caucasus, has also stated that the Circassians had several different races and argued that it was not related to slavery, but to the migrations to the Caucasus for thousands of years. Spencer: *''The Caucasian vallies having been, in all ages, the asylum of those who fled from oppression in the neighboring countries, we everywhere find tribes differing from each other in appearance, customs and manners. Circassians, the real rulers of the land, never intermarry with another race than their own, they preserve their lineage uncontaminated and lose their status in the society if they intermarry with lower classes.''* As understood by the statements of the travelers, the differences in physical appearance and skin color among the Circassians resulted from the social stratification between the races that did not mix and the classes that were living apart from each other.[50]

The difference between *Wune'ut* and *Pşıtl* has been expressed in many sources. The Circassians did not consider all of their slaves to be equals, and divided them into two classes: *Wune'ut*; The services of these slaves, mostly house servants and the *halayık*, were not subject to any procedure at all, whose services were not

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[49] "Garnet, Lucy M.J. The Women Of Turkey and Their Folk-Lore. Additions: John S. Stuart-Glennie.Vol 2. London: David Nutt, 1891." in Schick, İrvin Cemil, (2004). *Çerkes Güzeli Bir Şarkiyatçı İmgenin Seriveni*. Istanbul. p. 83.

[50] "Spencer, Edmund. Travels in Circassia, Krim-Tatary, & Including a Steam Voyage down the Danube, from Vienna to Constantinople and round the Black Sea. Vol 2. London: Henry Colburn, 1839." in Schick. ibid. p.83

dependent on conditions and which were not granted any rights. These slaves would get no shares or payment in return for their services. *Wune'ut* children were often sold without their consent. Their only expectation from their owners was to be fed and clothed. The slaves in this category were more expensive than the others. Because they were not subject to the Circassian legal system *habze*, their services and children were exploited without question.[51] The fact that the slaves, Wune'ut, were not allowed to form separate families, led to the subsequent sale of their children. If these slaves had children out of marriage, they would be open to the sexual abuse of their owners and other dominant household members. We have expressed in our oral history studies that the 'first night's right', a supposed legal right in medieval Scotland, can be interpreted as 'right of every night' in the case of *Wune'uts*.

The second class of slaves called *Pşıtl* were the ones who were subject to *Xabze*, the legal system, and they were like sharecroppers to their owners rather than slaves. Circassian tribes who had defeated their opponent tribes at war would, because they did not consider the defeated opponent as their equals, share the slaves of their opponents among their own people and create a lower class for them called '*Pşıtl*' which meant 'owned man'. These slaves were like slaves who were dealing with general farming and paying taxes to their owners. There owned separate houses, families, animals, fields, and shared half of the crops with their owners. The fact that the *Pşıtl* were able to buy their freedom in exchange for about thirty oxen indicates that these slaves could be freed by paying the price. In addition, the owners were obliged to pay the price in the event of a criminal offense committed by their slaves. The price of the bride was paid by the owner when a male *Pşıtl* slave got married and this amount could go up to 70 oxen. *'Vase'*, the price paid by the groom to the bride's family, was split in half between the slave girl's father and the owner of the slave family.[52] The daughters of the *Pşıtl*, who were subject to *Xabze*, were not sold without their fathers' consent. When sold with permission from the father,

[51] Baj. (2000). ibid. p. 94.
[52] Ibid. p. 95.

the cost was equally divided between the father and the owner. Among these two classes of slaves called *Wune'ut* and *Pşıtl*, the *Wune'ut* were thought to be captives from Russia or other foreign nations while the *Pşıtl* were thought to be slaves of Circassian origin. Apparently, the Wune'ut chose to be liberated at the end of a certain service period in one of the Ottoman cities rather than staying in the Caucasus and never being liberated, which caused them to be involved in the slave trade as 'volunteers'. This group, the lowest of the slave classes in the Caucasus, were sold by the Ottoman slave traders as 'Circassian slaves'. These 'white' slaves, their origins unknown, lived prosperously in the imperial harem or rich places they entered by playing the role of a Circassian girl. In a nutshell, to be taken to Ottoman lands by slave traders meant the beginning of a very big career for these slaves.

Additionally, the slaves of the Circassians could be inherited and shared by heirs. However, if the shareholder lived in a foreign place outside that community, he did not have the right to take the slave there with him. The slave was obligated to stay in his own community. In the event that the heir could not receive a slave, he was paid money for the cost of the slave.[53] To understand the position of the slaves, it is useful to look at the situation of free-born peasants: *''The property of the field slaves consisted of various gifts given to them by their owners. The peasants possessed no land of their own. They utilized the land which belonged to their owner. They made payment in various ways. Also, the land slaves had the right to acquire their own field slaves called 'lağuneut.''*[54]

For centuries, the divided social structure and the ancient system of slavery in the Circassians were practiced within the framework of deep-rooted traditions that regulated the society in the difficult living conditions of the Caucasus.[55] Circassian slavery was a 'Closed System' shaped by the rooted traditions in the Caucasus. So, Circassian slaves participated in voluntary slavery in the Ottoman slave markets and joined the Ottoman 'Open Slave System' in order to prevent

[53] Tuna. (2009). ibid. p. 233.
[54] Ibid. p. 239-240.
[55] Grassi. ibid. p. 36.

dying as slaves in the Circassian villages. In addition, the imperial court and upper-classes' demand for 'Circassian slaves' facilitated the Circassian slave trade. This demand of white slaves by the Ottoman upper classes was also met by cooperation of some Circassian and Abkhazian lords with Ottoman slave traders. Leyla Saz Hanım, in her remarks, reveals the following statements:

> *"Circassian girls were brought to Istanbul by men who were themselves Circassians. Then they were given to Turkish slave traders who acted as intermediaries between buyers and sellers. Circassian slave traders were of foreign nationalities, while the ones who supplied slaves in the Caucasus were of Circassian originAmong these men and slave traders were the gangs of Circassians and Abkhazians who practiced human smuggling."*[56]

As a result, Circassian slavery, whether in a systematic structure or not, emerges as the last representatives of a geography in which the last white slaves in the world were produced. The process of these white slaves outside the Caucasia, which were enslaved in various forms from Caucasian tribes such as Circassian, Abaza, Georgian, Ossetian, Karachay, Balkar, or the northern peoples such as Russians, Kazakhs, Ukrainians and Nogays and sold under the name of 'Circassian Slaves' in the market of the Ottoman slave, will be discussed in the remaining part of this thesis.

[56] Saz. ibid. p. 52

CHAPTER TWO

SLAVERY, WHITE SLAVE TRADE AND CIRCASSIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

In the second part of the thesis, we will examine the white slave trade in the Ottoman Empire from the beginning of the 19th century within the historical process of the network of relations between white slaves and the Circassians. In order to better understand the white slaves and the Circassian slavery they were involved in, we will first try to focus on the issues of slavery and white slave trade in the Ottoman Empire.

2.1. Slavery in the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire did not systematically produce slaves from its own citizens, this method was not applied until the arrival of 150,000 slaves during the Circassian exile in 1864.[57] In the late 19th century Russia and England were to control the resources of slave trade, this meant that all slave markets in the Ottoman lands were full of Circassian slaves from inside the Ottoman Empire. Niyazi Berkes considers the past of slavery to be rooted in *Kul'luk* and '*devshirme*' systems and expresses the rise in 'white' slaves coming from Caucasia as follows:

> *"Violent conflicts emerged between the devshirme from the Balkans and Caucasian slaves in order to gain high status. Although the devshirme from the Balkans and converts were almost entirely erased from the field of politics; because of the sultan's desire to maintain his despotic powers, a new field was opened for statesmen who were mostly Circassian slaves."*[58]

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[57] Ibid. p. 75.

[58] Berkes, Niyazi. (1973). *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma.* İstanbul. p.163.

The ascension and power of the "white slaves" of Caucasian origin would continue until the end of the Ottoman Empire. In 1865, the Ottoman Empire changed its policies regarding the slavery system, and pursued a policy by which it could abolish the Circassian slave trade. However, the state followed different policy when it came to male and female slaves. On the one hand, the state tried to stop the slave trade because of gathering troops for the army. On the other hand, it kept providing female slaves for the harems and konaks of pashas and nobles until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The three main forms of utilization of the 'white slaves' who were sold to Ottoman territories are stated in the memories of Leyla Saz Hanım:

> *''Captives are categorized in three classes according to the tasks they perform. The ones who will serve in house chores and become* halayık *must be tall, sturdy and relatively beautiful. The ones who will serve as odalisque or concubines must be very beautiful, graceful, curvy and between the ages of fifteen and twenty. The captives in the third category are bought for income or booty. These are selected among beautiful and curvy children between the ages of eight and twelve who give the idea that they will be even more beautiful as they grow up. These captives are raised with the utmost care. They are restricted from performing chores which could harm their hands and bodies. Also, after they are given a good education and taught music in addition to proper manners, they are finally marketed when they reach the age of marriage.''*[59]

The employment of slaves in harems and konaks in big cities concentrated in these three fields which meant the establishing of an age long trade. Slave traders, human-smuggling gangs, lords who controlled the demand for slaves and final customers were the groups who provided the institutionalization of white slavery.

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[59] Saz. ibid. p. 55.

The Circassian slaves, divided into two classes within themselves, were subjected to a different treatment. Although the emancipation process of *Wune'ut* slaves in the Caucasus seemed impossible and it was very hard for the *Pşıtl* to be liberated, the Ottoman slavery enabled opportunities for liberation. According to Leyla Saz;

> *''Term of legal and compulsory employment for a Circassian slave was nine years. Unless this service period was completed, a slave could not ask for his liberation, run away or gain his freedom by his own means. Once his nine-year-long shift was over, he was allowed to demand to be liberated in the name of the law. He would then be given a certificate of liberation or a document of emancipation which were valid in law courts.''*[60]

There were significant differences between the Circassian and the Ottoman slave systems. The Ottoman slave system worked in accordance with the Sharia Law, whereas the Circassian slavery system originated from the pre-Islamic customs and traditions. The slave system in the Ottoman Empire was open and not based on 'hereditary slavery'. It is also important that slaves would serve for a certain time, from 7 to 10 years, then they would be set free and mixed with the society. This was a general principle in the Ottoman Empire. However, liberation was not possible at all in the closed slave system of the Circassians; slavery would continue for more than a hundred years and slaves were kept in their own status for a lifetime. In the Ottoman open slave system, slaves could be free by marrying with free people, but in the Circassian closed system, the slaves were not able to marry free-born people. It was completely unaccepted.

The most common slave production method in the Ottoman Empire was the 'mukatebe' system, which meant that slaves would be set free after serving for a certain period of time. After being liberated, a slave could even marry his master's son or daughter, and mingle with the free society. In the Circassian slave system,

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[60] Saz. ibid. p. 60.

such a case was impossible. The first stop on the road to liberation of the Circassians' male slaves was the Ottoman Army. The Ottoman government also strived to open the way for the freedom of the Circassians' male slaves in order to provide the human power required for the army.

It is known that slave men were generally exempt from military service, which is why the Ottoman government wanted to abolish 'male' slavery. Later on, the children of those slaves would not be exempted from military service.[61] When slaves started their military service, they would be regarded as free individuals.[62] Those Circassian slaves that became aware of this new situation, fled from their masters and registered to the Ottoman Army. The Ottoman Empire preferred to make it easy for slaves to become free instead of directly intervening with the slave trade. In the historical document '*Arz Tezkeresi*', which was prepared on 31 March 1867, it is stated that the Circassians owned around 150,000 slaves. There were imperial edicts and orders to give lands for slave owners in return for the liberation of these slaves.[63]

Slavery in the Ottoman Empire was institutionalized legally within the scope of the Sharia Law. The number of slaves in the market would increase during immigration and war times. Especially concubines are widely used in domestic service, while men slaves had taken place in the economic structure of a cheap labor force employed in agriculture.[64] Instead of coming with new regulations on the subject of slavery, the new Law system 'Mecelle' during the Tanzimat period, assigned the old Sharia Court with this issue.[65] Although Sharia was authorized, all measures and arrangements in the issue of slavery were provided by the Edict of

[61] Özbay, Rahmi Deniz. (2009). "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Köle Emeğinin İstihdamı ve Mukâtebe Yöntemi". *Kocaeli University Journal of Social Sciences.* Issue: 17. p. 153.
[62] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 150-151.
[63] BOA, İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus, 1409.
[64] Özbay. ibid. p.158-159.
[65] Öztürk, Osman. (1973). *Osmanlı Hukuk Tarihinde Mecelle.* İstanbul. p. 175.

Sultan.[66] Many laws were issued in order to prevent slave trade. As a result, a new law against the black slave trade was issued in 1889. Slave importation was subjected to a certain order in the Ottoman system. A tax called '*pençik*' was to be paid for each slave. This tax was received by the state as one fifth of the estimated sale price of a slave. This importation tax had been in use until 1857.[67] The slave market in Istanbul was shut down in the year 1846, and the market in the Persian Gulf was banned in the year 1847 as a result of the pressures from the British Empire. These two events are considered to be the first regulations towards the abolishment of slavery and slave trade in the Ottoman Empire.[68]

In 1854, Sultan Abdulmejid I issued two new laws to be implemented by Mustafa Pasha who was the chief governor of Batumi at the time. Each of these laws gives clear orders aiming at preventing the export of Circassian and Georgian slaves. During this period, Georgian slave trade was completely lifted.[69] The Circassians were expected to take into account the warnings of the state regarding the export of slaves to the Ottoman market.[70] Additionally, this law orders necessary measures to be taken in the ports such as Anapa, Tuapse, Gelindjik and Sohumkala in the Caucasus. These ports all functioned as a harbor from which the Circassian slaves were sent to Ottoman markets. This law was also to be announced to the public in the Caucasus. Thus, export of Circassian slaves from the Caucasus was to be prevented.[71]

Generally, with these imperial edicts, the Ottoman government was trying to prevent slave trade, but did not put an end to slavery, because slavery was legal

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[66] İrade: All of the advice presented to the attention of the grand vizier by the Sultan. Although edicts were referred to as *'hatt-ı hümayun'* since they were approved by the signature of the Sultan, *irade* and edicts had the same amount of sanction power.

[67] Toledano, Ehud R. (1982). *The Ottoman Slave Trade and its Suppression*. Princeton. (Toledano, Ehud R. (2000). *Osmanlı Köle Ticareti 1840-1890*. Trans by. Y. Hakan Erdem. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları. p. 58-59)

[68] For detailed information see also. Toledano, Ehud R. (2000). *Osmanlı Köle Ticareti 1840-1890*. çev. Y. Hakan Erdem. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları. Chapter 3.

[69] Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında Mebusan-ı Kirama, p.7-9; Toledano. (2000). İbid. p. 96-102.

[70] Erdem. ibid. p. 134.

[71] A.g.e., p. 134.

according to the Sharia Law.[72] The main reason for the failure of the imperial edicts directed to the Circassians was the impact of the Russian-Circassian wars. The Circassian nobles who needed a significant amount of money during the war in order to carry out Russian imperialism[73], they continued to sell slaves in return for arms. On the other hand, the Caucasus was not planned to be a part of Ottoman Empire and the Circassians never felt that they had to obey the decrees of the Sultan.

The Ottoman system of enslaving the prisoners taken in the war was abandoned after the Russo-Ottoman War (1828-1829).[74] In order to get both French and British support in the Crimean War in 1856, the state had completely banned the sale of Georgian slaves, who were mostly Christians. Also, the Ottoman Empire did not encourage the Circassian slave trade during the war.[75] However, the Russian navy who lost the Crimean War, was forced to remove the coastal blockade of Circassia by the Allied Powers. Russians did not promote Circassian slave trade, but at the same time they did not give much attention to it.[76] Apparently, slave trade was serving to their military strategy, which was aimed at weakening the human power of the Circassians, which is why slave trade was met positively by the Russian Governors.

In order to better understand the continuation of Circassian slavery and white slave trade in the Ottoman Empire for another fifty years after the Exile of 1864 despite all of the external pressure, we must look at the upper class households and the life in the konaks. Many pashas and administrators during this period were in fact born as slaves. Similarly, there were many white slaves working in their households who claimed that they were Circassian. Among the Tanzimat writers, Ahmet Mithat and Sami Paşazade Sezai's mothers were concubines. Münteha Hanım, mother of Abdulhak Hamid, who mentioned concubines and slavery in his

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[72] Çelik, Civan. (2012b). *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kölelik*. Samsun. P. 23-32.

[73] Habjoka, Mufti Shawkat. (1972). *Heroes and Emperors in Circassian History*. Beirut. p. 220-p.251.

[74] Erdem. ibid. p. 64.

[75] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 96-104, p. 132-138.

[76] Erdem. ibid. p. 138.

plays, was also a slave who had been kidnapped from the Caucasus.[77] The presence of 'Circassian' white slaves in upper class households during the Tanzimat period demonstrates that these slaves acted as indicators of a fashion and class. From Keçecizade Fuat Paşa to the niece of the French Ambassador: *''This lady is my bride. She is originally Circassian. We bought and raised her to marry our son. As you can see, our understanding of slavery is different from yours.''*[78] For upper-class Ottoman administrators, Circassian slavery was a 'private' matter and a domestic affair; they would resist any external intervention in this soft area.

The white slaves and slaves of the Circassians sold to the Ottoman lands from the beginning of the 19th century established authority in the imperial harem and mansions of the big cities including Istanbul. These white slaves, who entered the upper class households as slaves and concubines, became the ladies of these mansions and married their sons to white slaves brought from the Caucasus. Among these white slaves, the most 'Circassian' ones were favored. In addition to female slaves, free-born Ottoman women also thought that a controllable labor power and old age security could only be reached through their married sons. Because their sons were the most significant support and security for these women, ensuring that their sons stayed connected to them for the rest of their life created a constant mental occupation for them.[79] By taking slaves as brides, they avoided belittling them and taunting them with their slave pasts. As a result, these slaves were treated with great respect which strengthened their authority. The authority of these slaves dominated many of the rich Muslim households in Istanbul. The power of the slaves was destroyed by neither the imperial edicts nor the laws; they were defeated by the fashion of the period and lost their positions to French nannies, prostitutes of Galata, white Russian mistresses, daily servants and orphans who were taken into the house. When the Sultanate was abolished in 1922, the newly-established Turkish Republic encountered the problem of slaves once again. The last Sultan Mehmed

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[77] Altındal, Meral (1994). *Osmanlı'da Kadın.* İstanbul, p. 33.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Kandiyoti, Deniz. (1997). *Cariyeler Bacılar Yurttaşlar Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler.* İstanbul. p. 122.

Vahdeddin was sent to exile in San Remo. Regarding the question of what would happen to the imperial harem, the Associated Press news agency reported on December 3, 1922:

> *''Refet Pasha is looking for spouses for the 150 women of the former Sultan's imperial harem. These women range in age from 17 to 35 years. They are all penniless... The women in the imperial harem who find husbands will be allowed to stay in Istanbul while the rest will be sent to provinces in the inner parts of the country. Most of these women are Circassians and they are reported to be of 'striking beauty'. A court officer said one day that 'it must not be hard for these women to find a husband or a spouse.' They are all chosen for their beauty, their youth and their proportionate bodies. Most of them were gifted to the Sultan by the governors. They have unique skin, dark eyes and long auburn hair. They are all religious, loyal and loving''.*[80]

The last Ottoman Harem was distributed in this manner. What happened to tens of thousands of slaves and imperial concubines who led isolated lives in the upper class mansions of Istanbul is a separate research subject. In the following sections, the historical transformation process of the white slaves and Circassian slavery in the Ottoman Empire will be studied periodically.

2.2. 1800-1856 Russo-Ottoman Wars and White Slave Trade

Crimea's split from Ottoman Empire with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca [81] in 1774 and its annexation by Russia in 1783 meant that the time was coming for the Circassians. Ottoman Empire, upon Tsarist Russia's invasion which began with

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[80] Schick. ibid. p. 130-131.

[81] According to Küçük Kaynarca Treaty which was signed at the end of the 1768-1774 Wars, Crimea was becoming independent. According to the article of tis treaty regarding Caucasia, because Kabarday territories were considered as a part of the Crimean Khanate, these territories appeared as if they were under the control of Tsarist Russia with the Russian occupation of Crimea in 1783. See. 21st article of Küçük Kaynarca Treaty. Muahedât Mecmuası, III/1, İstanbul 1296, p. 267

Crimea and then Caucasia, established Soğucak Governorship in an attempt to create a defense area with the help of Circassians. These relations improved during the governance of Ferah Ali Pasha; he not only made political attempts but also catered for the fast expansion of Islam among Circassians.[82] The relations developed by the Circassians with the Ottoman Empire against Russia and the efforts of the Ottoman statesmen and clergymen sent to the region are thought to have opened the way to Islam for Circassians and to have accelerated this process.

Russia's invasion of Caucasia and Georgia in the early 19th century indicated the shutdown of one of the biggest resources in the Ottoman slave market. In this situation, the market gravitated towards resources that provided black slaves. However, The Russian-Circassian conflict, which had been proceeding in de facto Circassian territories since the early 19th century, continued until the year of 1864. In this process, even the Russian blockade of the Black Sea could not prevent the slave trade which was carried out between the Caucasus and Ottoman Empire. The Circassians used the income they had gained from the slave trade to buy guns and ammunition to be used in their resistance against the Russians. This situation made slave trade even more crucial for the Circassians at the time. The slave trade was the only way to sustain the economy which was deteriorated as a result of never-ending wars. This condition continued until the Circassian Exile which was initiated in the year of 1864.[83]

There were fundamental differences between the Circassian and Ottoman slave systems. Although both were based on the Sharia Law, the Circassian slavery had its origins in the pre-Islamic customs and traditions that went as far back as thousands of years. While the slaves in the Ottoman open slave system were generally dismissed after completing a certain period of service, it was almost

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[82] For details V. Yağcı, Zübeyde Güneş. (1998). *Ferah Ali Paşa'nın Soğucak Muhafızlığı (1781-1785)*. Doctoral Dissertation. Ondokuzmayıs University. Institute of Social Sciences.

[83] Erdem. ibid. p. 78-79; Zilfi, Madeline C. (2010). *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Emprire*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 126; Karamürsel, Ceyda. (2017). "Transplanted Slavery, Contested Freedom and Vernacularization of the Rights in the Reform Era Ottoman Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 59 (3). p. 697, 702.

impossible to be liberated and exit the slave status. It would be wrong to say that the Ottoman open slave system was applied properly in every region. In many different regions of Anatolia, the slave owners acquired the habit of enslaving their slaves' children. In this respect, a practice similar to Circassian slavery continued to exist. The Sharia Law, which allowed the enslavement of the slaves' children, facilitated the work of slave owners in this regard. England's Trabzon consulate Palgrave, in his report on Trabzon, Ankara and Kastamonu provinces, stated that children of the slaves were considered to be slaves and could be officially enslaved at any time. The British consul in Baghdad Herbert expresses this situation in his report on the Arabic provinces of the Ottoman Empire as follows: ''In addition to the slaves imported in this country, the children of Arabic free men and female African slaves who did not belong to them are also sold quite frequently.''[84]

The situation became even more complicated when the subject was white slaves. Mehmet Bey, who was also a refugee himself, had owned 17 slaves and concubines in his possession when he died in 1861. According to documents, Mehmet Bey's heirs demanded that these 17 male and female slaves be sold. Officers consulted the Refugee Commission on how to act on this issue.[85] Apparently, when the white slaves passed away, all rights of disposition were passed on to the heirs of their owners.

The ethnicity of white slaves played a significant role in the Ottoman slave market in the 19th century.[86] Among these white slaves, Adyghes were the most wanted and precious ones. Usually defined as 'Cherkess' by Ottomans, Adyghes were privileged by the slave traders and were priced accordingly. Ottomans kept official records of the slave trade. These records showed the tribe of the slaves and also their old owners along with their family names. Compared to the Westerners who regarded all of the Caucasian slaves as Circassians due to the language barrier; Ottomans utilized Circassian slave traders as translators and obtained detailed

[84] Erdem. ibid. p. 74; Zilfi. ibid. p. 127, 211.
[85] Tosun. ibid. p. 71.
[86] Zilfi. ibid. p. 128.

information about the slaves as well as the peoples of Caucasia.[87] Besides, registering the former slave-owning lords with their family names gave the impression that the free members of noble families were enslaved. Even in today's Circassian society, the fact that the Circassians' slaves do not have dynastic names is a frequently asked question by those who are wondering whether somebody is of a slave or free family.

Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, emerged as the city with the largest white slave market in the world as well as being the largest slave market in the country during the 19th century. Slave ownership, which had been continuing for centuries in the richest houses of Istanbul, was being provided by Circassian slaves. A Circassian who had already begun to work in a house could give reference to the Circassian slaves which would later be taken. This situation, especially in the community life outside the imperial court, caused the concubines to become a source of restlessness for the housewives. The ruling class' demand for white slave and especially Circassian slaves directly affected the slave market and prices. Circassian slaves in the Istanbul slave market were finding buyers for very high sums.[88] The fact that white slaves and Circassians in particular were so valued can be a result of their being regarded by the Ottoman upper class over time as loyal, moral, reliable, clean, beautiful and white. This reputation has not only increased their prices, but also caused many white slaves, which were not actually Circassians, to be bought and sold as Circassians, and the Ottoman houses filled with fake Circassian slaves.

The most significant method of slave acquirement and enslavement in the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years was the method of taking prisoners of war. This method, which had been practiced to meet the slave needs of the Ottomans since the early periods of the state, was abandoned with the Edirne Treaty (1829) signed after the Russo-Turkish War as a result of the pressures of the Russians.[89]

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[87] Erdem. ibid. p. 81.
[88] Ibid. s. 85.
[89] Ibid. p. 88.

The Ottoman slave market, which acquired a lot of white slaves in the previous voyages to Europe, turned to Georgian and Circassian slaves after this treaty. In addition, the wars that usually ended with defeat in Europe further increased the interest in the Circassian, Abkhazian and Georgian slaves. Lord Ponsonby, the English Ambassador in Istanbul, stated in his report dated to 27 December 1840 that many Ottoman statesmen were slaves in the past and ascended over time to reach their present authorities.[90]

One of the best examples of this situation was Sadrazam Hüsrev Mehmed Pasha, who was formerly an Abkhazian slave and described by Halil İnalcık as ''the last great representative of the serf system''.[91] Hüsrev Mehmed Pasha, famous among Ottomans for educating and raising male slave children, made sure that all of the slaves he raised were put in administrative ranks and rose in society. Pasha also improved his own authority with this patronage system.[92] Hüsrev Pasha, who lived for almost a hundred years, played a very active role and became rich in the reign of Mahmut II and Tanzimat period. In fact, one of the main skills of Hüsrev Pasha, a slave of Abkhazian origin, was raising white slaves of Caucasian descent to be statesmen. It is fair to say that he had established a "slave farm."[93] Hüsrev Mehmed Pasha saw thirty of the slaves he educated rise to the pasha rank in the Ottoman system. In fact, Mehmed Reşid Pasha, one of his slaves, managed to rise to the grand vizier rank ten years before his master, between the years 1829 and 1833. It is known that the tradition of slave children being raised by high-rank Ottoman officials in order to serve in government service was abandoned by the Tanzimat era statesmen who were supporters of Westernization. Thus, the slaves that they raised and turned into statesmen had drawn a set in front of their efforts to become a force within the state. It was now apparent that the groups formed by people who move with different motives were struggling to occupy ranks in the state structure.

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[90] Ibid. p. 88.
[91] İnalcık, Halil. "Hüsrev Paşa". *İA.*, Vol. I. p. 609-16.
[92] Erdem. ibid. p. 88; Zilfi. ibid. p. 135.
[93] Berkes. Ibid. p. 209.

The Edict of Gülhane prepared in the lead of Mustafa Reşit Pasha did not say anything related to the concept of liberty or slavery, but made some important steps in this period about slave trade. Following the order of Sultan Abdulmejid (1839-1961), the Sultan who proclaimed the Edict of Gülhane, the slave market in Istanbul was officially closed on December 28, 1846.[94]

While Ottoman statesmen thought that the slave market of Istanbul was closed "thanks to the benevolence of Sultan Abdulmejid", Toledano considers this development as "the Sultan deciding that an open slave market in the midst of a Westernizing capital no longer agreed with the views of the time".[95] Whether it was philanthropy or Westernization, the official removal of the slave market by the state meant that the state lost control of slave trade and slave traders. After the slave market was closed by the state, the slave trade, which was scattered to different parts of the city, was actively conducted especially in the districts such as Fatih and Tophane. The black slave trade was mainly concentrated in and around Fatih, and the white slaves of Circassians, most of whom were brought to Karabaş Street in Tophane, were sold at the houses of many Circassian sellers. The shutdown of the market made all slave trade underhand, and the state had lost control of it in this regard. It was thought that this development would prepare the end of slavery by slowing the flow of slaves to the empire. As a consequence of the shutdown of the slave market, the guild of slave traders became dysfunctional although it was not officially removed. As the slave trade became illegal, guild merchants eventually turned into street sellers.[96] The closure of the Istanbul slave market is considered as a positive attempt by the state against slave trade, but it had only closed the market in the state capital. No attempt was made to prohibit slave trade. For this reason, slave trade continued to be carried out within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. In this case, the state was influenced both in administrative and economic sense.

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[94] Çelik, Civan. (2012a). *Bilinmeyen Yönleriyle Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kölelik (18. Yüzyıl ve 19. Yüzyıl)*. Samsun: Yolcu Dergisi Yayınları. p. 83.

[95] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 90-91.

[96] Erdem. ibid. p. 125.

Instead of the closed slave market, slave trade continued in various houses in different districts of Istanbul, but this trade was out of control of the state.[97]

2.3. Crimean War (1856)

Imperial Russia, following the defeat in the 1856 Crimean War, faced a serious loss of prestige and even lost its right to hold fleets in the Black Sea. Consequently, Russians wished to make up for this defeat by attacking the independence movement that was being carried out in the North Caucasus. Following the end of the war, Russia turned all of its forces to the East Caucasus at first and captured Imam Shamil in 6 September 1859 after much effort.[98] On August 25, 1859, Georgian and Armenian forces, fighting against Muridism together with the tsarist Russian armies, defeated the Caucasian highlanders and captured Imam Shamil.[99] The presence of Armenian troops in the Russian armies occupying the Caucasus had caused a very negative perception of Armenians in Circassian memory. Before the Circassians and Armenians were deported to the Ottoman lands, they had come across an unfortunate encounter during these wars in the Caucasus.

During the Crimean War, the Ottoman armies invaded Western Georgia. Following them with the same tolerance, Abkhaz, Ubykh and North Caucasian highlanders kidnapped young and beautiful girls and boys after attacking Western Georgia. During the Crimean War, Georgian-based slave trade reached their peak.[100] Georgians' involvement in the slave trade, who had a significant place among white slave resources, was caused by their local feudal lords as much as the

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[97] Ibid. p. 125-126.

[98] Imam Shamil (1797-1871) was born in Gimri village in Daghestan. He was elected in 1829 as the leader of the resistance organized against the Russian occupation in Caucasia. His resistance against the Russians stood until 1859. Also a Naqshbandi sheikh, Imam Shamil died in Medina in 1871. For Imam Shamil's campaign V. Tahirü'l-Kerakhi, Muhammed. (1987). *İmam Şamil'in Gazavatı.* Haz. Tarık Cemal Kutlu. İstanbul.; Tansu, Samih Nafiz. (1963). *Şeyh Şamil.* İstanbul.; Baddaley, *Rusların Kafkasya'yı İstilası ve Şeyh Şamil*; Gammer, Moshe. (1994). *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar. Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan.* Londra.; Budak, Mustafa. (2010). "Şeyh Şamil". *İslam Ansiklopedisi.* Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları. Vol. 39. p. 67-70.

[99] Iberieli. ibid. p. 31

[100] Ibid. p. 169.

Abazin feudal lords. During the Ottomans' occupation of Western Georgia, some Georgian feudals were cooperating with human-trafficking gangs and slave merchants. They were selling them peasant youth who worked on their own fields. The sale of young and skillful persons as slaves lowered the productivity in agriculture and people lived on the brink of starvation.

2.4. Russian Colonialism and Circassian Slavery

All of East Caucasia, much like the previously-occupied Azerbaijan and Georgia, entered into the domination of Tsarist Russia. From then on, the only obstacle before colonialism was the Caucasus and Abkhazia which were located in the Western Caucasus. Battles continued increasingly in these areas; the resistance of the Abkhaz and Ubykh peoples proceeded for six years until 1864. The Russians did not interfere with the attacks and human abduction practices of Caucasian highlanders living in and around Georgia. The Russian colonists considered all the native Caucasian peoples as potential enemies. For this reason, they planted seeds of hostility among the Caucasian peoples. Thus, Russians easily confiscated the homeland of the Caucasian peoples who were busy fighting each other. The Russians triggered Ossetian nationalism against the Georgians and used the Ossetian gangs to penetrate the country. Ossetian gangs sold the Georgians who they had previously kidnapped as slaves in the Caucasus.[101]

Although the Russians encouraged Circassian slave trade in the Northwest Caucasus, they did not pay much attention to it. The slave trade was thought to have reduced the number of people to fight the Caucasus. In addition, the supply of white slaves was not yet exhausted with the Russian invasion of the Caucasus; the white slave resource itself was driven to the empire.[102] Tsarist Russia watched the loss of the population that could fight against her without explicitly opposing the slavery and slave trade in the Caucasus, and in 1834 launched the "*emanet*" system. Under this system, the feudal Circassian families had their boys entrusted to military

[101] Ibid. p. 136.
[102] Erdem. İbid. p. 79.

schools in Saint Petersburg and the Caucasus.[103] Apparently, the Russians were trying to keep the Circassian feudals from revolting and forcing them to obey Russia.

As the Russian colonization increased, the territory under Russian control ruthlessly expanded. Russia usually constituted this colony by establishing Kazakh villages (Stanitsa). While the occupation of the Caucasus continued, in 1861 the serfdom, which had been a prominent system in Russia, was absolished. The peasants who had been released upon the removal of the serfs were in need of land. The newly liberated peasants needed fertile lands to operate, and these lands were provided by colonization activities in the Caucasus.[104] The Caucasus, a big step in the policy of Tsarist Russia to 'expand to warm seas', gained further significance after the invasion of Crimea in 1798. The Caucasus had to be cleansed from the Circassians and Russified at all costs.

It was stated that the resettlement practices in the North West Caucasus began in 1860 and 14,223 families and 85,000 people were placed in the newly established one hundred and eleven Stanitsa's. In addition, a total of 440,000 people were said to have been resettled from the mouth of the Don River in the north to Abkhazia in the south, from the Kerch Strait to Kuma in the west.[105] Before these resettlement policies, the Russians would fight in wars against the local Circassian tribes, and survivors would take refuge in other tribes. During these wars and exiles, many free-born persons lost their families or were widowed and orphans. Hunger and poverty, as well as the process of enslavement was fast-paced. From the beginning of the 19th century until the Circassian Exile of 1864, tens of thousands of free-born Circassians had to be enslaved and sold to the Ottoman territories as a result of destructive consequences of Russian wars. When Russian forces captured Adyghe, Ubykh and Abkhaz territories along the Black Sea coast between years 1862 and 1863, hundreds of thousands of Muslims in the region were driven to the

[103] Grassi. İbid. p. 61.
[104] Bahiçoğlu. İbid. p. 64-65.
[105] Ibid. p. 65.

Ottoman Empire. The reasons for this mass migration were probably the threat of forced religion change, the Russian persecution, the organized colonization of the region by the Kazakh settlers and the Ottoman propaganda.[106] The Circassians, who were able to survive as a result of the genocide imposed by the Russians, had no choice but to be driven to the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Ottoman rulers, aware of the loss of Circassia, had followed an encouraging policy regarding the forced migration of the surviving Circassians. The process of descent of the Russians to the south, who could not have been stopped in the Caucasus, was tried to be stopped by establishing resettlements in Tuna and Dobruca Provinces.

It was stated in the report written by the Russians about the circumstances under which the Circassian tribes who had been subject to exile were trying to make their voyage that: *"Russian officer Ivan Drozdov tells about the destruction of a group of Circassians trying to reach Sochi: Men, women, children, a group of elderly Circassians, while walking like corpses from hunger and disease, were attacked by dogs and eaten alive."*[107]

Circassians who survived this genocide and exile, but who had lost their families and relatives, struggling with famine and poverty, had to decide between selling as slaves or dying. Leyla Saz used the following statements related to the subject; *"During the great migrations of the Circassians, these losers were so crowded that they sold their children for the lowest prices, because they had difficulty feeding them. Everyone, even middle-income families, could afford to have a few slaves in their homes."*[108]

Circassians who were driven away by Russians from their homeland began to immigrate to Ottoman Empire during the 1850s and this immigration increased

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[106] Avagyan, Arsen. (2004). *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler*. İstanbul. p. 23-36.

[107] Richmond, Walter. (2013). *The Circassian Genocide.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p. 2.

[108] Saz. ibid. p. 54.

in the 1860s. In the year 1864, the Great Circassian Exile occurred. Approximately one and a half million Circassians were forced to immigrate to Ottoman lands.

Grassi expressed the misery of the Circassian refugees who survived the genocide in the following statement:

> *"Many Circassian families who survived the genocide have either sold or attempted to sell their own children as slaves in order to gain or save something. In those years, the Office of Shaykh al-Islam was filled with complaints of those who claimed that they had been sold as slaves in illegal ways."*[109]

The Circassians, who initiated their services to the Ottoman Empire during the 1850s and were now in the rank of 'pasha', would encourage and support tens of thousands of Circassian young soldiers to become gendarmeries or intelligence agents in order to increase their influence around Istanbul and the imperial court. This politics of the Circassian pashas would be applied successfully and the Circassians would find themselves killing, and dying in the forefront of ''for a state of which they did not know the language''.

The integration of the Circassians into the Ottoman society facilitated the inclusion of this new immigrant elite to the society thanks to the historical ties between the imperial court and the Circassians. These historical relations between the Circassians and the imperial court were based on 'slavery'. These white slaves, previously sold by the Circassian lords, were now mobilized for the Circassians who had flocked to the Ottoman lands as a result of the Circassian Exile. Thanks to these relationships established through slaves, the integration of these immigrants was relatively easy. Ze'evi used the following statements about the subject:

> *"Contrary to the unqualified slavery in the Middle East and America, the relationship between the households of the ruling and elite to and the Caucasian slaves, constituted the basis*

[109] Grassi. ibid. p. 133.

for the loyalty and service of these slaves to the state. Therefore, this became a means to preserve and maintain the integrity of the Ottoman ruling class. With the gradual replacement of slave managers with professionally-trained bureaucrats in the 19th century, Circassian slaves' grandchildren, born in the Ottoman Empire, began to build their own homes, and in the recent past mediated between Istanbul and the newcomer Circassians."[110]

The Circassians had come to the Ottoman lands with their slaves, and this caused the Ottoman slave market to find another major source of white slaves. Although the Russians did not actively encourage the Circassian slave trade, they did not try to prevent it. It is also thought that after 1856, the Russians who saw the export of the Circassian slaves as the drainage of Circassia's human power, thus they did not take a negative attitude towards the slave trade.[111]

In response to this attitude of the Russians, the Circassian lords who engaged in slave trade were dissatisfied with the edicts that led to the control of slave export from the Circassians, prepared by allies and Ottoman navy during the Crimean War of 1856. Ahmet Cevdet Pasha attributed the Circassians' indifferent attitude towards the Crimean War of 1856 as both an attempt to restrict slave trade and as a result of the fact that the Circassians sent in order to gather around the Sultan's case were in fact former Circassian slaves who ascended to the pasha positions of Ottoman statesmen.[112] Circassian feudalists did not accept to send these white boys, whom they sold as slaves, to the Caucasus to be successful soldiers in Istanbul. Thus, they did not listen to these Pashas, which were their former slaves. The ambitions of the British Ambassador of Petersburg to regulate the Circassian Exile before the Russian authorities has also yielded little results.[113] Because it was stated in formal

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[110] Ze'evi, Dror. (1996) "Kul and Getting Cooler: The Dissolution of Elite Collective Identity and the Formation of Official Nationalism in the Otttoman Empire", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 11. no.2. p. 177.

[111] Erdem. ibid. p. 79

[112] Ibid. p. 136.

[113] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 127.

documents that the London government approached this situation with a mentality much like, ''Circassia is out of hand, we should protect the Circassians'', the only financial aid received by England was in the form of 'British biscuits'. The biscuit aid was in small quantities and the delivery expenses were provided by the Sublime Porte. Nevertheless, it was accepted with gratitude by the Ottoman government which was struggling in the face of a refugee flow that reached millions.[114]

Since the late 1840s, the British governments used means of oppression to persuade the Sublime Porte in order to take measures to restrict slave trade in the country. Although the Ottomans allowed some of these prints by the British in the mid-1850s. A comprehensive action plan was not applied until 1847, when imperial an edict was issued which prohibited African slave trade throughout the country except for the Hejaz region. Britain and the Ottoman Empire signed a statement on the suppression of African slave trade in 1880. The Ottoman government also signed the Brussels Treaty against the African slave trade in 1890.[115] Thus, the Ottoman administration had connected itself to the international treaties on the issue of black slave trade, and has become a part of this international discussion.

The British had been trying to implement a policy to eliminate global slave trade, rather than the slavery institution that existed in various forms around the world. For this purpose, they were trying to put pressure on the Ottoman government to provide the British navy with a bilateral agreement granting them the right to search and seize the slave trade. The Ottoman rulers, as a result of the British diplomatic initiatives and pressures, took measures against the slave trade, which operated within the borders of the empire. The main precautions are as follows: the prevention of slave trade in the Persian Gulf in 1847, the prevention of white slave trade practiced in the Black Sea region, Georgia and Circassia coasts in

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[114] For details, see V. Çiçek, Nazan. (2009). "Talihsiz Çerkeslere İngiliz Peksimeti: İngiliz Arşiv Belgelerinde Büyük Çerkes Göçü (February 1864-May 1865)". *Ankara University, Journal of the Department of Political Science.* 64/1. p. 57-88. On the issues reflected in official documents about the interest of the English in the Circassian refugees V. Şaşmaz, Musa. "Immigration and Settlement of Circassians in the Otoman Empire on British Documents 1857-1864". *OTAM.* (9). p. 331-366.

[115] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 8-9.

1854, the prohibition of black slave trade practiced in Girit and Yanya, prohibition of African-based black slave traide in 1857 and the signature of the slave trade agreement between England and Ottoman in 1880.[116]

Since the 1850s, the British had used slave trade as a means to interfere into the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. For this purpose, they pressured the Ottoman Empire to reduce slave trade and then free the slaves. The Ottoman statesmen during the Tanzimat period fended off this British oppression by abolishing the African slave trade. Thus, they dealt with all foreign initiatives aimed at interfering with the imperial harem system provided by the Caucasus and the Circassian slave trade. Nevertheless, the same reformers used legislation, courts, and law enforcement agencies to alleviate the conditions of slavery and tried to control the power of the slave owners over their slaves. The contradiction in the movements of these reformist statesmen was due to their role as the head of the house, their relations with slavery and above all, the fact that they owned slaves in the first degree.[117] It should also be kept in mind that these people benefitted from the services of these slaves in their homes and often chose their wives among them, and this might have had an effect on their protecting and maintaining Circassian slavery against all kinds of foreign oppression of the ruling class of the Ottomans. This will make it easier to better understand the dilemma of the Ottoman ruling class.

The confidentiality of the institution, which intervened with the Islamic domestic life, reveals the stern religious opposition to the initiatives to suppress slave trade. Nevertheless, the Ottoman rulers who acted outside of the knowledge of foreign representatives and on their own initiative put into practice significant reforms that gradually removed Circassian slavery and slave trade. The Ottoman government did not leave an area of intervention in this regard for the British who wanted to move their initiatives on the issue of preventing African slave trade to

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[116] Erdem. ibid. p. 91.

[117] Toledano, Ehud R. (2010). *Suskun ve Yokmuşçasına İslam Ortadoğusu'nda Kölelik Bağları.* İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press. p. 101.

the field of white slave trade.[118] The English were deprived of the active partnership given to them in the suppression of African slave trade, when it came to Circassian and Georgian slavery. The white slave trade based in the Caucasus was regarded as a very difficult problem that the Ottoman rulers felt they had to solve on their own. Over the course of time, the steps taken by Ottoman statesmen in this area led to the gradual delimitation and weakening of white slavery and white slave trade within the imperial borders.[119]

The war prisoners captured during the Crimean War of 1856 were not enslaved. However, the Circassians did not pay much attention to the warnings of the Ottomans on the issue of the enslavement of Russian and Kazakh soldiers. The Ottoman Empire completely forbade the sale of Georgian Christian slaves and the enslavement of the Georgians in this period in order not to lose the support of Britain and France which they allied during the war. The Ottoman rulers, who did not prohibit Circassian slave trade, also refrained from encouraging the slave trade of Circassians who were in Ottoman status.[120]

It was stated that the Circassians would cross the Russian border and take animals and captives in times of difficulty as the war progressed. It was expressed that they treated them well, did not beat them, and fed them properly since Circassians did have a tradition of killing their slaves. According to the information sent to the Ottoman state, it was stated that it was not a shame to plunder according to the Circassians and that success in this matter was perceived as valor. Moreover, when a person was attacked by pillagers, he was untouchable once he stated the name of his tribe. If they did not obey the tribal law, but took away the goods and slaughtered the person anyways, the tribe, to whom that person belonged, could claim nine times the plundered goods from the pillagers, based on tribal law. If the pillagers were not able to give the ninefold of the cost they had received, then they enslaved one of them and sold it as "shame money" (*ayıplık parası*).[121] Although it

[118] Ibid. p. 9.
[119] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 11.
[120] Erdem. ibid. p. 132.
[121] Gökçe. ibid. p. 49.

is mentioned in many sources that the Circassians "plundered" and in this way obtained captives from the Russians, an important point has been missed here. The Russians occupied the Circassian lands and built colonies (stanitsa) around them; Circassia had been occupied in fragments for more than a hundred years. The attack on the Russian settlements of the Circassians was called 'plunder'. For the Circassians, however, this was a movement to defend their homeland and to prevent further spread of the Russian and Kazakh colonies by hit and run attacks. The fact that officials of the Ottoman Empire also referred to these attacks as 'plunder' and failed to see that this was a tactic used to protect their homeland is a matter which should be further discussed.

Similar to the Circassians, Abkhazians were also accused of 'pillaging' and obtaining Russian prisoners. As a result of increasing Russian pressures in 1830, the feudal lord of Tsabal, Marshania decided to reluctantly make alliance with Russia. In a letter written by Baron Von Rosen, the Georgian military commander, to Marshania on December 27, 1834: *"Russia was asked to release the civilian and military Russian citizens which they kept captive in order to bring Marshania under their yoke, and end the attacks on the Abkhazeti and Samurzakano regions and to abolish the slave trade that Russia had forbidden.".*[122] Apparently, before and during the Crimean War, a large number of Russian and Kazakh captives were enslaved and included in the slave trade through the plunder of the Circassians and Abkhazians. These war prisoners, called, *Wune'ut*, would be sold as 'Circassian slaves' in slave markets.

In addition, the refugees included in the Ottoman army during the Crimean War were paid a salary in line with their rank and service. Apparently, military service was the easiest area of employment for those who were amongst the warrior tribes. The military structure of the Ottoman State and the lives of the refugees in their homeland for many years under the conditions of war had an effect on this situation. Thus, Crimeans, Circassians, Nogais and Daghestanis participated in the Ottoman army. At the end of the war, the unemployed children who came to

[122] Iberieli. ibid. p. 150.

Istanbul were placed in industrial institutions and in the army to prevent them from starvation. In the case of girls and boys who were not suitable for military service, they were given as foster child in accordance with the Sharia Law. Some of the girls were married to immigrants or the men from Istanbul.[123] Apparently, before the Circassian Exile of 1864, the Ottoman officers had already met with Circassian refugees and began to employ them as spouses and nations in the army.

In addition to the Circassians and Abkhazians; Georgians, who had a significant place among white slaves, continued to provide slaves to the slave trade. Despite the efforts of the Russians to prevent all slave trade in the mid-19th century, Georgian feudal lords who fought among themselves sold the people they had kidnapped to Ottoman slave traders.[124] The demand of these feudals for luxury goods was provided by Ottoman merchants. The ships departing from Trabzon came to the ports of Georgia and exchanged luxury goods for feudal lords, young slave girls and boys.[125] It was also expressed that the Georgian feudals carried a certain part of this trade with the Abazin federals. In addition, Hasan Marghania, one of Abkhazian feudals, took Georgian children who had been kidnapped from their villages and then sold them to Ottoman slave traders.[126] When the British and French navies entered the Black Sea in order to help the weakened Ottoman navy fight against the Russians, the end of the Russians' maritime superiority was ensured. This has led to the removal of a major obstacle in front of the slave trade in the Black Sea. Thus, the Circassian and Ottoman slave traders decided to make the most of the present situation, and this has led to a significant increase in slave trade.[127]

British Ambassador Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, in 1854, demanded the Ottoman rulers to abolish the slave trade originating from Georgia and from Circassia in the Ottoman territory. The British Ambassador claimed that the

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[123] Saydam. ibid. p. 174.
[124] Iberieli. ibid. p. 167.
[125] Ibid. p. 17.
[126] Ibid. p. 148.
[127] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 98.

enslavement of the Christian Georgians constituted an insult to the Sultan's Christian allies, while enslavement of Muslim Circassians was not legitimate in terms of Islam.[128] The Ottoman statesmen, on the other hand, did not want any interference especially in the Circassian slave trade. Rashid Pasha said to the British embassy dragoman that it was not a bad policy to allow the importation of slaves, and the population of the country had been increasing which was disadvantageous for Russia.'[129] Apparently, the slave entry in the country was so dense that the state was trying to get rid of the British pressure by saying that these slaves had increased the Ottoman population against the Russians.

Following the discussion of this matter on September 18, 1854 in Meclis-i Vükela, Grand Vizier Cypriot Mehmet Emin Pasha presented a report to the Sultan. The Grand Vizier, in this report, stated that the Georgians had neither been enslaved nor imported to the Empire for a long time. He emphasized that most of the Georgians who had fallen into the captive markets were kidnapped and stolen into the Ottoman territory by illegal means. The Grand Vizier Mehmet Emin Pasha stated that the government had not allowed the Georgian slave trade anyway and that it was trying to get rid of this trade which had been carried out underhand. The Grand Vizier, who shared these views on Christian Georgian slave trade, also mentioned that when it came to Muslim Circassians, they could not be enslaved because they were Muslims, and that the tradition of selling relatives, which was a strange tradition among Circassians, made it difficult.[130] Unlike the popular belief, 'the sale of relatives' expressed in many sources, does not seem to be a living custom among the Circassians. This situation, expressed as the 'selling of relatives', was not a Circassian in any way apart from some exceptions. The Ottoman officials thought that these Wune'ut slaves were relatives of their owners, probably because they were registered with the family names of their owners. However, these slaves did not in any way have a family name and could not use the names of their owners. The fact that the Circassians who were starving and miserable at the end of the war

[128] Erdem. ibid. p. 132.
[129] Ibid. p.137
[130] Ibid. p. 132.

were sold by their relatives does not mean that it was a tradition. However, it is thought that the existence of a slave class among the Circassians and the ambiguity of the relation of belonging to these slaves to their owners caused the Ottoman officials to perceive it as selling Circassian children or relatives.

Georgians, like Circassians and Abkhazians, would also sell their families to slave merchants, in the event of poverty and epidemics. In the years 1811-1812, in West Georgia, there was a plague of famine and famine, and families had to sell their own sons for a piece of bread. Due to plague, starvation and slave trade carried out by Ottoman slave traders, the population of Georgia fell by half.[131] Immigration of migrants in misery and being in need of a slice of bread were exploited by some civil servants;

> *''Some people who benefited from this ancient tradition of selling children among the Circassians bought concubines for very low prices. For example, Burah Bey, a Circassian from Burdur, filed charges against Qaimaqam Rashid Efendi, who had forcibly kept her daughter with two of his daughters. When Rustem the Circassian opposed Muhsin Efendi, the seal of Muhlis Pasha, the Governor of Trabzon, to whom he reported that twenty-four of his slaves and concubines were confiscated, the slaves and concubines claimed to be free-born as a result of the provocation of Muhsin Efendi''.*[132]

The Muslim and Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire had to sell their children in times of poverty and famine. However, this method was not widely applied before Circassian Exile.[133] Apparently, the Circassians were pushed into such great poverty and misery that they had no choice but to sell their last slaves. It was often difficult to understand whether the slaves they had sold were their free-

[131] Iberieli. ibid. p. 121.
[132] Saydam. ibid. p. 191.
[133] Erdem. ibid. p. 69.

born children or the children of their slaves since Circassians had a serious language problem with the local people.

As a result of the meetings held in Meclis-i Vükela, two orders were sent to Mustafa Pasha in Batum. In the first of these edicts prepared by Meclis-i Vükela and approved by Sultan Abdulmejid, the enslavement and sale of the Georgians were completely forbidden. The second edict wanted Mustafa Pasha to warn the Circassians that selling children and relatives was an inhumane practice. This edict ordered that the necessary precautions be taken in the ports from which the Circassian slaves were removed from the Caucasus. The provisions of this decree was ordered to be made public in the Caucasus. The Ottoman rulers thought that this would prevent the export of Georgian and Circassian slaves from the Caucasus.[134]

However, it was impossible to solve this problem in Circassia by mere suggestions. Circassia was the country of people who had fought against Russian expansionism for approximately two hundred years, consisted of tribes and clans that rejected the authority of a singular government and willingly practiced slave trade. Hundreds of thousands of widowed women and orphan children had an immense effect on the increase in Circassian slave trade in the 19th century. Even though Circassians were subject to Sharia Law since they were a Muslim society; it is known that the determinative set of rules in Circassian social life was not Sharia, but Xabze. Circassians acted according to their pre-Islamic set of traditions called *habze* when dealing with most situations.[135]

The Circassians needed serious amounts of money to sustain the struggles that they had against the Russians. It was almost impossible for them not to sell their slaves in order to get this money. Human trafficking, one of the greatest export items of the Caucasus for centuries, continued in the eras of war and peace. The measures taken by the Ottoman Empire to prevent Georgian slave trade did not take place at the point of Circassian slavery. According to the edict sent to Mustafa

[134] Ibid. p. 132.
[135] Ibid. p. 135.

Pasha, the purchase and sale of Circassian slaves were not prohibited, only the recommendations were made. Apparently, the state was willing to continue importing slaves from Circassia and keeping the slavery institution alive. In the instructions given by the Ottoman administration to the Divan-i Hümayun interpreter in order to report to the French and British embassies, it was stated that the enslavement of Georgian women and children had never been approved by the Ottoman Empire. The Circassian slaves were never mentioned, while the Georgians brought to the Ottoman Empire as slaves would be freed and returned to their families.[136]

The edicts of 1854 contain political differences regarding the Georgian and Circassian slave trade. As a result, the Georgian slave trade was almost ending in the Ottoman Empire in the form of single-person kidnapping. Circassian slave trade took a different shape in the result of the imperial edicts of 1854. Because the Circassians were at different levels of continuing this trade, from slaves to slave traders and slave-bearers, and they did not see any obstacles in keeping this tradition alive. On the contrary, it can be said that French, British and Ottoman navies were disturbed by the edicts leading to the control of slave exports from Circassia. Historian Ahmed Cevdet Pasha links the Circassians' indifference to the Crimean War to these initiatives. Additionally, he stated that the Ottoman Pashas sent from Istanbul to Circassia were former Circassian slaves and thus despised by the Circassians.[137]

Despite the fact that the Ottoman government issued edicts, they were not ready to deprive the country of the Circassian slaves just yet. The wishes of the Circassians to sell slaves also coincided with the demand of the market. The reports presented to the British Foreign Ministry stated that the Ottoman rulers had shown no willingness to put these edicts into effect. It had been reported that the Governor of Trabzon, upon seeing passengers of two ships who told him that they were Circassians, did not detain them saying that he could not determine whether or not

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[136] Ibid. p. 135-136.
[137] Ibid. p. 136.

they actually were Circassians.[138] This shows that in spite of the legal regulations, Ottoman administrators did not take any steps to prevent Circassian slave trade; they continued to ignore this work and thus, supported it.

Circassian slave trade increased in the post-war period, with the Russians being removed from the Black Sea for a while and continued unabated until the Circassian Exile in 1864. After the black slave trade was banned in 1857, it can also be stated that the Ottoman administration hoped to get rid of the British pressure on Circassian slavery. The Ottoman rulers saw the Circassian slave trade in a different way. They stressed that Circassian slave trade was not a bad thing and that the population of the Caucasus, which Russia occupied, was rapidly decreasing, while the population of the Ottoman Empire was increasing. In addition to male slaves, most slaves consisted of fertile women. It is thought that this situation was assessed and supported by the Ottoman statesmen who were eager to increase the population of the country as their own demographic results. [139] Thus, the Ottoman government considered Circassian slave trade as an attempt to benefit the country and allowed it to continue.

Moreover, thanks to the slave trade, the Circassians, who lived in the "needy" situation in their country, were given the opportunity to reach "welfare". In response to the British who criticized the Circassian slave trade in human terms, the Ottoman rulers stated that the Circassians reached "from a primitive life to civilization" through slave trade. Hence, the Ottoman statesmen argued that there was no legitimate reason to ban the Circassian slave trade for humanitarian reasons.[140] The validity of these theses put forward by the Ottoman rulers was a matter of debate, and this defensive mechanism gave them time and maneuverability in the face of British oppression. Some sources indicated that 'voluntary slavery' was encountered among the Circassians due to extraordinary circumstances caused by war and famine. In 1840, the eastern provinces of the

[138] Ibid. p. 137.
[139] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 97.
[140] Ibid. p. 140.

Ottoman State suffered famine, some Armenians migrated to Iran, and they sold themselves and their families as slaves when they could not live there.[141] Apparently, extraordinary circumstances such as war, famine, and epidemic disease, the nation has opened the gate of slavery to people without discrimination.

During the years of great immigration from the Crimea and the Caucasus, the Ottoman government had allowed only the orphan children and the slave children to be brought to the capital.[142] According to these activities, orphaned refugees were distributed to Istanbul dwellings and employed. The slave children were one of the easiest groups to integrate into the Ottoman society. In order to get rid of their slave pasts, Istanbul offered them a lot of opportunities, and their slave pasts also provided them with a positive discrimination in their ascension at the state. The Ottoman statesmen could try to tell the British that Circassian trade was not related to the black slave trade, and that they would marry the Circassian female slaves who came to Istanbul with their consent. In time, the British accepted the importance of the Circassian slave in terms of the Ottoman ruling class and avoided interfering with the Circassian trade more.[143]

Britain, who had been struggling for some time, realized that over time it was the only state against the Circassian slave trade. Since the Georgian slave trade was almost completely abandoned, everyone involved in the Circassian slave trade wanted it to continue. The vendor, the buyer and the slave joined in supporting the continuation of the slave trade. Many people were desperate because of the wars, migration and distress. Orphaned children, women, girls and boys were left with little choice except to die or find a slave owner. The British who followed the developments eventually understood that all other sides were satisfied with the Circassian slave trade and that the Circassians were disturbed only by the intervention of the British in the process.[144]

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[141] Erdem. ibid. p.73.
[142] Grassi. ibid. p.91.
[143] Erdem. ibid. p. 145.
[144] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 118.

The Ottomans, at the point of ending their white slavery, resisted British pressure and eventually succeeded. This resistance shows how important Circassian slave trade was for the Ottoman society. This situation also helped Britain realize that there was a limit to their ability to interfere in the Ottoman Empire's internal affairs.[145] Unlike their strategies in Circassia, Russians were opposed to the Georgian slave trade because they did not want to vacate and make a new resettlement policy in Georgia. At the same time, this gave them an opportunity to consolidate and intervene in the authorities in the newly-drawn but still not fully-defined Ottoman-Georgian border. During this period, the Ottoman slave market was compensating for the loss of Georgians with the Circassian slaves coming from the Caucasus.[146]

As a result, Crimean War provided Britain with the opportunity to intervene in the Ottoman slave market, which they had been trying to intervene since 1840. Ottomans, on the other hand, separated England's attempts to interfere with the Caucasia-based white slave trade into two categories as Georgian and Circassian slave trade. The Ottomans, who met the British demand for Georgian slaves, resisted the demands for the Circassian slavery and after a while they ensured that the British stepped back.

2.5. The Effects of the Circassian Genocide and the Circassian Exile of 1864 on Slavery and White Slave Trade

After the surrender of Imam Shamil in 1859, the Circassians were offered two options: being exiled to to the inner regions of Russia or the Ottoman Empire. When the last war in the Kbaada Valley was lost, the majority were forced to seek refuge in the Ottoman Empire in order to prevent dying in the Russian steppes. During the wars with Circassians, Russians gave the people of the occupied places approximately one month to evacuate the valleys and also issued an enactment.

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[145] Ibid. p. 119.
[146] Ibid. p. 120.

Those who did not obey this enactment were declared to be treated as war prisoners.[147]

In order for the Circassians to quickly evacuate the Caucasus, the military forces have used violence in such a way as to make the lives of the Circassians impossible. This policy has been described as follows: "The classic method of forced immigration: burn the houses, fields, cause devastation; leave no chance but fleeing or staying and dying off."[148]

Following the final defeat that took place in the last resistance in Kbaada on May 21, 1864,[149] Russian historian Berje witnessed the miserable state of the hundreds of thousands of Circassians on the coasts of the Black Sea. His words reflect the harsh truth of 1864: ''I shall never forget the overwhelming impression made on me by the mountaineers in Novorossiisk Bay, where about seventeen thousand of them were gathered on the shore. The late, inclement and cold time of year, the almost complete absence of means of subsistence and the epidemic of typhus and smallpox raging among them made their situation desperate. And indeed, whose heart would not be touched on seeing, for example, the already stiff corpse of a young Circassian woman lying in rags on the damp ground under the open sky with two infants, one struggling in his death-throes while the other sought to assuage his hunger at his dead mother's breast? And I saw not a few such scenes."[150] The hardships and struggles that Circassian immigrants had to face on the way is expressed in the report prepared by the Russian Consul of Trabzon at the

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[147] Tuna, Rahmi. (1977). "Çerkeslerin Kafkasya'dan Göçü", *Kafkasya Üzerine Beş Konferans*. İstanbul. p. 95-149, 141.

[148] McCarthy, Justin. (1998). *Ölüm ve Sürgün*. Çev. Bilge Umar. İstanbul: İnkılap Yayınevi. p. 35.

[149] For details on Circassian-Russian Wars V. Kasumov, Ali / Kasumov, Hasan. (1995) *Çerkes Soykırımı, Çerkeslerin XIX. Yüzyıl Kurtuluş Savaşı Tarihi.* Trans by. Orhan Urevelli. Ankara; Esadze, Semen. (1999). *Çerkasya'nın Ruslar Tarafından İşgali, Kafkas-Rus Savaşlarının Son Dönemi*, Trans by. Murat Papşu. Ankara.; Köremezli, İbrahim. (2004). *The Place of the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Circassian War (1830-1864)*. MA Dissertation. Bilkent University. Department of Internal Relations.

[150] Shenfield, Stephen D. (2011). "Çerkesler – Unutulmuş Bir Soykırım mı?". *Sürgün*. May 21, 1864. Ankara. p. 126-127.

time and given to Russian General Katraçef who was one of the generals in charge of the exile:

> *"70.000 Circassians came to Batum to go to Turkey. Approximately seven of these die every day, and 19.000 of 24.7000 people that were brought to Trabzon died. Currently, 180-250 out of 63.900 people are dying every day. Approximately 200 of 110.000 people in the Samsun area are dying. I have received news that out of 4650 people brought to Trabzon, Varna and İstanbul; 40-60 are dying each day."*[151]

It is estimated that some of the Circassians who lived under these awful conditions did not refuse to be sold as slaves and gave their consent.[152] The women who had lost their husbands in the war probably did not resist slavery in the new territories in order to form a new life for themselves and their children and prevent death or being forced to prostitution. After the Circassian Exile of 1864, only a small part of the Circassian slaves migrating to the Ottoman lands were allowed to remain in their homeland. The Circassians who remained in their homelands also accepted to live a life suited to Russian law. The removal of Russia's 'serfage' in the 1860s had a positive effect on the elimination of white slave trade. After these reforms, the feudal lords that acted independently in Georgia and provided the greatest support to the slave trade lost their influence.[153] Most of the Circassian and Abazin feudal lords who practiced slave trade became Ottoman citizens.

According to Civan Çelik, during the forced migration of the Circassians, which began to increase in the 1860s, most of the immigrants were moved by sailing ships. In this complex period, captains initiated their own slave trade by charging one child as the passage money of thirty people. The child that would be given to the captain was chosen by drawing lots. This practice was later banned by the

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[151] Çelik. (2012b). ibid. p. 70.
[152] Karamürsel. ibid. p. 694.
[153] Iberieli. Ibid. p. 172.

Immigrant Committee.[154] In the midst of the tumult that arose in the early years of the Circassian immigration from Caucasia, non-muslims also tried to buy slaves and concubines; with these news arriving at İstanbul, decrees were sent to related regions immediately saying that refugee children and slaves would absolutely not be sold to non-muslims.[155]

Before the Great Exile in 1864, it was among the fields of activity of some of the Circassian lords who engaged in slave trade to kidnap persons, especially children, and sell them as slaves in the Ottoman territories. Although the kidnapping of a man or child never turned into a social tradition, it was one of the slave acquisition routes of the Circassian lords dealing with slave trade. This tradition of abducting and selling persons continued after the Great Exile, among some Circassian lords who dealt with slave trade. Although some lords and their gangs did these kidnappings, Circassians were accused of kidnapping and selling free-born Muslim girls and non-Muslim children by the people of the territories they settled on the Ottoman soil.[156] The archival documents also referred to the non-Muslims who were sold as "Circassian slaves";

> *"It was stated that a young Armenian man named Mikayel was bought by a Circassian named Ishak who settled in Amasya as a Circassian slave in 1856. Later, an Armenian delegate was informed about the situation and the young man was bought from Ishak the Circassian. However, the delegate informed the authorities about the situation and demanded that the money paid to Ishak be returned to him, expressing that a free man was taken captive and sold."*[157]

Apparently, the slave traders managed to enslave and sell a free-born Armenian peasant, thinking that it would make them more money, and this Armenian man could not resist the situation until the it was noticed by everyone. It

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[154] Ibid. p. 74.
[155] Ibid. p. 172.
[156] Erdem. ibid. p. 66.
[157] Tosun. Ibid. p. 68.

is unknown whether this Armenian was enslaved by slave merchants or by Circassian lords. One year after the Circassian Exile of 1864, in the province of Danube, in Dobruca, the words of an Ottoman officer were as follows:

> *''A Bulgarian man in the village of Gorac, who had been fighting with the Circassian immigrants, shouted to the Christians: "Are the fields yours? Your land titles, ha! I do not acknowledge them. You do not have the power to shelter and feed the Circassians? If so, sell your houses, your wives and your children; surrender or go away from here!''*[158]

Apparently, the narrations related to 'plunder' and 'enslavement' of the Circassians had reached the Balkans before the Circassian Exile. Both civil servants and indigenous Christian folk preferred to stay away from them.

Ottoman administrators who thought that the Circassian tradition of selling their children and relatives was a 'bizarre custom'; realized that Circassians, who had two main and strict social classes as 'free-born' and 'slave', were taking advantage of certain legal gaps regarding the slave trade of their children and relatives. Circassian Lords who owned slaves also controlled slave trade. Along with Circassian Lords, this class of slaves were also forced to immigrate to Ottoman Empire. In this exile process, some of the Circassian lords, in their new settlements, had to lose some of the rights over their slaves and caused the slavery system to loosen. However, the extreme misery, famine and epidemics that they experienced during the exile process caused some Circassians to sell their own children to slavery ''with the aim of providing better living conditions for them''.[159]

The refugees suffered horrible poverty and misery. For example;

> *"Except for a few of the immigrants in Samsun, Ladik, the rest is open and naked; One third of those in Mecitözü and Osmancık could*

[158] Engelhardt, Edouard-Philippe. (2010). *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma Hareketleri: Tanzimat*. İstanbul. p. 348.
[159] Ibid. p. 70.

protect themselves, but the rest were hungry and naked. Half of the refugees in the other cities were in this state."[160]

In another example; Circassian lords, who were placed in Sivas on February 1, 1860, wanted to sell the children of their concubines they had in their services and explained this by saying, "This is an application we have been doing since ancient times.".[161] Apparently, the lords wanted to sell their slaves' children as if they were their own as was the tradition in the Caucasus. This situation would be interpreted by officers as Circassians selling their own children, and to whom those children actually belonged would remain a mystery.

Almost at the same time, the wives of upper-class civil servants and pashas in rich districts of Istanbul carried out some sort of slave production and trade. The sale of the children of struggling Circassians was seen as a strange practice. However, this slave production and sale activity, which was carried out in the rich households of Istanbul, was regarded as a regular business line.

"In the past century, raising and educating slave children at a young age in order to market them in the future was not considered to be a shameful profession. I met a Circassian girl who was bought by two sisters with middle income in order to gain profit by selling her in the future. She was a very rare beauty."[162]

In the Circassian slave trade in Ottoman territories, various interlocked factors can be mentioned. The existence of the slave class among Circassians which had a rooted past, Circassian lords losing their authority over their slaves after the exile, the struggling families wanting a better life for themselves and their families, Circassian slaves preferring the Ottoman slave system which was an 'open slave' mechanism over dying in their 'closed slavery' mechanism, and Ottoman administrators' demand for slaves all made it easier for Circassians to sell their

[160] Saydam. ibid. p. 142.
[161] Tosun. ibid. p. 68.
[162] Saz. ibid. p. 57.

children and relatives as slaves.[163] Circassians who had been forced to migrate to Ottoman Empire since the beginning of Crimean War were notorious for abducting Bulgarian, Rum and Tatar girls from Bulgaria. Faced with these kidnappings, the Ottoman Empire brought a one-year prison sentence for those who kidnapped children in 1858, and extended the scope of this sentence with the laws issued in 1860 and 1867.[164] The kidnapping of children and adults was one of the main sources of slavery. Apparently, the Circassian tribes continued their enslavement activities by kidnapping various Christian nations, who rebelled after the exile and applied violence.

> *''Some rival Caucasian tribes kidnapped men from their tribes, mostly small girls and boys, and sold them to the Ottomans. Circassian tribes continued their tradition of kidnapping after their mass migration to the Ottoman Empire in the 1860s.''*[165]

During the Great Exile, thousands of immigrants lost their lives because of epidemics, a lot of families dispersed in this chaos and the number of orphan immigrant children increased. The government wanted to prevent these children from living in poverty and falling to the hands of slave merchants. In order to accomplish this, young girls were given to those who paid 'hujjat' (court verdict paper) and young boys were placed in 'military schools and industry troops'.[166]

2.6. Circassian Exile 1864 - Treaty of Berlin in 1878

Following the winter of 1863-1864, there was a great increase in the number of exiled Circassians. The number of the refugees, which was an estimated 40-50 thousand in the beginning, reached 400 thousand in a very short time span.[167] In the following months, this number increased abnormally and settlements in the

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[163] Ibid. p. 71.
[164] Çelik. (2012b). ibid. p. 49-50.
[165] Erdem. ibid. p. 66.
[166] Şen, Ömer. (2007). *Osmanlı'da Köle Olmak*, İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları. p. 119.
[167] Karpat, Kemal. (1985). *Ottoman Population (1830-1914): Demographic and Social Characteristics*. Madison. Wisconsin. p. 67.

Caucasus that were crowded villages and towns before the exile were now almost entirely evacuated. In the December of 1864, the number of the Circassian refugees exiled to Trabzon alone was more than 100,000.[168] It was obvious that the sparsely populated city of Trabzon would not be enough to shelter all of these people who were brought there in inhumane conditions and caught epidemic diseases. Even though all of the mosques were empty and the vacant houses were not used, the shadows of hazel and olive trees were occupied by refugees. Such a big crowd of people would only be transported between Trabzon and Samsun by sea but Black Sea was not fit for transportation in those months.

It is estimated in the sources that 180.000 people in Trabzon and 150.000 refugees in Samsun went ashore until the July of 1864. However, these numbers do not include the refugees that reached villages and towns by illegal means. In Trabzon and Samsun where Dr. Barozzi served as an inspector, approximately 350.000 immigrants arrived but death rate among the refugees was very high. According to sources, in the first years of the exile only, approximately 35.000 Circassians died because of hunger and misery in the city of Trabzon.[169]

Until the end of October 1864, there was a great disaster in Samsun similar to Trabzon. Deaths were calculated in hundreds of thousands. Sixty thousand of these deaths were in Samsun and forty thousand were in Trabzon. The number of refugees who set foot on the coast of Trabzon between November 1863 and September 1864 was approximately 220 thousand. About 10 thousand of these refugees were sold as slaves.[170] Apparently, misery and deprivation followed the Circassians not only in the Caucasus, but also in the Ottoman harbors after their deportation. After the exile some of them, free-born or not, were sold as slaves in order to create a living for those who survived.

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[168] McCarthy. (1998). ibid. p. 35.

[169] Ibid. p. 153.

[170] Şaşmaz, Musa. "Immigration and Settlement of Circassians in the Ottoman Empire on British Documents 1857-1864", *Ankara University Journal of The Center for Ottoman Studies*, no.9, p. 349.

The Ottoman government usually followed the policy of settling the refugees in a dispersed manner. In the case that the resettlement of the Circassians as a collective was found appropriate from the political and economic point of view, they also allowed collective resettlement. The most common examples are the settlements in Uzunyayla[171] between Sivas and Kayseri and Düzce-Adapazarı.[172]

Devlet-i Ali's relocation policies for Circassians were carried out in the territories seen fit for the continuity of the state. In the period between 1864 and 1877, the number of Circassians relocated in Rumeli only was described as 400.000.[173] According to the information provided by Kemal Karpat, the number of Circassians exiled from the Caucasus since the 1860s were an approximate 1,2 million.[174] Ottoman government was in hurry to strengthen the Muslim population which was diminished as a result of wars and wanted to provide a Muslim majority in the existing territories. The thought that this was the only way to sustain the authority of the government would dominate relocation policies. Circassian refugees in return would be relocated in various regions of the Ottoman geography under this policy.[175]

Among the Circassian refugees, the ones who crossed the Black Sea and reached the ports of Varna and Köstence were immediately transported to inner regions without any delay since the transportation conditions were relatively superior at the time. Because political and military reasons were in the forefront in these relocations, Ottoman government had the tendency to place Circassian refugees in such areas. According to a news that took place in Takvim-i Vekayi; until the end of July 1864, the transportation plans were as follows: the ones who

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[171] Akay, Tolga. (2009). "Kafkasya'dan Uzunyayla Havalisine Göçler ve İskân (1859-1876)". MA Dissertation. Erciyes University. Institute of Social Sciences.; Yel, Selma / Gündüz, Ahmet. (2008). "XIX. Yüzyılda Çarlık Rusyası'nın Çerkesleri Sürgün Etmesi ve Uzunyayla'ya Yerleştirilmeleri (1860–1865)". *Turkish Studies* III/4. (Summer 2008). p. 949-983.

[172] Özlü, Zeynel. (2012). "19.yy Düzce Kazasına Göçler". *Bilig*. (Bahar 2012). Issue:61. p. 201-222.

[173] Akarlı, Engin Deniz. (1970). "Ottoman Population in Europe in the 19th Century; Its Territorial, Racial, and Religious Composition". MA Dissertation. University of Wisconsin-Madison. p. 82.

[174] Karpat. ibid.p. 65-70.

[175] Karamürsel. ibid. p. 695.

reached Varna and Köstence ports and 5-6 thousand of refugees who arrived at Burgas Pier would be transported to Edirne and İslimiye; 12 thousand refugees who arrived at Varna Pier would be transported to Şumnu, Silistre and Vidin regions; the ones who arrived at Köstence port would be sent to Kosova, Vasvik, İştib, Niş, Sofya and Berkofça districts; 7.500 households to Vidin and Lofça and 3.300 Circassian households to Niğbolu and Ziştovi.[176]

Nusret Pasha, who was a relocation officer, reported that refugees that would be brought to Rumeli from then on were planning to be resettled in Niğbolu, Ziştovi, Rusçuk, Silistre, Dobruca and Varna. The number of refugees was estimated to be around 10 thousand households and a population of 50 thousand and houses and winter supplies were provided for these refugees beforehand. Thanks to the efforts of Nusret Pasha who went and handled matters in person in Niş, Sofya, Vidin and Silistre districts; the conditions of refugees in this area were superior compared to Anatolia.[177] Another reason for this situation was the necessity to locate as many Circassians as possible in this region before a possible war that would break out in the Rumelia area. Thus, in addition to increasing the Muslim population in this area, Ottoman army would also make use of Circassian gangs against the attacks of Bulgarian gangs.

One of the reasons Circassians, who were the last nation to collectively convert to Islam in the late 18th century, were prejudiced against Christian minorities in their new settlements was the fact that they saw Russians who attacked their nation as the representative of Christianity. Circassians made up for their

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[176] Ibid. p. 65-70.

[177] Some research papers on the relocations of Circassians in Rumeli: Marc Pinson, "Kırım Savası'ndan Sonra Osmanlılar Tarafından Çerkeslerin Rumeli'ne İskânı", *Çerkeslerin Sürgünü* 21 May 1864 (Rescripts, Documents, Articles), Ankara 2001, p.; Kemal Karpat, "Ottoman Urbanism: The Crimean Emigration to Dobruca and the Founding of Mecidiye, 1856-1878", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* III/1, Cambridge 1984-1985, p. 1-25; Marieta Kumpilova, "Circassian Exodus from the North Caucasus and Their Resettlement in Kosovo", *1864 Kafkas Göçü, Kafkaslarda Rus Kolonizasyonu, Savaş ve Sürgün* (Assertion presented to symposium); Margarita Dobreva, "Settlement and Integration of the Circassians in the Danube Vilayet", *1864 Kafkas Göçü, Kafkaslarda Rus Kolonizasyonu, Savaş ve Sürgün* (Assertion presented to symposium).

defeat by Russians by attacking Bulgarians, Macedonians and Armenians; between the years 1864 and 1878, great disorder occurred in the Rumelia provinces in which Circassians were settled.

Many enactments were issued in Meclis-i Vala in order to prevent some needy Circassians from selling their children. In the enactment that was issued on 3 February 1862, it was stated that Circassians were selling their children and that Georgians did not have this tradition. Therefore, among the Circassian refugees who immigrated to the Ottoman Empire, the slave trade of captives within the ages of fifty and the refugees between the ages of twenty-five and thirty who had children was prohibited. The necessity to prevent Circassian people from selling their children and relatives was also emphasized. Thus, it was decided that captive merchants would be stopped and the enactments would be announced to the relevant provinces.[178] There is no information about whether the children sold were slave children or children of free peasants in this decision taken in Meclis-i Vala. In addition, there are statements that do not reflect the truth, such as the statement that Circassian community prevented the selling of their relatives. It is a great possibility that the Ottoman officers interpreted the slaves sold by their owners as Circassians selling their own relatives since they did not know about Circassian slavery. They went so far as to say that Georgians did not have such a custom but Circassians did. This is also a misunderstanding and it is believed to result from the fact that the people who were sold were thought to be a family member or relative and not a slave.

Supposedly, the slave trade of children was a common practice among the Circassians who were members of the slave class. Young girls who were sold with the permission of the owner and their parents were taken to harems in Istanbul where they thought big opportunities awaited them. In most cases, both sides were satisfied with this agreement.[179]

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[178] Ibid., p. 55.

[179] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 15; Karamürsel. ibid. p. 698.

After the Great Exile; on July 24, 1864, Ottoman government issued a set of regulations indicating how to deal with the slavery among Circassian immigrants and the problems resulting from slave trade. In this letter of instructions, it was mentioned that immigrants who were free but poor sold their children as slaves out of necessity and some people who wished to benefit from this cooperated with the captive merchants and tried to enslave free-born children. It was also stated that selling free men and women as slaves was against Sharia Law and violating ''unfortunate immigrants who trusted in the mercy of the Sultan'' was an inhumane practice. Because of this, the government stated in this document that selling free people as slaves would not be allowed and criminals would be heavily penalized. However, if parents sold their children voluntarily, the trade would be allowed and ownership and tenancy would not be affected even though it was strictly against Sharia Law.[180]

Ottoman government, with this ban proposed in this letter of instructions, aimed to forcefully prevent any encouragement of enslavement or any kind of slave trade. Letters of instructions following the ban showed the route to specify the status of the people who said that they were enslaved by force. In a Sharia court, attempts would be made to find out whether the prosecutor was free or a slave. If the prosecutor failed to bring satisfying proof that showed his freedom but stated that he had relatives in his previous settlement that would testify on his behalf; he would be sent to this place and the investigation would be initiated there once again. In order to prevent false applications, the government then stated in a directive dated to March 30, 1867, that witness testimony regarding personal status would be made in the place of residence of the relatives. This testimony would then be sent to the court via local authorities. This was clearly aimed at helping those who practiced enslavement. [181]

In addition, the fact that hundreds of thousands of Circassian refugees were struggling with misery and poverty attracted attention of some local cunning

[180] Ibid. p. 133.
[181] Ibid. p. 134.

people, and they were involved in the 'white slave' trade. A woman named Emine from Giresun, with a few friends, visited poor refugees who stayed in Üsküdar, and sold these free born Circassian girls as slaves by tricking them in various ways.[182] Apparently, for the local merchants, all Circassians were bought and sold as a commercial commodity, regardless of whether they were free-born or slaves, as the demand for Circassian slaves was still high. Because the local people did not understand the language of the Caucasian slaves, they referred to all of them as 'Circassian' and boasted about having Circassian slaves in their homes, which was in accordance with the fashion of the time.

Even though the unity of slave families was of high importance in old Circassian traditions, the hardships brought by the immigration could cause local rules to degenerate. Families dispersed because many members of slave families were sold to different buyers. Circassian slaves were trying to resist this practice of slave owners and this situation often caused unrest between the two sides. Ottoman government usually sided with the slaves in such situations.[183] The slaves began to escape from their owners because of reasons such as the disintegration of their families and the inappropriate enslaving of free-born Circassians. The state took precautions against these escapes because they were thought to disrupt public order and increase prostitution and theft.

A case of slaves fleeing their owners was experienced in Thessaloniki:

> *"In 1891, female slaves of Iskender Pasha, originally from Thessaloniki and residing in Istanbul, escaped and took refuge in the authorities. In addition, they told the authorities that they had been held captive and requested that they would be given 'ıtıkname' (manumission papers). The governor of Thessaloniki did not know what to do, so he asked for opinion from the Prime Ministry."*[184]

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[182] Tosun. ibid. p. 79.
[183] Ibid. p. 135.
[184] Ibid. p. 79.

In the face of the increasing tendency of slave-master conflicts in the Ottoman territories after the Circassian Exile, the government did not tolerate the slaves' violent reactions or their escape from their owners. Slaves and concubines who had escaped in this way were caught and delivered to their masters again.[185] Apparently, the politics of the Ottoman Empire related to 'white slaves' and 'Circassian slavery' were not clear. While trying to satisfy the white slave owners, the state was also trying to prepare an atmosphere for peaceful means to attain the freedoms of white slaves. While these activities were being carried out, the Circassians, who had been addressed by the state, were left unpressured as much as possible, and the slaves were not allowed to disrupt public order by acting on their own initiative. In short, the Ottoman state was trying to carry out a difficult policy which would abolish the enslavement of free-born Muslims, liberate the white slaves but do all of these without disrupting public order. The state peacefully extended the 'white slaves' and the 'Circassian slavery' over time, hoping that it would resolve itself spontaneously.

The fact that Circassian tribes who had been exiled to the Ottoman Empire as refugees refused to abandon their unique customs caused serious problems. When the tribes came to the Ottoman State they did not abandon their old customs but continued their lives by not recognizing the laws of the state, operating their own old legal systems and following the orders of their own lords. The Circassian lords would receive the daily wages of their slaves and other free-born refugees, and left them a very low amount. In particular, the slaves did not benefit from the land distributed by the state, but their title deeds were organized in the name of their lords. Thus, the slaves were at the mercy of their lords and were unable to escape from hunger and misery. Under these difficult circumstances, the slaves could not escape their owners and most of them lost their lives in the face of hunger and lack of clothing.[186]

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[185] Saydam. ibid. p. 198.
[186] Ibid. p. 140-141.

While the state was dealing with the problems between the Circassian lords and their slaves, Slavic nationalism, which was increasing in the Balkans, began to threaten the future of the state. As a result of the Ottoman resettlement policy, the Bulgarian gangs, which the Ottoman armies could not tackle, eventually came across with disorganized Circassian gangs and bandits who conducted effective armed conflict just like them. It is a paradoxical situation, but the Circassians shared the fate of playing the similar role of the Russian Kazakhs in the Caucasus for the Ottoman State in the Balkans.[187]

Even though the Ottoman government was aware of the situation, they would prefer to encourage the Circassians who managed to defeat these Bulgarian rebels instead of stopping them. 400.000 Circassians who arrived at Varna and Burgaz ports in 1864,[188] would be sent to Bulgarian villages and towns because of the insufficient precautions of the Immigrant Committee. Even though villages were eventually established for Circassians in that area, Circassians would continue this plunder and outburst for fourteen more years until they were removed from the region with the Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

Circassians were aware of the fact that they were in the religious ''refugee'' status and they would make use of this tolerance of the government to its full degree. Following Circassians' relocation in Rumelia,[189] Sublime Porte would breathe a sigh of relief and Bulgarian riots would be repressed by these gangs without growing further. The government would not hesitate to use Circassian gangs, which it both condemned and supported, against Bulgarians as a military and economic source of pressure. Sublime Porte would not take warnings that said Circassians should be restrained and penalized seriously. Sublime Porte would often penalize Circassian gangs only for show; gang leaders would be imprisoned but they would be released shortly after and sent to other problematic Rumeli regions. Sublime

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[187] Kumpilova, Marieta. (2014). *Circassian Exodus from the North Caucasus and their Resettlement in Kosovo*. p. 421.

[188] Karpat. ibid. p. 67.

[189] Yılmaz, Özgür. (2014). "1864 Kafkas Göçü Hakkında Bir Rapor". *Mavi Atlas*. (3/2014). p. 140-144.

Porte's communication and mobilization between the relocated Circassians in Rumelia would be provided via high-rank army officers. Some of the Circassians who immigrated to Ottoman Empire since 1850s had been gradually rising to high ranks in military. This paved the way for the big crowd who had entered Ottoman territories to be employed especially in the military. The Circassian pashas and military officers of the time encouraged many Circassians to join the army in order to increase their dominance in the military.

It was exactly in this time period that Circassian slaves and concubines met the imperial harem. In the 1850s, fifty years before the Ottoman army and bureaucracy was occupied with Circassians, ''Circassians had captured the fortress from the inside'', a Circassian hegemony was established in the Ottoman harem.[190] Circassians' dominance in the imperial harem began in the reign of Sultan Abdulmejid and Sultan Abdulaziz and peeked in the reign of Abdul Hamid. Circassians used their power in the imperial harem so effectively that they became a serious part of military, security intelligence and bureaucracy in less than fifty years.

Administrators in the Ottoman Empire gave Circassians freedom of action and prevented interference with the matter when it came to Circassian slavery. The arrival of many slaves and their owners to the empire with the Great Exile of 1864 caused Ottoman administrators to follow different policies regarding Circassian slave trade. Reforms in Circassian slavery and slave trade resulted entirely from the attempts made by the Ottoman government. In the last quarter of the 19th century, Ottoman governments carefully and gradually lowered the agricultural slavery among Circassian immigrants to de facto status.[191] The state would come up with new methods of problem-solving as it tried to solve the problems of the Circassian refugees who continued their lives in the context of 'tribal culture'. At this point, the goal of the Ottoman resettlement policy was to solve the Circassian tribal culture

[190] Hasan Amca. "Çerkez Kızları Saraydan Niçin Çıkarılmıştır?". *Yeni Tarih Dünyası.* no.1. p. 24-25

[191] Erdem. ibid. p. 145-146.

with the pressures of the centralized administration. The fact that different tribes did not break off their ties but even strengthened them despite the geographical distance is the most important indicators of the sociocultural resistance of the diaspora.[192]

Despite precautions, the government failed to prevent the conflicts emerging among Circassian slaves and their lords who had migrated to Ottoman territories. In 1865, Circassian lords and slaves in Mandıra Village near Tekfurdağı, at which 400 refugee families had been relocated, had conflicts which then turned into a dispute. Upon this situation, government officials interfered with this and maintained order in the village. As a result, Meclis-i Vükela was gathered on March 11, 1867 in order to find a solution for the Circassian refugees who were members of the slave class who refused their slave status.[193] Meclis-i Vükela investigated the case in detail and tried to solve the problem of the freeing of more than 150.000 Circassian slaves in the scope of Sharia Law. Meclis-i Vükela, put forward the *'mukatebe'* system which was a contractual enfranchising system in which the owner would be paid a certain amount of money in return for the release of his slave. Also, Circassian lords were to be given public property as compensation. The price of the slaves would be balanced in the pieces of land and public property would be given as the price of liberation of the slaves. Thus, uncultivated land would be opened for cultivation, refugees would lead an orderly life and the disputes between lords and slaves would come to an end. *Mutakebe* system, which was a contract based on free will, required the approval of both sides. Upon grand vizier's report regarding the subject, these decisions made in Meclis-i Vükela were approved by Sultan Abdulaziz on 1st of May 1867.[194] In the following process, Ottoman governments sustained a policy that encouraged the liberation of Circassian slaves through the *mutakebe* system.

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[192] Sunata. ibid. p. 45.

[193] Ibid. p. 150; see also Karamürsel. ibid. p. 700-701, 710-711, 713-714.

[194] Ibid. p. 151; see also Karamürsel. ibid. p. 706, 712.

Ottoman government tried to give adult male Circassian immigrants their freedom and the alleged reason for this was to provide sources for the army. Because only free people could serve in the military, its labor force naturally diminished. In other words, the government, while helping these slaves to gain their freedom, might have acted upon the motive to make them fit for the military.[195]

When the white slaves entered military service, they automatically gained their freedom. For the slaves, going to the military was the first step towards liberation, of course, for those returning from the military without dying. One way for a slave to enter military service was to be sent as a 'substitute' for a free-born soldier.[196] This led some slave owners to send their slaves to military service instead of themselves or their children.

> *''During the reign of Abdul Hamid II, Meclis-i Vükela presented a plan that would allow the Circassian field slaves to join the army with the consent of their owners. If the owner accepted the recommendation, the slave would be released, the slave owner would be compensated by his previously tendered lands.''*[197]

Apparently, along with the slave-based Circassian soldiers involved in the state mechanism, the state made these people feel as if they were privileged individuals. The slaves were not only liberated by military service, but were also bound by an infinite loyalty and devotion to the state which presented it to them. The state would go on to rebellious minorities by using Circassian slaves in the army, private gendarmerie units and intelligence agencies, thus ensuring their allegiance. The state would also allow these Circassians to wear their local clothes and make those clothes useful as the 'national' outfit of the Hamidiye Regiments. The most significant point about the slave or free-born Circassians employed in the army was that many military associations were made up of members of the same family line and acted under the command of the elders of the dynasty. It is also

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[195] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 150-151.
[196] Erdem. ibid. p. 89.
[197] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 102.

claimed that Abdul Hamid II was a very important actor in the elevation of the traditional 'warrior' Circassians to the highest ranks of the state.[198]

One of the most important tasks of the Ottoman government was to protect public order. Ottoman administrators were obligated to limit possible sources of dispute that threatened public order, soothe any disturbances and restore the order. The disputes between Circassian slaves and their owners openly threatened public order. The desire to put an end to this gradually increasing tension is considered as the main driving force behind Circassian slavery and slave trade policies.[199] Ottoman government tried to produce solutions for social disputes with *mukatebe* which was regarded as the middle way.

A dispute between Circassian lords and their slaves in a town in Çorlu in 1874 was reported. After the military forces had stepped into the situation, Circassian lords had to accept the *mukatebe* suggestion put forward by the government. Accordingly; the slaves would be liberated without any payment and slave owners would take all of the land that they previously shared with their slaves as compensation. As for the liberated Circassian slaves, they would be assigned to neighbor Turkish villages and other public properties would be granted to them. the slaves would leave the village taking their wives, children, cattle and household goods.[200] The government used the *mukatebe* system, which it had been suggesting, for the last time with this military interference and this did not occur out of force. Also, it is thought that the gradual assimilation and integration of these families into the Ottoman society were intended with the slave families being dispersed to Turkish villages by means of locating one family to each village.

The numbers of the Circassian refugees reached one and a half million. While the state was trying to cope with their problems related to resettlement, public order and slaves, it was also trying to place this population in strategic areas for the

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[198] Gingeras, Ryan. (2014). *Dertli Sahiller Şiddet, Etnisite ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Sonu, 1912-1923.* İstanbul. p. 44.
[199] Ibid. p. 152.
[200] Erdem. ibid. p. 152.

future of the state. At a time when increasing Slavic nationalism threatened Muslim villages in the Balkans, it was thought that Circassian refugees could be placed in particular in Rumelia. Thus, the situation of the Muslim population in the Balkans against the Christians would be strengthened. In addition, a line of defense against a possible Russian attack in the future in the south of the Danube River, especially in the province of Dobruja was planned. Indeed, it seems that Britain had also inspired the idea to utilize the immigrants to increase the defense power of the empire against the Russians. British statesmen who wanted to prevent Russia from descending into the southern warm waters wanted new 'warrior' elements to strengthen Ottoman Empire against her enemies.[201] The fact that these 'warrior' refugees could pose a threat to indigenous Christians in the Balkans was not taken into consideration; the primary threat for Britain and the Ottomans was to prevent Tsarist Russia from descending further south, at any cost.

In the eyes of the Circassians, the Bulgarians were seen as 'semi-Russians' because of the similarity between their languages and the fact that they were both Orthodox Christians. The situation was like a bomb ready to explode at any moment. Circassian refugees were scattered in misery and poverty in the Balkans, which made the Bulgarians very nervous. The demand for revenge by the displaced refugees was spreading in Bulgaria. In countless villages around Plovdiv, where a number of Bulgarian activists attempted to rebel, the people were killed without regard to age and gender, and the rebellion was suppressed in a bloody manner. Fifteen to twenty thousand Christians were victimized in this brutal suppression by Circassian savagery.[202] The state was trying to reflect these conflicts to the western world as a series of miscellaneous events between two different ethnic groups. Very few of the Circassian gangs and gendarmerie units that bloodily repressed the Bulgarian uprisings were sentenced to ineffective punishments, which encouraged gangs and groups called 'bashibazouk', *(Turkish başıbozuk, literally "damaged head")*. Complaints flooded Istanbul saying that some Bulgarian and Serbian

[201] Bahiçoğlu. ibid. p. 104.
[202] Engelhardt. ibid. p. 367.

children and girls obtained from pillages during the Bulgarian uprising were included and enslaved in the Circassian villages as "captives".[203] The government often chose to ignore them, allowing the rebellious Bulgarians to be punished in this way. The Bulgarian revolts gave the Circassian gangs and 'bashibazouk' groups an advantage. The criminal organizations that provided this, tried to attack all the Bulgarian peasants, rebellious or not, and oppress them. Wherever we have conducted oral history studies, we have been told that the Bulgarian slaves whom the Circassians had slaved in their 15-year period in Bulgaria were later sold as 'Circassian slaves'. Apparently, the slave supply which was provided by Russians and Kazakhs in the pre-exile period before 1864, was now being fulfilled especially by rebellious Bulgarians in the Balkans for a certain period of time. The state had allowed this enslavement.

As a result of the oral history data obtained in relation to this chapter, the fact that there is a side of Circassian slavery nourished by the revolts of minorities leads to the idea that it was a factor in not banning Circassian slave trade until later. The fact that Circassian slavery was provided partly by minority revolts caused the state not to ban Circassian slave trade until later. The revolting minorities, the Bulgarians in the west, and the Armenian revolts that would later emerge, ended with stories of humans abducted and enslaved by the Circassian gangs that had suppressed these rebellions, thus acquiring new identities. 'White slavery' continued to be fed with human resources acquired from groups that were not Circassian but sold as Circassians, which, after the deportation of 1864, dissolved and melted into this system. It was stated that these minorities, who were enslaved and 'Circassianized' for the sake of survival, chose to stay alive as Circassians over remanining Bulgarian or Armenian and thus being murdered. Apparently, the 'white slaves' and 'Circassian slavery' also contained an implicit mechanism that was used to 'deal with' minorities. These minorities, which were sold as 'Circassian slaves' and cherished in the places they entered for being 'Circassian', no longer posed a

[203] Adanır, Fikret – Özel, Oktay (eds.). (2015). *1915: Siyaset, Tehcir, Soykırım*. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları. p. 35.

threat to the state by first becoming Circassianized and then Islamized in their new household.

We can interpret this complex government policy of 'white slaves' and 'Circassian slavery' as a desire to turn a foreign order into itself or to dissolve it completely. The state had made white slaves, which are no strangers, part of a deep politics through Circassian slavery, allowing them to live according to its policies for another fifty years. In addition, while the state used Circassian slavery to subdue the rebel minorities, it is possible that it acted on the desire to undermine the authority of the Circassian lords, whose wealth and power depended on their hereditary slaves.[204]

2.7. Treaty of Berlin (1878) - Second Constitutional Era (1908)

Between 1864 and 1878, the state established closer relations with the Circassians since they became citizens; from the problems of resettlement, to the minority rebellions and to the slave-master conflicts, the state was now in direct contact with the Circassians in all matters. In addition to being known as a nation loyal to the state, the Circassians, who were also notable for their warrior characteristics but who did not speak a word of Turkish, were given the duty of being 'gendarmeries' of a state that was being demolished. Circassians did not have another choice, they accepted this duty by free will because Ottoman Empire getting its old strength would open the return path to Caucasia. This opportunity found them only 13 years after the Exile of 1864. Imperial Russia had reached the Caucasus Mountains in the east and Danube River in the west by 1877. Following the policy of protecting the rights of the Slavic peoples in the Balkans, Russia openly declared war against Ottoman Empire on April 24, 1877.[205] The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 symbolized such a sacred mission for Circassians. The Circassians who wished to take revenge for their families and relatives volunteered to join the army especially on Balkan and Caucasus fronts.

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[204] Erdem. ibid. p. 153.

[205] Uçarol, Rıfat. (1995). *Siyasi Tarih (1789–1994)*, İstanbul: Filiz Yayınevi. p. 329.

The Circassians, of course, were not a monolithic group. The main problem between the tribes arose from class matters rather than from language or ethnic distinctions. The main fault line dividing the Ottoman Circassians was the question of class among the free groups and of slavery. The urban Circassian elites were primarily equal, perhaps more privileged than others, in the capital and other centers of the Ottoman Empire. They went to the school together with the non-Circassians and, like the other elites, shared the same sense of loyalty or unfaithfulness to the Ottoman state. Additionally, there were Circassians, mostly free peasants, who were stationed in rural areas, especially in troubled areas between minorities. Whether they lived in the town or in the village, these 'disreputable' Circassians made good soldiers for gangs, the military or the gendarmerie, and the Ottoman intelligence. It is this section of the socio-economic range that fed the most common negative perceptions associated with the Circassian diaspora.[206]

The redistribution of land in the course of the Circassians' resettlement in the Ottoman territory was a particularly sensitive matter. Because the borders and rights began to be discussed between the different ethnic groups in the country once again. Above all, the Circassian immigrants, especially those who were driven to the countryside, increasingly became synonymous with banditry, theft and violence. Reports by local Ottoman officials were constantly referring to the widespread militia activities of rural Circassians. All the villages would be involved in establishing, supporting and using the gangs which were hired to rob the wealthy merchants, steal their property or commit murder.[207] This problematic post-resettlement period, which would eventually lead to the expression of 'May god save you from the Circassian and the Abkhazian!' in the Ottoman society, was also stated as the survival struggle of Circassian refugees. We have witnessed in the oral history interviews conducted in many different villages that, even the Afshars, who had kept the Ottoman state in turmoil, said the following words about the Circassians: ''They eat millet, they wear leather; eyes of blue, face of yellow; For

[206] Gingeras. ibid. p 49.
[207] Ibid. p. 47.

goodness sake my Sultan, shove them to where they came from...''[208] The state must have interpreted these complaints coming from Afshars as success in resettlement policies because it is stated that even more Circassians were resettled in this area after these complaints. The Circassians, who had been expelled from their homeland and relatives, felt a desire to get some kind of revenge from the minorities in the regions where they were settled. Additionally, the patriarchal reflex of protecting the land was a decisive factor in the Circassian relations with the authorities. The effects of this behavior can still be seen today; it was an effort to restore their newly home at the cost of compromising their own identities.

Various problems arose as a result of the resettlement policies of the Ottoman government. The Circassians' inability to adapt to new territories and their desire to live near their relatives were among the main factors in the failure of the resettlement policies. The requests that indicated that the migrants wanted to be relocated were often accepted, altered or completely ignored by the administrators. The conflicts between the tribes, the class structure, opposition of the nobility to be treated equally to the slaves caused many difficulties.[209] In addition, the slave-owning lords were uncomfortable with the fact that their slaves were taken from them and resettled in households in the neighboring Turkish and Muslim villages. These situations weakened the political authorities of the Circassian lords whose slaves worked in their land and looked after their animals. It is clear that these lords were also particularly afraid of an economic depression.

Before the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878), the rebellions, especially in Bulgaria, were oppressed bloodily by the Circassian gangs and gendarmes and caused a bigger problem. The Russian oppression in the the Berlin Congress, which way held as a result of the Russo-Ottoman War, caused all Circassians who had been settled in Rumelia to be removed in the year 1864. This meant that the Circassians were for the second time exiled.

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[208] Sunata. ibid. p. 26.
[209] Ibid. p. 17.

After the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878), also known as the '93 War, Ottoman Empire lost many territories in the Balkans and began to practice the policy of 'Islamization and Turkification' of Anatolia with the help of Muslim refugees who were exiled from Rumelia. One of the major, and perhaps the most significant, actors of this policy was none other than Circassians. Some of the Circassians who were exiled from Rumelia in 1878 used their own means and seaway to go to Southern Marmara and Western Anatolia regions. Meanwhile, İstanbul government was trying to relocate Circassians of Rumeli in Syria and Palestine. Following Circassians' immigration to Western Anatolia, Rûm-Circassian relations would leave its mark on the era and Circassians would be obligated to pass the test against Rûms and Albanians.

Especially the Circassians in Rumelia, who faced another defeat against Russians in 1878, were living the pain of being exiled once again and they were ready to take this out on Christian minorities in the Anatolian regions in which they would be relocated. As for the Sublime Porte, it would feign ignorance throughout this whole process.

The Circassian presence in the Ottoman army later made it possible for the Circassians to function in the intelligence service. It was stated that non-Turkish Muslims in the Special Organization were high in number. In particular, it was also important that there were a large number of Circassians in the governing bodies within this intelligence organization. In addition to the two founding officers, many Circassians stated that they filled in various offices in intelligence.[210]

Integration of Circassians into Ottoman politics started before the '93 War and it reached its peak in the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909). The sale of Circassian girls to the Court started in the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861) and increased during the reign of Abdulaziz (1861-1876). As a result, Circassians would start to view the Ottoman Dynasty as their kin and act as if they owned this property. The girls given to the Court often became consorts of the

[210] Gingeras. ibid. p. 102.

Sultan and Valide Sultan and there occurred a female hegemony in the imperial harem. As a result, Circassians sympathized with the Khalifa Sultan. This relationship was described as 'conquering the court from the inside' paved the way for Circassians in the military and bureaucracy and often put them in a favored position. The Circassians 'presence in the Special Organization was the last position crowning the Circassians' inter-state organization.

In the center of all these relations established with the state were Circassian or Abkhazian women of free or slave origin in the imperial harem. One of the most powerful of these women was Perestu Valide Sultan. She was the daughter of Gok Bey Gogen, a Wubygh feudal lord. She was given to Esma Sultan by his father at a very young age and married Abdulmecid Khan in Çırağan Palace on January 20, 1856. As a result of this marriage, she demanded that a piece of land be given to her brothers, Mustafa, Hussein and Hasan Bey, who had come from the Caucasus. Perestu Valide Sultan, after marrying Abdulmejid, not only made many offerings to her family, but also gifted them a terrain near Balikesir, Gönen. The Gogen family then settled in this area and established the village called Karalar Çiftliği. Valide Sultan also built this mosque in this village in 1888.[211] Apparently, the Circassian lords had an informal relationship with the imperial court by giving their slaves or free-born daughters to the palace, and received gifts, possessions and authorities as a result of this relationship which allowed them live however they want as the relatives of the Sultan.

> *"A solid Circassian front was established in the palace... Recently, a Circassian in Izmit slaughtered a few families, relying on his relations with the Palace. When he was caught, his relatives brought his son to the palace. The son of a murderer, who caused those families to mourn their kin, is treated like the sultan's son in the palace... When I asked Mehmed VI why this man was favored in such a way, he said: "Be*

[211] Açba, Harun. (2007). ibid. p. 46.

silent. Do you want me to not be able to breathe in this palace? Here, everything is set up like this, and so it goes like this... "[212]

Those who were taken to harems or mansions and brought as slaves from Circassia in their early life did not keep in touch with their origins and forgot about their native lands as a result of mixing with the society of the big cities to which they went.[213] Apparently, these slaves were trying to stay away from their slave pasts regardless of whether their age, and continued their lives in accordance with their 'Circassian slave' identity in the households to which they were sold. It was almost impossible for local customers to understand whether the 'white slaves' they bought were Circassians or slaves of the Circassians.

Those who were sold to the imperial harem were undoubtedly the luckiest of white slaves. These girls were given a proper education in the palace and offered the opportunity to have a great fortune. These white slaves, who had high ranks, sometimes had the opportunity to help their families. In particular, the slaves sold to the sultanate after the Exile of 1864 were more closely related to their families. For this reason, many Circassian villages were protected by the imperial court.

''There were many villages such as Kayalar Village, Beynüvit Village, Bedil Villages, Soğuksu, Harmantepe, Ormanköy, Kuzuluk, Yanalık, Kadirköyü which were located mainly in Adapazarı. They built mosques and fountains in these villages. They repaired their roads, helped the people of the village to gain ranks and office and so and so... Obviously, they led prosperous lives in their villages thanks to the favors coming from those ladies in the palace. However, when the Constitution was declared, Circassian Union and Solidarity Association stated that those Circassian girls were in fact helpless slaves who were sold to the palace and demanded their immediate release. What a painful incident this is! There was no such thing as

[212] Vahidettin, Nevzat, "Yıldız'dan Sanremo'ya", 1999, İstanbul, p.27
[213] Gökçe. ibid., p. 41.

algebra in the palace; no girl was held there without their consent and could walk off whenever they pleased...''[214]

''One of my sister's slaves, when she was given her manumission documents, ripped them with her own hands and said that she never wanted to leave my sister's mansion. She raised most of the children and died in that house at the age of 60.''[215]

Apparently, both the lords who strengthened their authorities and the slave girls who enjoyed the life in the palace were happy to be a part of this relationship. Similarly, some Circassians and Abkhazians 'of the palace' were disturbed by the attempts of Circassian Union and Solidarity Association to liberate the slaves and concubines in the palace. It is a fact that after the Exile of 1864, the mechanism of white slave production was exiled to the Ottomans along with the Circassians. The busy courtiers were assigned with the duty to supply the girls to serve in the palace after the exile. The most noteworthy of these was Circassian Mehmed Bey, and he was responsible with supplying girls only for Saray-i Humayun. Circassian Mehmed Bey started this work while taking the Circassians, who were settled around Konya, to Karaman. He took their daughters to the palace. It was also stated that a monthly payment was made to him for his services.

''Upon seeing all the gold, Circassian Mehmet Bey would gather all the poor refugee girls in the empire and take the ones he liked to the harem of Sultan Hamid. It was as if Circassian Mehmet Bey had been given a Circassian army at his command. Mehmet Bey chose these men himself and paid particular attention to the fact that they were from his immediate circle of friends. Mehmet Bey's entourage would in return act according to his commands and

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[214] Marşanoğlu, Nemika Deryal. (2011). *Haremden Sürgüne Bir Osmanlı Prensesi*. İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi. p. 50.
[215] Saz. ibid. p. 61.

wandered the empire in order to recruit girls for Saray-i Humayun.''[216]

There were also other persons gathering girls to serve in the palace. Süreyya Pasha, the head clerk of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, wrote 21 encoded letters and telegraphs to Hasan Hilmi Pasha, the Governor of Konya between the years 1891 and 1892.[217] Süreyya Pasha asked the Governor of Konya to provide him with concubines among Circassian immigrants who had settled in the province. Süreyya Pasha indicated that he was looking for girls above the age of 14 who did not speak Turkish or know Turkish customs and indicated that he preferred blonde hair and blue eyes.[218] It was also stated that the imperial court was interested in girls from the slave class only in order to avoid violating the ban of selling free-born Circassian girls. The standards of the imperial court specified by the Governor were hard to meet; the essential reason behind why the specified girls could not be provided was because some parents simply denied to sell their daughters. Even though they were offered a big amount of money, parents were persuaded only after the interference of the leaders of the group of immigrants.[219]

Although some Circassian parents had sold their children with the hopes of enhancing the living conditions of themselves and their children, people realized that some Circassian parents were no longer keen on selling their daughters for the top price. This is thought to be resulting from the differences between their resettlements in the Empire territories. Most of the immigrants, despite the long battles in which they fought against Russia for many years in the Caucasus, settled in the territories they were given and made stable lives for themselves as farmers. Circassian families who were the main resource for slave trade were reluctant to resell their children as slaves after they had gained their freedom via the *mutakebe* system. Thus, this shift in attitude in the slaves who made use of Ottoman resettlement and *mutakebe* policies created a transformation in Circassian slavery.

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[216] Marşanoğlu. ibid. p. 47-48.
[217] Toledano. (2000). ibid. p. 155.
[218] Ibid. p. 155.
[219] Ibid. p. 156.

This situation also shows that the relationship between economic obligations and slavery was far more significant than tradition. When under captivity, many families sold their children to the harems in major cities with the approval of their owners with hopes of giving them a better life. Slaves did not maintain this practice after their liberation. It is also significant to point out that Circassians did not sell their children as slaves under normal circumstances.[220]

Despite the high prices offered by the imperial court, the number of concubines was still low. This shows that slave trade among Circassian girls for harem services was practiced in a small scale. The completion of the resettlement process and liberation of immigrant slaves through the government-operated *mutakebe* system were main factors for the decrease of volume in Circassian slave trade and the increase in prices. The generally deteriorated economic conditions in the late 19th century in Ottoman Empire caused the trade of Circassian concubines to become a luxury consumption. Western ideas and lifestyle also had an effect on the decrease in Circassian harem slavery in Ottoman territories and caused Ottomans to adopt a anti-slavery attitude.[221]

[220] Ibid. p. 159.
[221] Ibid. p. 159.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ABOLISHMENT OF CIRCASSIAN SLAVE TRADE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE EFFORT OF CIRCASSIAN UNION AND SOLIDARITY ASSOCIATION

The declaration of the Second Constitutional Era on July 24, 1908 started a new era in the social life in the Ottoman Empire. Committee of Union and Progress, which facilitated the declaration of the Constitutional Era, put in place a rapid social change and transformation plan in order to modernize the Ottoman society. The abolishment of censorship on the press and the provision of freedom of association had a great influence on the Ottoman public opinion.[222] On the one hand, there was a mass press explosion and on the other hand, many associations and organizations were established for different purposes. Thus, these associations and organizations started to operate in the direction of their determined goals. All the elements forming the Empire were aiming to establish their public opinion through newspapers and magazines they published and the associations and societies that they established which would aid them in reaching their goals by protecting themselves in the Ottoman political and social agenda. It is known that the Circassians established Circassian Union and Solidarity Association in line with these aims.

After migrating to the Ottoman territories, Circassians established their first association on November, 17 1908 in Istanbul, under the name '*Çerkes Ittihâd ve*

[222] For detailed information see. Ahmetoğlu, Selim. (2010). *İttihatçı Aktüaliteden Kitlesel Popülariteye: Şehbâl Mecmuası (1909-1914)*. İstanbul: Libra Kitap.

Teâvün Cemiyeti'[223] which means 'Circassian Union and Solidarity Association'. Many members of this organization were Pashas, bureaucrats and intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire[224]. In order to play active role in politics, members of this organization established '*Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti*' in Istanbul in 1918, under the leadership of Fuat Pasha who is known as 'deli' *(Turkish crazy)*. Circassians were successful in opening their schools in the Ottoman territories, and they sent many people to the Caucasus in order to open schools there. Although the Circassian Union and Solidarity Association had many cultural and social activities, one of the most important issue for them was the 'slavery issue'.

Before the Second Constitutional Era, the Circassian female slaves were used as concubines inside the imperial and in many of the *konaks*. The Circassian Association was working hard to take the girls out from the imperial harem. The Association even asked help from Deli Fuat Pasha.[225] After all these efforts, Abdul Hamid II, allowed all of the girls to leave the imperial court. However, even Fuat Pasha expressed his worries about the conditions of those girls outside the imperial harem.[226]

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[223] Karamürsel, Ceyda. (2016). "The Uncertainties of Freedom: The Second Constitutional Era and the End of Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire". *Journal of Women's History*. vol. 28 (3). p. 51-154; Kurmel, Ömer Aytek. (2006). "1908 Çerkes Aydınları". *Nart*. Sayı 50. (July-August 2006). p. 44.

[224] Among the founders and members of the association: Marshall Merted Abdullah, Marshall Berzeg Zeki, Veteran Muhammed Fazıl Paşa, Pooh Nazmi Paşa, Şhaplı Osman Paşa, Loh Ahmet Hamdi Paşa, Therkhet Ahmet Cavit Paşa, Met Çunatuko Yusuf İzzet Paşa, İsmail Berkuk Paşa, Hagur Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Lieutenant Ahmet Koşogo, Mustafa Butbay, Blenav Harun Bateko, Tsey Ömer Hilmi, Ahmet Nuri Tsaşo, Şemseddin Tleseruk Paşa, Yusuf Suad Neguç, Hüseyin Şemi Tümer, Hit Tevfik Talat, Dr. Mehmed Reşid Şahingiray, Mizancı Murad, Hüseyin Tosun Şhaplı. Eken, Hakan. (2006). "20. Yüzyıl Başlarında Çerkes STK'lar, Kültürel, Siyasal Etkinlikleri ve Ethem Bey-I". *Nart*. No. 52. (November-December 2006). p. 43.

[225] Aksoy, Elmas Zeynep. (2003) "Çerkes Teavün Cemiyeti ve Faaliyetleri". *Toplumsal Tarih*. No:112. (September 2003). p.101.

[226] Hasan Amca. ibid. p. 25; Parlatır, İsmail. (1984). "Türk Sosyal Hayatında Kölelik", *Belleten*, vol. XVII, July 1983 separate edition from issue 187, Ankara: T.T.K. Basım evi. p. 805.

3.1. The Booklet, "Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında"[227] by Circassian Union and Solidarity Association

It is interesting that there was no organizational work inside the Ottoman Empire which aimed at abolishing slavery. Also, slavery was accepted in the Ottoman society. The most important complaint on slavery arrived in the 28-page booklet prepared by Circassian Union and Solidarity Association, and was sent to the Higher Council.[228] In this part, we will look into issues such as, who prepared the booklet, The Circassian Solidarity Foundation, its most important two young members, the foundation's activities and everything related to slavery. The significance of this booklet comes from being the first and the only civil movement which aimed to abolish slavery in the Ottoman Empire, and its being prepared by the Circassian Foundation itself.

Even today, it is significant that the booklet prepared by the first Circassian foundation in 1910 was related to slavery which is a very sensitive topic that is not discussed in the Circassian Associations now. Furthermore, the first activity for the Circassian activists during the Ottoman period was to abolish slavery, and the booklet prepared for this issue played an even more significant role. Apparently, Circassian slavery, especially the trade of concubines, had its own mechanism. However, the fact that the word slavery was being associated with Circassians started to bother some Circassian intellectuals during that time.

This booklet consists of a combination of petitions and articles sent to newspapers, and it was printed in 1910 in the new Istanbul printing house. The authors of the booklet are Haytok M.Tevfik Talat and Ğotuk Halit. It important tot specify whether this booklet was really written by those two young university students or prepared by the Pasha members in the foundation. Likewise, most of the high ranking Pashas who were among the founders of the Association were

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[227] M.Tevfik and Halid, "Köle Ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında Mebusan-ı Kirama", Yeni Osmanlı Matbaası, İstanbul, 1326. This booklet is located in the catalogue of Atatürk Library of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality under the asset id Bel_Osm_K.07929 and overlay number 1326 R/1910.
[228] Çerkes Teavün Cemiyeti Arzuhali, 'Çerkes Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında Mebusan-ı Kiram'a'

originally Circassian slaves. My first interaction with this booklet was through the studies of Toledano.[229]

When examining the two authors of the book, I was not able to find much information related to the Public Administration student Haytok M.Tevfik Talat and Law Faculty student Ğotuk Halid, other than them being the founders of the Circassian Association. Using those two members' original surnames 'Haytok' and 'Ğotuk' has been very helpful to me since I was able to reach one of Haytok M.Tevfik Talat's grandsons, Cemil Özden, through '*Şamil Vakfı*' in Istanbul.

Cemil Özden was born in 1942 in Istanbul and he mentioned that his grandfather Haytok M.Tevfik Talat died in 1959. According to Cemil Özden, his grandfather fought against the slavery issue among the Circassians until the end of his life. The republican regime did not permit the establishment of any Circassian associations or foundations until the 1950s, which is why his grandfather did not leave any written documents about his mission. On the other hand, I was not able to reach any information about the Law Faculty student Ğotuk Halid.

Knowing that the booklet was written for the government authorities, and was later on published in the newspapers, is actually a proof that this work was aimed at creating public awareness in the community. The Foundation tried to attract the readers' interest by showing that slavery was not an issue that only mattered to the Circassians, but that other nations were also suffering from it, and that even men and children were among those being kidnapped. The Foundation seems to have worked hard to prove that this was a social matter that concerned the whole Ottoman society. Only the Circassians apart from the other nations in the Ottoman Empire were involved in this kind of a slavery system. Some extraordinary events did happen but that should not mean that other nations were also involved in slavery as much as Circassians did. Some authors say that Albanian and Turkish girls were sold as Circassians, while writing these, they were trying to show that this trade affected the whole society. In addition to that, I believe that some authors

[229] Toledano. (1982). ibid.

tried to attract readers' attention by saying that: 'slave trade was very popular'. Also, in the 21st page of the booklet, there are direct complaints towards security officials, who followed the slaves who escaped from their masters and brought them back. I believe that these texts were meant to attract reader's attention.

The biggest problem in this booklet is that it did not include any sanctions or recommendations for the Circassians. It is obvious that the member of the Circassian Association wanted to solve this issue by law regulations that came from high political authorities. However, the roots of the problem came from Circassian traditions that allowed slavery to be practiced as a form of trade. While the text includes nice and refined requests, it does not offer Circassians a well-organized plan regarding the necessity to abandon this bad tradition.

Although the authors used emotional language in the booklet, they have often stressed the freedom that was brought with the Second Constitutional Era. The constitutional system and the parliamentary system were often praised in the booklet, and it mentioned the parliamentarians who despite being busy with other issues, stressed the need to abolish slavery for being a shameful tradition. The booklet tried to push the parliament to be active in this issue by stating that Istanbul and the imperial court were the center of slavery. The booklet also mentioned that there were mostly women and children suffering among the slaves, all of these texts was meant to attract the parliament's attention.

The main goal of printing this booklet as it is clear from the title, aims to abolish Circassian slavery and concubinage. By saying slavery, they did not mean only female slaves living in the harems and *konaks*, but also male slaves. Male slaves were few in the imperial court compared to the women, but the booklet stated that thousands of male slaves were working in the fields for their masters. Sending this booklet to be published in the newspaper (Takvim-i Vekayi) was a way to push the parliament to find a solution for this issue. As a result, on May 25, 1911 a new law was issued forbidding Circassian slave trade.[230] But this was only one of the

[230] Takvim-i Vekayi, 26 Cemaziyelevvel 1329, no: 832, p. 2.

requests that were mentioned in the booklet, no steps were taken regarding the other requests. Circassian slave trade was banned by this imperial decree, but Circassian slavery did not come to an end. More details about this issue will be provided in the conclusion.

In fact, the booklet discussed a very important but at the same time very sensitive issue, because many of the members of the Association, those famous Pashas, were actually slaves. Circassian slavery was the first issue the Association decided to work on, which can be considered as a proof for this relation between the members and the slavery. Although Pashas were important for the Ottoman citizens, they were still called slaves by their Circassian masters. Also, the founders of the Circassian Association and its members consisted of educated intellectuals, and studied at the modern schools opened during the Tanzimat period, and had faith in the Constitutional Assembly. It is probable that this forced them to act in such a matter. The widespread of concubines in Istanbul in the year 1910, especially in the houses of the nobles, must have bothered the members of the Association. The booklet expresses that large numbers of female slaves existed in the houses of the elite. The most important works written about Circassian slavery can be sorted as Ehud Toledano's books: Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression 1840-1890, Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East, As If Silent and Absent Bonds of Enslavement in The Islamic Middle East

I can suggest 'Guaze' newspaper as a secondary source for Circassian slavery, some parts of it were published in the Circassian language during the end of Ottoman Empire. '*Guaze*' means 'guide' in the Circassian language. Circassian Solidarity Foundation started printing this periodical newspaper in 1911.[231] 59 editions were published, the newspaper discussed a variety of issues, and it dealt with the issue of 'slavery'. Named as 'Kölelik Aleyhinde 1' essay and another essays written by the Chairman of the Circassian Women Union Association *'Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti'* Hayriye Melek Hunç were two important

[231] Aksoy, Elmas Zeynep. (2008). *Circassian Organization in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1923).* M.A. Thesis. Boğaziçi University. Department of History.

articles since both of these texts stressed the main topics mentioned in the booklet 'Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında'.[232] The referenced booklet was published in 1910, but some of the petitions included in the booklet were issued in 1908 and 1909. The issue was first started as a movement to release the Circassian concubine in the court of Abdul Hamid. At the time, the founder of the Circassian Association, the famous Fuat Pasha, was not in good relations with the Sultan, so he sent the British Envoy to Abdulhamid to ask him to release the female slaves, and thus they were released. After the military coup (31 March Incident) in April 13, 1909, the power was no longer in the hands of the Sultan; Enver Pasha and his team would be leading the whole empire..

The founders and members of the Circassian Association were important high ranking figures both in politics and military, I believe that is why they were very influential. During the reign of Abdul Hamid II, there were many Circassian soldiers and bureaucrats in the imperial court and even in the ranks of the Committee of Union and Progress. However, both of these Circassians agreed on the issue of slavery, and that is why they were powerful, I have mentioned the

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[232] *1 - Liberation of Circassian slave class for a reasonable price based on correspondence methods 2 - – State treasury paid for correspondence expenses. 3 - Since no slaves and cariyes would be left in this case in order to provide their buying and selling; issued a law and applied for "Meclis-i Mebusan" (Sacred Council).*

Sacred Council stated that this was the duty of the government.

In this transcript: ' ... it has been decided that the buying and selling of slaves and cariyes from Circassian and other nations will be abolished, those slaves who are kept by their owners will be given a paper of liberation and this situation will be asserted to the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.''

Let's assume that Aziziye (Pınarbaşı) Court adjudged the freedom of a slave – will that person be truly free? Circassian society judges and views slaves who have gained their liberty in their previous slave status. Our government, Assembly of notables and National Assembly are our assurances. We are not saying that congressmen should issue a law that would oppose religious enactments regarding slaves. But we want the correspondence method to be used... A law that would allow for a correspondence opportunity for a reasonable price paid to the owner will provide social peace and welfare. The community had asked for the total liberation of slaves and the compensation for their expenses from the national treasury. The utilization of the enactment dated to 29 Rebi'ül evvel 1327–1327 and its assignment to Fetwa Institution which was issued for the liberation of slaves after they had been bought by the government... this is our aim.'' Aksoy. (2008). ibid. p. 74

names of those Pashas above. Also we should not forget the British Envoy that was assigned by Fuat Pasha to talk with Abdul Hamid.

It is important also to notice that during the Ottoman period, there had not been any civil movement against slavery up until the publication of this booklet. Circassian slavery was a social reality that had existed widely, especially in the upper class social life of major cities such as Istanbul. There were common narrations that Circassian slaves in these rich mansions outside the harem were enjoying a prosperous and happy life. This propaganda was so strong that Circassian slaves in the villages used to run away from their masters in order to be part of this luxury life. During this period, the Circassian society was isolated from other nations in the Ottoman Empire, and it kept producing and selling its slaves. The Circassians were able to gain positive discrimination, by building a network of relatives in the Ottoman Palace through their slaves as well. It is not a coincidence that 4 out of Sultan Vahideddin's 5 wifes were Circassians.[233]

The period covered in this booklet is mostly related to the final years of the reign of Abdul Hamid II and the time of the Second Constitutional Era. The strongest ideological group at that time was the Committee of Union and Progress, and most of the members of the Circassian Association were already members of the Committee of Union and Progress. So, it was not a coincidence that the Association's first target were the concubines who were leading a comfortable life in the Palace. Sultan Abdulhamid II must have known that if he resisted, he could face a big anti-propaganda against him, so he immediately accepted the offer, and he set 213 Concubines free.[234]

It is stated that Circassian slaves and concubines established their strongest authority during the reign of Abdul Hamid II. It is also worth noting that the Sultan used the following statements in a memory related to the slaves and concubines:

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[233] Açba, Leyla. (2004). *Bir Çerkes Prensesinin Harem Hatıraları.* İstanbul. p.378-390.
[234] McCullagh, Francis. (1910). *The Fall of Abd-ul-Hamid.* p. 276-278; Karamürsel. (2016). ibid. p. 145-150.

''Abdul Hamid II was very respectful to Mithat Pasha; with overstatements such as "We are two men who grew up in the hands of Circassian imperial concubines...", he immediately discovered his soft spots''. [235]

Abdul Hamid, in his meeting with Mithat Pasha, tried to honor Mithat Pasa by stating that the Shahzade did not receive a direct education and were raised in a mundane way by the cariyes in the harem, and that Mithat Pasha was an experienced statesman, who started off as an officer and made his way up in the hierarchy. Circassian Association considered this a success, and as a second step, they presented a request to the Assembly asking to ban Circassian slavery and to put an end to the Concubinage.

The issue of Circassian slavery, especially concubines, was happening mostly in upper class mansions, mostly in the capital, and the other big cities. Circassian slavery did not come to an end immediately after the declaration of the imperial decree. Circassian slavery was abolished in time, when those concubines were getting retired or passing away, on the other hand we are not sure whether some of the masters released their concubines just after the declaration of the decree or not since there are no documents mentioning this. Because the government banned the legal Circassian slave trade, this trade continued illegally in some parts of Anatolia until the 1960s. The Circassian slave owners continued to practice this illegal trade, then this trade totally disappeared. However, slavery as a social class continues within the Circassian society even today.

Considering that our topic is slavery, and knowing that slavery is a global issue, we should state that Britain played a very important external factor in this frame. Britain initiated the anti-slavery movement that spread around the world, and it forced the Ottomans to take steps in order to abolish slavery. Closing the slave market in Istanbul in 1846, prohibition of selling Georgian slaves in 1854 and prohibition of the Black slave trade in 1857 were measures taken by the Ottomans

[235] Berkes. ibid. p. 316.

under pressure from Britain. In this part, I would like to give more information about the petitions and essays published in the newspapers.

3.2. Petition Published on January 28, 1910 (15 Kanunısani 1325)[236]

Circassian Association wanted to draw attention to this topic by sending this petition to the Parliaments both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Ottoman Empire on January 28, 1910. In this petition, they especially insisted that constitutional principles were contrary to the slavery which was practiced at the center of capital. They underlined that the black slave trade had been banned and the new constitutional period brought rights even for animals, why did Circassian Slaves still not get their basic human rights?

On the other hand, the Circassian Association proposed some other articles such as;

a-Official declaration of the abolishment of slavery by the Ottoman Government.

b-Establishing new modern schools as Russia did.

c-Making financial aids by the government for the slaves.

d-Establishing a special patronage commission for the protection of slaves.

e-Providing houses, lands and animals by the government for the slaves, and all these expenses should be covered by the financial budget until 1326.

f-Accepting slaves as new emigrants and slaves should benefit from the exemptions they have.[237]

This petition is very significant because the Circassian Association did not only complain about slavery but offered a full proposal to the parliaments to abolish

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[236] "Cemiyet tarafından esaretin lağvı hakkında makam-ı sami-i sadaret penahiye, Meclis-i Mebusan ve Meclis-i Ayan riyaset-i celilelerine takdim kılınan dilekçe", in M.Tevfik and Halid, "Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında Mebusan-ı Kirama", Yeni Osmanlı Matbaası, İstanbul, 1326. p.10-13. The translation of this document from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish was done by Fatih Gide. I would like to thank him for hiscontributions.

[237] Köle ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında Mebusan-ı Kirama, p. 10-13.

the slavery. Apparently the Circassian Pashas and other bureaucrats were powerful enough to offer a solution proposal to the Ottoman parliaments to abolish slavery.

3.3. Petition Sent to The Ministry of Interior Affairs (Dahiliye Nezaretine Gönderilen Dilekçe)[238]

Circassian Association prepared another petition to abolish slavery on April 6, 1910 and sent it to the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The point is that the Association members received information that the previous petition they sent to '*Sadaret*' had reached to the Ministry of Interior Affairs so they would like to show the bureaucrats that they were following this issue and sent this last petition.

What is important about this petition is that, for the first time Association members requested from the government to count the number of slaves and odalisques living in Istanbul and asked if they had official slavery papers which could show that they were slaves but not free-born Circassians. What could be behind this investigation, is to find out whether the slaves living in the palaces were legal slaves according to Sharia Law, illegal slaves such as free-born Circassians, kidnapped or sold by their relatives. The Circassian Association was trying to prove that most of the slaves living in Istanbul were illegal slaves according to Sharia Law.[239]

In this petition, the Circassian Association members mentioned one more time that the center of slavery was the capital, Istanbul. However, even in Bursa province some of the Turkish and Albanian girls were kidnapped and sold to high class *konaks* as if they were Circassians. So the Association members were trying to give the image that slavery was not a question for Circassians but also concerned other nations such as Turks and Albanians. As evidence for this claim, they were giving details about the women who left the imperial harem and confessed that they were actually not Circassians but originally they were Turks and Albanians. Besides

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[238] The translation of this document from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish was done by Fatih Gide. I would like to thank him for his contributions.
[239] . p. 14-16.

the confessions of these retired imperial concubines, there were some more cases which were already discussed and recorded at Divan meetings.[240]

On the other hand, the essay named *'Kölelik Aleyhinde'* (Against Slavery), written by Hayriye Melek Hunc and published in Guaze Newspaper underlined this question again and mentioned that: 'women from many other nationalities left the imperial court as if they were Circassians'.[241]

However, another author who was also a member of 19th century imperial court, Leyla Saz Hanım, wrote in her book that: ''A woman who called herself 'Circassian' was later found out that she was originally a Turk from Sivas.'' According to Leyla Saz Hanım; the way to enter the imperial court and be able to rise was to be a Circassian and that is why many of the girls were claiming that they were Circassian or Circassian slaves.'[242] Besides the effort of creating public awareness by the Circassian Association, could this information be true and could illegal slave trade be common in the Ottoman society or were these just some individual and extraordinary events used by the Circassian Association for propaganda?

3.4. Article Sent to *Sada-yı Milliyet* Newspaper[243]

The article which was published in March 21, 1910 by the Circassian Association members at Sada-yı Millet Newspaper would also be sent to '*Dahiliye Nezareti*' (Ministry of Interior Affairs) as a petition.

This article was written by the Public Administration Student Haytuk Tevfik Talat and the Law Faculty Student Ğotuk Halid. These university students were

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[240] Türkay, Cevdet. (1968). "Esircilerle İlgili Bir Belge". *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi.* Issue.11. (August 1968). p. 60.

[241] Hunç, Hayriye Melek. (1911). "Kölelik Aleyhinde 1", *Guaze*, April 2, 1911, İstanbul, p. 2-3. I would like to thank Selim Ahmetoğlu who translated this document from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish.

[242] Saz. ibid.

[243] "Esir-i Ticaret-Sadayı Milletten" in M.Tevfik ve Halid, "Köle Ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında Mebusan-ı Kirama", Yeni Osmanlı Matbaası, İstanbul, 1326. p.17-22. The translation of this document from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish was done by Fatih Gide. I would like t thank him for his contributions.

very active not just in the Circassian Association but also in many other foundations. Young university students' activism was common during the Second Constitutional Era.

In this article, the authors also mentioned that the parliamentary system and the Constitutional Era had returned but slavery was still very common in the capital and in Sivas, Canik, Konya and Suriye provinces. In addition, they insisted on the abolishment of the whole slavery system. In this petition, it was the first time they mentioned the police attitudes against the slaves who fled from the palaces or from *konaks*. Authors complained that the police were capturing the slaves out of their residences and delivering them back to their masters. On the other hand, they were talking about the poor Turkish farmers' position in the slave trade and the Armenian families who were involved in slave trade in Bitlis and Mutki regions by bartering their kids in return for guns and animals.

In summary, this article demonstrated a general view about the Ottoman slavery system in the beginning of the 20th century. In this example, by sending this article to this newspaper, the Circassian Association wanted to reveal the slavery system to the whole public opinion. The interesting part of this was that authors wanted to give the image to the readers that slavery was not just related to Circasssians but also many other nations were involved in this shameful trade. As a conclusion, I could say that this article was an emotional text that touched the hearts of many readers.

3.5. Article Send to *Yeni Gazete* Newspaper [244]

The article named "*20. Asrı Medeniyette Esaret*" written by Haytuk Tevfik Talat and Ğotuk Halid was published in "*Yeni Gazete*" on April 16, 1910. I would say the reason why this article was published in the newspaper was to get the support of the public opinion.

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[244] Tevfik Talat and Halit, '20.asr-ı medeniyette esaret' Yeni Gazete, April 16, 1910. The translation of this document from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish was done by Fatih Gide. I would like to thank him for his contributions.

The main topics mentioned in this article stated that slavery was against civilization and the new law Kanun-i Esasi yet people were bought and sold for money, deputies were obliged to protect all the Ottoman citizens' rights including the Circassians, Circassian slavery could not be considered as a part of Islamic slavery which was permitted by Sharia Law, the other citizens of the Ottomans were bought as if they are 'Circassians' servants in the houses could not be considered as slaves, Circassian slaves who were living under the name 'concubine' could be problematic and the illegitimate child who were born from these non-married concubines could be illegal according to Sharia Law.[245]

On the other hand, this article contains many Islamic terms and religious details. Presumably, the authors were trying to establish public opinion by using religious feelings, which could have had an effect over the Ottoman society.

3.6.Regarding The Document Written by the Ministry of Interior Affairs Which Demands Ziraat Bankası to Grant Loans to Circassian Slaves (18 February, 1328)[246]

Following the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era, the Ottoman political and social life began to develop rapidly. As a result, the Ottoman rulers confiscated the situation and sought solutions. For this purpose, a document was prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and signed by Undersecretary of Ministry of Internal Affairs on February 18, 1328.

It is stated in this document that the disputes between Circassian slaves-concubines and their owners had increased in the Ottoman lands, in which freedom was allegedly dominant, and that it was compulsory for the state to intervene and find a solution to this situation. Apparently, the Circassians who took refuge in the Ottoman Empire due to genocide and exile were placed in various corners of the

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[245] M.Tevfik and Halid, "Köle Ve Cariyeliğin Ref'i Hakkında Mebusan-ı Kirama", Yeni Osmanlı Matbaası, İstanbul, 1326 p. 23-28.

[246] BOA. DH. HMŞ., D: 10, G: 62, 1331-3-24 The translation of this document from Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish was done by Selim Ahmetoğlu. I would like to thank him for his contributions.

nation in accordance to the Article of Refugees because their resettlement was considered to be compulsory. It was stated that, in order to solve the problems between slaves-concubines and their owners, it was necessary to use the *mukatebe* system (a written treaty concluded between slave and owner) in selling uncultivated public land to Circassian lords in exchange for the prices of the slaves and distribute some of this land to the slaves to ensure their survival. Moreover, it is emphasized in this document that it would be an appropriate application for Ziraat Bank to lend 10 or 15-year term loans to these people so that they could operate and run these allocated places and maintain their freedom. At the end of the document, it is stated that slavery was forbidden Sharia Law and on Ottoman territories and that this problem could be solved by the solution mentioned above.

3.7. Mehmet Fetgerey Şöenu and His Attempts

Mehmet Fetgerey Şöenu was a Circassian patriot, athlete and writer. He was the son of Atkug Musa Afşanba who had to immigrate into Turkey from Gudauta-Vendripş district of Abkhazia following the Abkhazian revolt after Russo-Turkish War (1877-78). He was born in the Yanık Village of Sapanca in 1890. He was raised by his uncle, Bersis Habiç Bey, with whom he visited İstanbul as a kid along with his mother and two sisters following the death of his father at an early age. As a secondary school student, he left classic education and started educating himself. He learned French. He was interested in history, sociology and sports. The first French books he read were the ones on the Caucasus and Circassians. He used to compare the things he read with the Ottoman society of the era and the situation of the Circassians in exile, which caused him great sorrow. He wrote his books entitled *Hayat-ı İçtimaiye and Yaşamanın Felsefesi* under the influence of such feelings. Influenced by the implications made by Celal Nuri about Circassian women in one of his books, he published his book entitled *Osmanlı Alem-i İçtimaisinde Çerkes Kadınları* in 1914.[247]

In this work, which was published in 1914, Fetgerey expressed that secret slave sales continued despite the fact that there were no longer captive markets and

[247] Aksoy (2008). ibid. p. 31-31. footnote. 54.

publicly-traveling slave traders in big cities.[248] In his article titled "Circassianerism and Selling of Girls", he expressed that his own family suffered from this issue:

> *"I have experienced this. I have felt this pain. My desperate mother said to me: "My son, work. The life of the nation and their womanhood are directed towards the passionate and inappropriate desires. Cry out. When you grow up, try to remove them and abolish them altogether. This is a cause of sorrow for our nation... We are not the only ones experiencing this... Roam our village and see how many mothers are in mourning and how many women are without a wrinkle on their foreheads and a white hair on their heads..."*[249]

Fetgerey made courageous statements in his work which was published as early as 1914 and tried to discuss the private issue of "selling girls" whom he described as a part of slavery; *"The abduction, trade and presenting of Circassian girls are being carried out in a secret and unofficial manner..."*[250] Fetgerey stated in his work that when he was investigating the origin of the issue of "the selling of girls", he came across with social stratification and the institution of slavery:

> *"They also accepted the institutionalization of slavery. The social stratification, which has been officially in place until now, and which is now officially in force, is made up of two main parts. In the Caucasus today, the effects of this stratification have diminished and are about to disappear. After the Russian invasion, the slave class was abolished and everyone was considered equal in the eyes of the law. In the Ottoman society after the reign of Abdul Hamid, a right to live, liberty, equality and fraternity has appeared. However, this was only a on the surface. In fact, stratification and classification are still in*

[248] Fetgeri, Mehmet, Şoenü, "Tüm Eserleriyle Mehmet Fetgeri Şoenü". Ankara. 2007. p.19.
[249] Ibid. p.19-20.
[250] Ibid. p.22.

force. The fact that the Ottoman Circassians did not remove such an ugly tradition as to sell girls is also due to this situation."[251]

Fetgerey stated that Russia's colonization period of the Caucasus, which is expressed as a Russian invasion, led to slave sales, and stated that Circassians did not sell slaves earlier:

"The Circassians did not sell their slaves in the first place, but they regarded selling as a shame and an ugly behavior. The real human-trafficking started with the formation of the last invasions. At the time of external incursion, the slave class in the interior demanded to be liberated. This led to the slave sales, which began with the intention of preventing disorder, and then led to cruel practices such as selling their own daughters."[252]

Fetgerey stated that the sale of children first started with slave children, and that in the face of the misery and poverty caused by the migration, the free-born Circassians were also sold. Fetgerey, who stated that this thought was still alive in the upper class of the Ottoman Empire in the form of "One simply cannot live without a concubine", and emphasized that this lifestyle also triggered sales. Fetgerey criticized the government for allowing slavery to exist underhanded, and he finished his article with the following statements about the Circassians:

"Circassians are hurting their Circassians in this way. With every girl leaving their households, Circassian social living loses not only a single person but the chain of families that extend to the future."[253]

As a result, it can be said that the revitalization brought by the Second Constitutional Era to the Ottoman social life affected the Circassians. It seems that Circassian intellectuals and their elders tried to reach their goals through

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[251] Ibid. p.24.
[252] Ibid. p.25.
[253] Ibid. p.28.

associations, newspapers and magazines they established with the purpose of defending the rights of the Circassians, and helping the Circassians to reach better living conditions. In addition to the attempts made by state institutions to prohibit Circassian slavery, a subject highly emphasized by Circassian intellectuals, the attempts of Circassians to create public opinion by propaganda through the media are also of significance. The most important development concerning the prohibition of Circassian slavery and slave trade during the Second Constitutional Era that these particular requests came from the Circassians themselves and that the Circassians started to work towards these aims.

The state did not take a clear stance on the subject of 'white slaves' and 'Circassian slavery', which had a rather complex structure reminiscent of an equation with multiple unknowns. The Ottoman Empire did not interfere in any way with the white slave and concubine trade, and tried to take it under control when it was a matter of public order. However, according to the documents in hand, there is information suggesting the prohibition of the enslavement of free-born individuals in 1864. Namely, the descendants of slave families were not interfered with by the state. In the case of a complaint, the slave would be separated from his master in order to prepare the basis for liberation, but this situation was never objected formally.[254] The slaves went to court and claimed that they were in fact born as free individuals, the qadis would have difficulty in making a decision regarding this person.

The executives of the Party of Union and Progress, whom first led to the abolition of white slave trade in the country, had an important place in the Family Law of 1917 which was to be issued later.[255] The Family Law of 1917 was a product of this policy. It was also the first intervention of the central government to the law of domestic relations, which was organized by the religious authorities of various

[254] Saydam. ibid. p. 196.

[255] Aydın, M.Akif. (1998) Hukuk-ı Aile Kararnamesi. İslam Ansiklopedisi. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Vol. 18 p.314-318.

nations that lived under the Ottoman rule and protected by all of them with jealousy.[256]

The westernization movements which spread in the First Constitutional Era and accelerated after the Second Constitutional Era brought a western influence to the upper-class houses in Istanbul. The men of the Ottoman upper class no longer wanted marriage to be arranged and controlled by their elderly relatives, but they longed for romantic relationships and love, and looked for wives with whom they could exchange ideas. In short, they wanted free themselves from oppressive rules of traditional Ottoman life.[257] The new way of life had rapidly begun to change social relations, family and marital relationships in the upper classes. The odalisque would leave their places to mistresses, slaves to daily servants, and concubines to French nannies. Thus, this new fashion was to bring 'white slaves' to an end.

This change within the scope of white slavery led to a faster change in the households which favored the western life style whereas in the more conservative homes, the people did not want to admit that slavery, apparently out of fashion, was abolished. During the First Constitutional Era, a new method of enslavement emerged as a result of the laws against slave trade. This method of enslavement, 'besleme', was based on Islamic grounds and created yet another false justification for slavery.[258] Some 'white slaves' replaced by nannies, mistresses, and servants, continued to keep their exist in various households as fosterlings or 'besleme's for limited time periods.

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[256] Kandiyoti. ibid. p. 175.
[257] Ibid. p. 174.
[258] Şen. ibid. p. 187.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHITE SLAVES AND CIRCASSIAN SLAVERY ACCORDING TO NARRATIONS FROM ORAL HISTORY

4.1. Oral History Methodology

Interviews on slavery will be reviewed under various headings in this part of the thesis. The interviews conducted at certain intervals and in different regions during the twenty-year period between 1996 and 2016 were discussed through the methods used. Thus, the twenty-year process has been examined in this context. Interviews conducted after 2015, when the thesis topic was identified, includes final data as a result of a twenty year study. This study also made it possible to compare the negotiations made both before 2015 and after 2015 in the thesis process. The data obtained from the negotiations constituted the main sources of this oral history work on slavery. By using the term oral history, I mean the interpretation of history by listening to people from various societies and cultures and recording their memories and experiences.[259]

As I traced white slavery, I once again recognized the importance of oral history studies while listening to interviewers from different cultures and social classes in different regions. It is necessary to state here that a good oral history research should provide an understanding of individual lives and include both a unique interpretation and a broader analysis of societies.[260] So far many studies on Circassian society have been made. I think that this thesis, which is in particular on white slaves and Circassian slavery, will be useful to make a social analysis in a wide frame along with the previous oral history works.

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[259] Thompson, Paul, "21.Yüzyılda Sözlü Tarih İçin Potansiyeller ve Meydan Okumalar", Kuşaklar, Deneyimler, Tanıklıklar, Türkiye'de Sözlü Tarih Çalışmaları Konferansı, İstanbul, 2006, p.23

[260] Ibid. p.25.

4.1.1. Strategy Formulation

Developing appropriate strategies for selection of interviews and sample selection in this framework is important work that needs to be done during the preparation process.[261] The choice of example interviewer is even more important in a matter which interviewers do not want to mention. I learned during my experiences in the field that the oral historian should develop far more diverse strategies when it comes to issues that few people have agree to discuss such as slavery.

Answering the question "What issues have special strengths and potentials for oral history research?", Paul Thompson answered "establishing connections through hidden voices, hidden areas, oral traditions and lives".[262] I thought that an oral historian working on white slaves should stand here and determine their methods and announce the secret voice of the other. If I had done a study on the Circassian lords, I would have experienced that more and more people would voluntarily share the beautiful and special memories of the past.

Praising, talking about past weddings, girl abduction adventures, and banquets constituted a recalling process that entertained the interviews. However, talking about the slaves and servants of the house and their trade did not delight anyone. In fact, nobody wanted to remember these memories.

However, these hidden, silenced voices had to be voiced in some way, and these memories had to be brought to the surface. I had set a strategy as an oral historian. I did not ask the interviewers directly about the issues of slavery, went over their past memories and made them talk, and in the following hours, I tried to lead them to the subject of slavery. Every remembrance for me was precious. Despite the fact that many people remembered every subject, they often said "Unfortunately, I can not remember" when confronted with the subject of slavery.

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[261] Ibid. p.25.
[262] Ibid. p.27.

What the interviews chose to forgot were valued as much as what they did remember.

4.1.2. Memory and Forgetting

"Not remembering" was also a data and those that were not remembered about slavery were much more than remembered. "I do not remember" was a polite way of saying "I do not want to talk about it". H. Neşe Özgen, who asked the question "Why do we intentionally forget experiences?",[263] emphasizes what, how and why we remember certain things and the relationship between our memory and responsibility areas. I have personally witnessed during many conversations I made that the concern that memories will upset an interviewer and the possibility that one will embarrass someone becomes the responsibility of the interviewer. Referring to the question "Who is Talking?",[264] H. Neşe Özgen mentions the importance of determining whether interviewers who testify to the subject are only a witness, a victim of harm, or the person responsible for the event.

In the slavery accounts, it is also a very important deterrent to the oral historian that the interviewer is an individual who belongs to a slave family, who has been harmed, oppressed, marginalized or hatred. In our work, perhaps because of this, the social class of the narrator is a more important factor than from which city or Circassian village he comes. The question 'who is talking' was recorded in this section of the thesis as the first information we received on the interviews in all the interviews we had examined under different headings.

To remember and to establish a relationship of belonging was an effort to understand the experiences of those who shared their memories in oral history talks, which led me to adopt an approach that centralized the life experiences of individuals.[265] It was determined that the stories of those who had no relational affiliation with being a Circassian and who considered themselves to be Turks or

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[263] Özgen, H.Neşe, "Seçici Unutmanın Tanıklıkları", Kuşaklar, Deneyimler, Tanıklıklar, Türkiye'de Sözlü Tarih Çalışmaları Konferansı, İstanbul, 2006, p.182.
[264] Ibid. p.197.
[265] Özbek, E.Egemen, Telliel, Y.Doğan, "68'li Olmak: Hatırlamak ve Aidiyet", Kuşaklar, Deneyimler, Tanıklıklar, Türkiye'de Sözlü Tarih Çalışmaları Konferansı, İstanbul, 2006, p.245.

Turkish were more critical. Apart from being Circassian, interviews who identified as Turk, Muslim, or Turkish, and broke their relationship with the society they came from, could speak more easily about slavery because slavery was no more than an old memory to which they no longer belonged.

Hidden areas were as effective as the hidden voices in specifying the framework of our study. These areas included family relationships and experiences that were rarely well represented in historical records of human life.[266] This area, inhabited in the house, living in a confined area and not at the same time family, and open to all kinds of abuse, summarizes the situation of white slaves. "Being the other in the private area" is a problematic field that comes up in slavery narratives.

4.1.3. Oral History Process;

When I started my first interviews in 1996 to prepare a paper for university, I had no idea that I would write a thesis on slavery in the future, but I tried to note all the interviews carefully. I was also using a recorder that I had acquired from the school, but the first time the slavery issue was opened, the interview asked me to turn off the recorder. I had begun to receive the first reports on slavery, but the interviewers did not allow the talk on this subject to be recorded. This was the first time I encountered a stance against the recording device, and this was due to the issue of slavery. Very few people agreed to talk about this 'sensitive' and 'intimate' subject, as emphasized by everyone while entering the conversation.

Most of these people I interviewed were either close relatives or people we knew. Those who did not know me and my family never spoke in this regard. Even my acquaintances who agreed to talk on this subject often preferred to convey their memories over events without giving the names of individuals and villages. This confidentiality and privacy caused me to be more inclined to conduct research on slavery.

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[266] Thompson, Paul, "21.Yüzyılda Sözlü Tarih İçin Potansiyeller ve Meydan Okumalar", Kuşaklar, Deneyimler, Tanıklıklar, Türkiye'de Sözlü Tarih Çalışmaları Konferansı, İstanbul, 2006, p.28.

The work on slavery that I started in 1996 without using the recorder and making notes on covered topics continued at regular intervals until I graduated college in 2001. I started my oral history studies in the city center of Samsun and in the vicinity of the relatives and continued with the towns and villages of Samsun. At the end of 2001, I held many meetings in Samsun, Amasya and Çorum, and continued to take notes as I spoke to those who agreed to talk about slavery.

Because I was often rejected when I said I wanted to discuss slavery, I developed a method, whereby I said that I would like to discuss matters such as marriages, old weddings and customs, and I tried to open the issue of slavery at the end of the opinion after I had established trust with interviews. This method, while time-consuming, helped me to gather data on slavery. At least I did note why people did not want to talk about this subject. The reason for their inability to talk about this subject was just as important as the issue of slavery.

Some interviews said that this delicate and intimate subject remained in the past, that many people's lives were damaged, and that reviving these memories would hurt them more. However, Marita Sturken says, "...the past does not wait to be discovered in a stable state; it is constantly being reproduced in the direction of past, present and present purposes."[267] Slavery was redrawn to us as we remembered it, not as it happened in the past. We were after returning to the past and remembering to forget in the midst of all these life experiences. Some of those who agreed to talk about slavery were starting their sentences with the phrase "What is past is past... do not open old wounds!" There were also those who said, "What good is talking about these bitter memories?". There were also those who said "Haynapa!", which means 'shame' in Circassian, and closed the subject without saying anything. The slavery narrative and silence were two intervowen concepts. "Why this silence?" was one of the basic questions I asked both myself and the interviews in all interviews on slavery. When the interview said, "Haynapa!", however, this issue was closed to never be opened again. I understood the significance of not insisting on the result of the first interviews I made, since even

[267] Neyzi, Leyla. "Ben Kimim? Türkiye'de Sözlü Tarih, Kimlik ve Öznellik", İstanbul, 2004, p.21.

in 1996, society regarded this subject to be a taboo and refrained from talking about it.

There was no change from 1996 to 2001. We conducted interviews in every subject, but we were stuck in the subject of slavery. Perhaps it was my oral historical methods that changed in these five years. I started getting information about the family before going to interview them. When I went to the houses of people who were from slave families, I avoided this issue entirely because once the family I thought was a free peasant family turned to be a family of slave descent and when I opened the subject of slavery, both sides were in a very difficult situation. I started asking about and learning about the origin of the family, and then I went to see if I was able to build enough trust with the interview.

Because I stayed abroad at certain intervals fom 2001 to 2004, I did not have sufficient time to conduct lengthy interviews. The interviews I made were with people that I met through acquaintances. When I returned to Turkey in 2005, I resumed my interviews. After 2005 I made interviews based mostly in Istanbul and Ankara. Although the interviews in the big cities were more open to talk about slavery, the situation was the same for those over the age of fifty. They preferred to talk on issues outside this subject.

One of the main of the issues I paid attention to when selecting interviewers was to convey an appeal with an acquaintance's reference. I went to see if they agreed to meet me as a result of a familiar phone call or direct conversation. Otherwise, I did not bother them. The acquaintances consisted primarily of relatives, my friends, and in some cases people who worked at Circassian associations and foundations. Before the interview, I asked some sources to determine the social class of the family, and after that I went to see them. Likewise, I had a very difficult experience as a result of a family of free peasants who turned out to be of slave descent. After that, I started to pay more attention to the social classes. Speaking of slavery with interviews from noble families was just as difficult as it was with those of the slave class. These two classes experienced and practiced slavery personally, these negotiations were conducted in a tense

atmosphere. The interviews with the free peasants called *'fekhol's,* which makes up roughly 90% of the Circassian community, were relatively easy. There were cases where some of the free peasants also had slaves. The slaves were employed in the houses of lords, *'pşı'*, and the lords' men, *'work'*.

Most of the interviews in Istanbul and Ankara after 2005 were made with the children of village-based families who migrated to the cities during the 60's. Among them were high school and university graduates and they had experience of living together with different nations in the city. Living with different communities led them to examine similarities and differences between themselves and others. Although Circassian society has various similarities in many respects, slavery and slaves were not present in any of the other communities. Many of the people I interviewed voiced this difference and went into slavery discussions in their own family and private spaces.

In the village-based but urbanized intellectual households of Istanbul and Ankara, the subject of slavery was questioned and some were trying to justify the past by producing reasons of their own. Some of the narratives show that the interviews wanted to "be them",[268] replace themselves with the slaves of the time and call out from their voices. After this period, I came across more frequent use of expressions such as, "Now that I am putting myself in the slaves' shoes...". Being them also brought about the necessity to question slavery at the same time. This questioning created various debates within the family. The sides were divided in three categories of those who defended slavery by emphasizing that it was a rooted tradition, those who criticized it by rejecting its legitimacy and those who tried to justify slavery by saying that it used to exist in the form of servitude.

Past efforts to justify the past also caused an opposing group to appear. This part, which consists mostly of left-wing university grduates, had a favorable attitude towards confrontation. In the period after 2005, individual people who favored confrontation were more visible. Many of those who advocated that history must

[268] Ibid. p.160.

be questioned were members of the free peasant class. I also encountered individuals belonging to the noble families. It was over ten years since I started negotiations in 1996, but even those who stood by confrontation did not let me get record videos or audio recordings of them. Even after ten years, this subject was still a taboo that many people were uncomfortable with and unwilling to talk about. In 2006, we were able to about this issue on a larger scale, and we were confronting it, but the interviews happened in the condition that I only took notes and kept the names confidential. As Paul Thompson put it, "the ability to listen and make people speak" [269]was one of the characteristics of a researcher who made an oral history. In addition, it was necessary for someone who was engaged in slavery studies to learn to listen to people with patience and to develop his ability to make them talk.

From 2006 to 2012, I had the opportunity to interview people from the Circassian diaspora which occured outside Turkey. I married my wife, a Syrian Circassian, in 2005, and even though I had gone to Syria before, I had the opportunity to revisit Syria, Jordan and Israel again by 2011. The findings at the end of this six-year period showed that contrary to Turkey, slavery was abandoned by Circassians living in the Arab world. It was an old phenomenon that could barely be remembered by people over seventy years old but was no longer in society at all. Unlike in Turkey, the slave pasts of the families were not mentioned in the case of marriages, and the words of slavery like "wuneut" were not used as insults. Although some marriage processes were mentioned about the 1920s and 1930s, no one remembered anything after the 1950s. One of the interviewers summarized the situation as follows: "After the Ottoman withdrew from these places, a few Circassians remained. If we were to let this matter of nobility divide us, we would have to marry Arabs. We decided that it was better to perform marriages within slave families. Therefore, we managed to survive as Circassians..."

In 2012, the online newspaper "Guşıps" was established for the Turkish Circassian community. The founders of the site were among my close friends and they had formed a structure in which all kinds of topics could be discussed easily.

[269] Thompson, Paul, "Geçmişin Sesi Sözlü Tarih", İstanbul, 1999, p.19.

Because they knew that I had been trying to conduct oral history research on many different issues among the Circassians since 1996, they asked me to write these memories and publish them on their sites. In 2013 I wrote my first article and published it on the site under the title "Circassian Araksi", in which I touched upon the Armenian-Circassian relations of 1915 from a distinct perspective. My second article was on slavery. For whatever reason, this article about slavery initiated more attention and discussions than the first one.

A new era began when I started turning slave memories into literary texts and publishing them on the website. Now the people I went to interview were worried that one day the memories they told me could be taken and posted on the internet or perhaps in a book. Until 2013, nobody thought that these memories could be written one day, so they were conveying the events with less censorship. However, as a result of the dissemination of the writings at the Guşips site in 2013 via social media, I experienced a great loss as a researcher. Now fewer interviewers agreed to interview me on slavery, and those who did prefered to transfer them in a censored manner. I could understand this from the narrator's attitude and the carefully selected words.

In 2013, when slavery began to be debated in social media and wider areas, the idea of studying this subject in the form of a postgraduate thesis has emerged. The necessity of being the voice of the white slaves and laying bare the memories of these marginalized people forced me to write on other channels than an internet journal. The idea of writing a thesis on white slaves was shaped in this period. In the case of writing such a thesis, I decided to use these interviews to evaluate this subject differently than previously written theses and books.

I started my master's degree in the History department of Istanbul Bilgi University in 2015 and one of the subjects I set as my thesis topic was slavery. In February 2016, I decided to write this thesis. Paul Thompson says, "Oral evidence allows us to extract the object being searched from the position of 'object' into a 'subject' so that not only the richer but more precise and more painful, but more real,

history can be formed.".[270] This statement brings us to white slaves, the realities of the history which ended on these lands.

4.1.4. Generations and Slave Narratives;

In 1909, as a result of incoming requests, Mehmed V issued an edict prohibiting Circassians to be bought and sold as black slaves.[271] The edict also completely forbid the 'white slave' trade. The trade of the last white slaves in the world was also banned in 1909. The white slave trade was forbidden by this decree. However, the 'Circassian slavery', which was a major resource for this trade, was untouched and slavery was not prohibited in the country. After 1909, in the regions where Circassians lived collectively, such as Aziziye, some slaves demanded their freedom based on this edict and various judicial cases were experienced. In 1922, when the Sultanate was abolished, the concubines in the imperial harem of Mehmed VI were handed over to their families, and concubinage and slavery in Istanbul was thought to be over. However, what ended up was the slavery and concubinage within the imperial harem. There were white slaves in the upper-class households of Istanbul, other big cities and rural settlements of the Circassians. Circassian slavery continued to exist as a social structure.

In this part of the thesis, by analyzing the recall, space and repression and the witnesses, we will try to elucidate what happened to the white slaves in 1909 and the evolution of Circassian slavery. In all the interviews I have conducted about 'Circassian slavery' and 'white slaves', the narrators avoided talking about this 'sensitive' issue. Some of them even warned me saying, *"Let's talk about anything but please do not go into the subject of slavery!"*. There were also those who said, *"Why on earth are you so worried about the problem of slaves?"*. Some elderly women, probably out of curiosity, whispered in my ear, asking me if I had belonged to a family of slave background. There were also those who advised me with words such as, *"How inappropriate!* Haynape! *Slavery is an old practice. One should not open up these topics!"*. Some blatantly expressed the futility of my research by

[270] Ibid. p. 88.
[271] Tosun. ibid. p. 83.

saying, *"The slaves suffered a lot indeed. But it's all forgotten now. How is it beneficial for anyone to talk about these things?"* Because I was not able to make anyone talk about this subject in the early stages of my research, I started to bring up the subject of 'slavery' and 'slaves' in indirect ways. Some speakers who said that there were no slaves in their villages, when they found it difficult to answer some questions, ended their sentences by simply saying, *"They were slaves, so that's why..."* Those who said *"We did not have slaves but so and so family had them"*, usually talked about other people they once knew who had slaves. Apparently, the ones who did not want to talk about their own slaves seemed to have no difficulty in talking about the slaves of other people.

The intergenerational transfer of slavery was also explicitly expressed. "My grandfather told me like this, my grandmother said, I heard this way from my aunt..." were often repeated expressions. Most of the accounts of the first quarter of the 20th century were expressed in the way my interviews heard it from their grandfathers or grandmothers. Born in the period from 1915 to 1925, the oldest interviews gave the information to illuminate this period with first-hand testimonies.

Some of the interviews born between 1915 and 1925 said that their grandfathers were born in the Caucasus, and they also expressed memories about the exile they heard from them. The descendants of the Caucasian grandfathers born in Anatolia and their third-generation grandchildren born in the first quarter of the 20th century had witnessed that slavery was alive, and that people continued to be bought and sold in some places. Memories of slavery between the three generations resembled each other but were getting weaker and diminishing. This meant that a period was closed with the memories of the witnesses of the last slave sales during the post-1930 period.

No interview expressed that there was sale trade after 1945. They did not witness such sale, nor did they hear any sales after that date. Apparently, the last white slaves in Anatolia were sold out or given away in the form of marriages by 1945. It was expressed during many interviews that the last representatives of the

generation born in the Caucasus in the pre-exile period between 1850 and1860 died in the 1950s. The disappearance of this generation coincided with the turning point in which rural-urban migration started. According to the information I gathered from the interviewers, there was no Caucasus-born people living in Anatolia in the 1960s. The intergenerational transfer would continue with the testimony of the second and third generations born in Anatolia after this date.

4.1.5. Social Classes and Slavery Narrations

It was correct that slavery was a private and delicate matter and the families did not wish to face their pasts. Slavery was intimate, delicate, and the families no longer wanted to confront their slave past. Therefore, I tried to conduct interviews with families from three different classes. The Circassian society in general consisted of these three classes: The noble families (*'pşı'* and *'work'*), free free-born families and slave families. Within these three groups, the people I had the most comfortable conversation with were individuals from families of free-born peasants. According to them, slavery had been practiced among the gentry and slave families, and they had only witnessed this without playing an active role in this dynamic. In general, the individuals from families of lords usually began talking about the subject by sentences such as, *"Our grandparents did have slaves, but they took good care of them..."*. 'Taking good care of' those slaves probably meant that they tormented them a little less. Other members of families of lords would say, *"The free-born peasants had slaves, as well. It was not just us..."*, which confirms that slavery was operated in line with economic conditions.

The situations in which I found it the hardest to bring up the subject of 'slavery' were the interviews with the individuals coming from slave families. In some, the speaker scolded me and ended the conversation, and some of them switched to a totally different topic after saying, *''They gave you the wrong information, nobody in my family was a slave!''*. Some hypothesized that slaves could not have a family name saying, *"We have a family name, so we were not slaves!"*. There were few of those who actually admitted the involvement of their family with slavery. Most of the individuals facing this confrontation were

financially well-off. They reinterpreted the network of relations between slavery and the economy by comparing their wealth to the poverty of the noble families in recent times.

4.1.6. Being an Insider

My biggest advantage as a person trying to make oral history on white slaves and Circassian slavery was being an insider. In the Circassian society, which had a closed social social structure, it was not possible for an outside researcher to come and conduct oral history research on a subject such as slavery in the 90s. In order to encourage the narrator, I used the expressions such as "I know of that situation even if you don't tell me about it..." at the points where I was stuck in these interviews in which I followed the records of the white slaves.

Hiding, not telling and forgetting hardly worked when the researcher who was interviewing had a good grip of the subject. The interviews continued in a thin line between trying not to frighten the narrator but also allowing him to share his memories. I often encouraged the interviewer by giving examples of my own family life saying, "My grandfather told this situation to me in this manner..." or "According to what our grand aunt told us...". In some cases, I even provoked them while they were talking. Despite all these efforts, there were people who told a lot by without actually saying anything and ended the interview. " An old woman replied to me, "If you know all of this so well, why are you asking us?". She skillfully maneuvered and sent me empty-handed after an interview which lasted two hours. Slavery was a sensitive issue, and as an insider, I was learning not to transgress my boundaries.

I began conducting interviews related to 'slavery' for the first time in 1996; the very first interviews I conducted were with my family and relatives. By their reference, I continued to record data by interviewing people in other villages and towns. Every speaker I have interviewed was hesitant when talking about this 'sensitive' issue. There were many of people who brushed it off by saying that they did not remember anything related to the subject.

In every case, I was trying to determine which questions I should ask as an insider and which subjects I should not enter, and to reach the goal by carefully proceeding without distress and disrespect. As a result of the interviews I tried to conduct without crossing any boundaries, reaching a memory of slaves was a long and difficult process. As a member of Circassian society, I was also aware of what I should ask of the interviewer, and if I were to let him go, there was a high possibility of getting lost in the endless praising of the past. Being an insider was most useful when I encountered observers who tried to end the conversation by saying, "There was no such thing as slavery in Circassians!". I can say that an outsider researcher would have a hard time in this case.

4.1.7. Gender and Slavery Narrations

According to my findings, women were less uncomfortable talking about 'slavery' than men. Especially in the case of some elderly women; they would start talking by saying, *"If I do not tell you about this, nobody will..."* and in the later stages of the interview, would tell everything there was to know about their village as if they were some sort of local authority. The elderly men were willing to make long speeches about various matters in order to use it as a method to avoid talking about slavery. I was rarely able to get valuable information from elderly men related to slavery. In this case, the elderly woman of the house saying, *''If you do not tell him, I will!''* played a quite significant role in making the men go into the subject of slavery.

Particularly, women and especially elderly women tended to share or confess the pains of slavery by using expressions such as "They made a lot of people suffer, they were cursed, they got what they deserved...". Some of these elderly women belonging to the free peasantry group stated that they thought differently about slaves in their youth. They said they were in an acceptance expressed in the form of "What can you do? This is our custom...". There were also those who accused a senior generation of saying, "I was young, I had seen it like this from my aunts...". There were many women who confessed that they changed as they grew up, that they were very sad for the slaves, and that the slaves suffered so much.

Men, on the other hand, shared fewer narratives because they generally avoided talking about slavery. The elderly men who agreed to speak about the subject usually said that this was their custom. Some of the slave-owner and elderly people often said that they also had slaves, but they took care of them very well and did not oppress them. İnterviews from different regions said, "When I went to another village, I could tell who was a slave girl because they would be more beautiful, whiter and more attractive...". A narrator who said, "God is not just! The slave girls would be prettier. While the daughters of lords would be spinsters, there would be great competition for the slave girls..." later revealed that he also negotiated with the family of such a slave girl but that they could not get married.

4.1.8. Memory and Final Remarks

The issue of slavery became a topic of conversation probably for the first time in 87 years after its abolishment in 1909. Circassians preferred to remain silent until this time. No researcher who was an outsider to the Circassian culture emerged who had dared to study such a private subject. Most of the writings on slavery were to be interpretation and evaluation of the archival documents. I aimed to find an answer to the question of what happened to white slaves and Circassian slavery after 1909.

However, when the topic of 'marriage' came to the forefront, the slave pasts of the families were kept in their collective consciousness, ready to be shoved in their faces. The names of the slave families in the region were not recorded in the documents but this valuable information has been transferred to the present day in the village's memory. This memory was refreshed when the subject of 'marriage' came about and most of their marriages were prevented by threats saying, *"They are a slave family. It cannot be!"*. Although slave trade was banned in 1909, it still continued to exist among Circassians and Abazins as a valid practice and a social phenomenon which was remembered at relevant times.

The question we had most difficulty in taking the answer, whether we asked it to a lord, slave or free-born peasant, was *"Why do Circassians not marry slaves?"*

Many answers were given regarding class distinctions, economic differences and social status, yet nobody provided us with a satisfying answer. The subject of slavery was 'fragile' as much as it was 'private'. The 'stain' that was covered up by this veil would be revealed in an interview we conducted in 2016.

May 2017 concluded the oral history interviews that I started in 1996. In this context, I had the opportunity to interview two hundred and thirty-two speakers from fifteen cities in Turkey. Among the people I interviewed were Circassian and Abazin intellectuals who had contemplated upon this issue for a long time. I tried to carry the discussion through the narrated incidents by respecting individual rights. While revealing these narrations, I paid special attention to keeping the names of the persons, the villages, the towns and the families fully confidential. In the footnotes, I provided information regarding only the social class of the person narrating the incident.

The final part of the thesis consists of evaluations made through one hundred interviews selected from oral history interviews and related narrations.

4.2. Circassian Slavery and Assimilation

We stated earlier that children and adults who were kidnapped from neighboring tribes and foreign captives abducted during war played the most significance role in the slave production mechanisms of Circassians. These prisoners, most of whom were of foreign nationalities, were placed among the current slaves of the lords and taught the Circassian customs and language. Afterwards, they would be sold as 'Circassian slaves'. Although the fact that these white slaves were not actually Circassian was known to the slave traders. However, they were 'Circassian slaves' for the people in the Ottoman cities, where there was always an infinite demand for slaves. These people, mostly Russian and Kazakh in the north and Georgian in the south, aimed to spend the rest of their lives in the rich mansions of big cities where they would play the role of 'Circassian slaves' as they entered a non-reversible path. By learning the Circassian customs, traditions and language, these 'white' slaves, who were captured in war and torn away from their

own roots, tried to establish themselves as Circassian slaves in the households to which they were sold. We can say that these 'white' slaves enslaved in the Caucasus were assimilated among the previously enslaved Circassians. Another variation of the 'false identities' and the assimilation that arises during discussions regarding Circassian slavery is the cultural assimilation of these white slaves among Circassian counterparts.

In addition, people living in Istanbul's wealthiest mansions, who had been employing slaves in their homes for four or five generations, did not want to buy slaves that were not the best, i.e. not Circassian. Besides, the ruling elite class' demand lured the most expensive and most preferred slaves into coming to Istanbul.[272] Originally Circassian or not, the white slaves continued to live in these mansions for a while after the Edict of 1909, eventually leaving their places to non-slave brides and thus ending the slavery in the big cities.

However, there are also findings suggesting that Circassians who settled in Ottoman territories after the exile and some of their slaves were assimilated in these new life conditions and mixed with the Ottoman society and the new post-Republic Turkish society respectively. In this second assimilation process, policies practiced by the administrators of Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic played a big role along with the social problems of Circassians. We previously mentioned several times in the oral history studies that the slaves of the Circassians did not have strong ties to the Circassian culture and they were more inclined to adopt the language and culture of the household to which they were sold. For these slaves the 'Circassian identity' was at the very center of their past as slaves and exactly what they wanted to forget was the past. As the white slaves became accustomed to their new households, they started to rapidly move away from their past in terms of language and culture. These slaves, experiencing a new identity process, isolated themselves from their Circassian identities as new ones such as Ottomanization and Islamization came their way.

[272] Erdem. ibid. p. 85.

The first oral history narrative presents an anecdote which reveals the situation in the pre-exile Caucasus and its reflections after a hundred years. According to this narration, The Russian or Kazakh boys who were brought in as prisoners of war in the Caucasus would get their hair cut off and they would be say to them, *"Do not cry. Soon, your hair will grow and you will become a Circassian."* In 4-5 years, these children would forget their former customs and traditions and grow up as a Circassian to be sold as a slave. The narrator, who is a member of the free-born peasantry, also tells the story of her sister, who had alopecia, being shaved by her mother in 1992. Upon seeing the girl's buzzcut, her Nenej (grandmother) scolded the mother saying, *''What is this atrocity? What have you done to my granddaughter?''*.[273]

In another oral history narration from an interview from the free-born peasantry, Ottoman Empire considered the harsh living conditions of non-Turk Circassians who came to their territories as an opportunity to integrate them into Ottoman society. Also, just like the *devshirme* who were brought from the Balkans, orphan children were taken and given to Muslim-Turk families in order to learn Islam and become Turkish.

> *''When the girl was sold, she could not speak a word of Turkish. She did not know a single salah prayer. After seven years passed, when the girl came to the funeral of her father, nobody could recognize her because she was wearing a big headscarf. She also performed a beautiful recitation of Ya Sin in a group of women and made prayers to her deceased father.''*[274]

It was also claimed that Ottoman Empire attempted to keep the power away from Circassian lords by allowing them to continue selling the last of their slaves and ensured the assimilation of the Circassians into the Ottoman society by separating the Circassian slaves from their communities. As it can be understood from this narration, the trade and integration of the Circassian slaves into Turkish

[273] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 1999.03.14.
[274] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2001.05.21.

and Muslim households paved the way for their Islamization and Turkification. Circassian slaves who learned the language and religion of the household to which they were sold spent their lives with their new identities because they were torn from their families in the villages, and tried to to stay as far away from their slave past as possible.

Another oral history narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry tells the story of assimilation. In this narration, during a looting done by Circassians who were relocated in Dobruja village after the year 1864, a Bulgarian girl was abducted and given to a slave household. They cut her hair and she gradually forgot her own identity in the time she spent with the slave family and she grew up raised as a Circassian. It is mentioned that she then was sold to the palace of Cemile Sultan in Istanbul as a Circassian slave and completed her life in this palace living as a Circassian.[275] The bloody Bulgarian revolts encountered by the Circassians during their resettlement in Rumelia between 1864-1878 and the stories of the enslaved Bulgarians who were Circassianized and Islamized held a significant place in the Circassian memory. Apparently, some Circassians caused the enslavement of Bulgarians by using the Bulgarian revolts as a means to include these people in the slave production mechanisms.

Another narration also tells the story of the Circassianification of a Bulgarian girl and her marriage as a Circassian. According to this narration; the Circassians who were exiled from the Balkans after the '93 War brought their slaves with them. Ottoman administration planned to relocate them in the Kütahya area but some of them went to Bilecik. The narrator who is a member of the free-born peasantry has stated that her mother came from Bulgaria with these Circassians, but she did not know the Circassian language and learned it afterwards. The narrator indicates that her mother had probably been a Bulgarian or Pomak girl but she did not remember it accurately. The Circassian lord of this group would sell slaves at times of need but he took care of the narrator's mother as if she was his own daughter. The narrator mentions that her mother was married to a man from

[275] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2005.08.14.

Odunpazarı around the age of 15-16 but that she was never sold as a slave. She also adds that her slave grandmother never went to that village after the Circassian lord's death and that she separated all her bonds with the peasants who knew the past of the village. The narrator stated that her grandmother died in 1954 and that in the first years of her marriage to an Abkhazian man from Bursa in 1965, people found out about her slave roots and talked negatively about her. She states that this subject was mentioned even though it happened many years ago.[276] It is important that the slave past of the narrator's grandmother was considered to hinder her marriage as late as 1965. If slavery brought with it a 'stain', the families could not get rid of it no matter what they did. In this respect, the desire 'to not remember' and 'to forget' came to the forefront of slave narratives. This narration is an interesting example of assimilation and social stratification.

Mustafa Olpak, known for his studies on black slaves, stated in his book: "My grandfather was a slave. The first generation experiences, the second generation denies, the third generation investigates..."[277] However, it is necessary to state that the grandchildren of the white slaves are not ready to face such a confrontation. Instead of confronting, many of them are doing their best to forget this past and never remember it again. The desire to not remember and forget prevents us from having enough information about identities such as male and female slaves, eunuchs and concubines. Was it a part of the nature of Circassian identities to be largely untouched and unwritten, except for the limited testimony of the European travelers?[278] In addition to the journeys of the Europeans, the harem and palace remembrances shed light on only a limited part of this period. It is necessary to state that how the white slavery was practiced in Anatolian cities and rural areas can only be revealed by carrying out memory studies.

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[276] Interview with a free-born peasant in Eskişehir, 2001.12.15.

[277] Olpak, Mustafa. (2006). *Kenya-Girit-İstanbul Köle Kıyısından İnsan Biyografileri*. İstanbul. p. 7.

[278] Bozdoğan, Sibel - Kasaba, Reşat. (1998). *Türkiye'de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik*. İstanbul. p. 101.

Another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry touches upon the misery that Circassians experienced after the exile. It states that the Ottoman administration adopted an indifferent attitude towards this and tried to utilize this situation to separate orphan Circassian children and slaves to isolate them from their own roots and Turkify them.

> *''They were struggling with so much hunger and misery... but the state did not care! They stole the animals of the neighboring villages so that their families did not starve. There were also women who could not afford to take care of their children, so they had to sell them to the rich. What else could they do? They sold one of their children so that they could afford to feed her other four children. If she did not sell one of them, all of them would die.''*[279]

According to another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry, the Ottoman government aimed at weakening the labor force of Circassian lords by allowing for slave trade. Thus, these lords were subjected to government authority. In addition, it is also stated that the slaves who were sold mixed with society and became Turkicized; the homogeneity of these villages disappeared as Turks settled in Circassian villages with scarce population.

> *''My grandfather used to tell me this story. When the first lords came to our village, they brought forty slaves with them. They were quite powerful for some time. Then when their financial situation got worse, they sold all of these slaves to a Turk one by one. These lords even separated a woman from her husband and sold her. How cruel! So the slaves became Turkified. What did you expect? The money had not been good for the lords and their leader died in a short time. My dad used to say that the curses of the slaves took effect.''*[280]

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[279] Interview with a free-born peasant in Çorum, 2001.11.14.

[280] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2006.04.29.

Another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry states that exogamous marriages between slave Circassian girls and Turkish men and free-born Circassian girls with Turkish men were followed by marriages between Circassian men and Turkish girls. Assimilation occurred in these marriages and no trace of Circassian culture was left in those areas. According to this narration, in the late 1930s, a Circassian lord sold one of his slaves to a friend who was from one of the wealthiest families of Tokat. Although the girl was brought to the house as a maid, the young man fell in love with the girl and they were engaged regardless of the disapproval of the man's parents. The slave girl kept going to her village and stayed in touch with her family. She then arranged the marriage of four other girls from her village to the sons of wealthy families in Tokat. Because these slave girls who got married lived a prosperous life, the free-born families in the village tried to get their daughters to marry wealthy families in order to obtain *'vase'* (dowry money). This effort became almost like a race among the families. Thus, external marriages which started with slaves then affected the whole village; the men of the village were obligated to marry girls from nearby Turkish villages since most of the girls in their own village were married off to other villages.

> *''A lord used to sell his slaves to wealthy Turks in Tokat. He sold quite a lot of slaves in a period of three to five months. These slave girls had such a comfortable life... Even the girls of the village who were not slaves began to envy them. So what? Our men took Turkish girls when most of the girls got married and went to the town. Were they supposed to die single?''*[281]

As a result of this situation, it is claimed that there was no Circassians were left in this village and assimilation took place..

Another oral narrative told by a lord who stated that he was from a noble family in the ..... district of Çorum states that slavery still existed as late as 1940. Turkish guests were served by the slaves of the household and Circassian

[281] Interview with a free-born peasant in Amasya, 2003.11.14.

women were not allowed to serve foreigners. The narration also mentions the Turkification process of a girl who was bought for the price of a horse by a gendarmerie officer who often visited the house. According to this, the narrator describes the gendarmerie officer as a kind-hearted man and states that he got the young girl an identity card to officially take her as a wife and that he served office in many parts of Turkey until he settled in Izmir. The peasants found out that the Circassian lord who was a friend of the young girl made her living with the letters he wrote to her daughter, this young girl who did not speak a word of Turkish learned the language in a short amount of time. The narrator also pointed out that the young girl had never mentioned anyone about her past as a slave, forgotten Circassian and that she is now living a life away from Circassians and her past as a slave. It must also be considered that this Turkification process is also a process of isolating oneself from an unpleasant past as a slave.[282]

Apparently, this sale, which took place at the beginning of the 1940s, belonged to the last slave sold in the country. The narrator, who lived among these slaves during his childhood, expressed that he learned many of the old Circassian songs, poems and stories from these slaves in the house. According to the narrator, the slaves were special people who carried and conveyed the Circassian culture. With the sale of these slaves, the Circassians did not only lose the individuals but also deprived themselves of their cultural carriers; the narrator added that after the sale of these slaves, there were no men left to play the accordion in some villages.

According to another narration told by a member of free-born peasantry, slavery was a common practice among Kosovo Circassians who managed to stay in the Balkans after the Treaty of Berlin (1878). Also, when a big immigration occurred in Yugoslavia in the 1950s, Circassians who were in the slave class also came to Istanbul but they did not mix with the other Circassians because they did not have family names. Some of these slaves preferred to isolate themselves from Circassian communities in fear that their slave backgrounds would be used against them and they usually practiced external marriages. It is also stated that when they

[282] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Çorum, 2007.03.16.

went to the ..... province of Çanakkale in the 1970s, people implied that they were slaves even after decades. They never went to ..... again and tried to distance themselves from the Circassian society. As a result of this situation, a significant portion of Kosovo Circassians, open for assimilation, forgot their Circassian roots and adapted to living among Turks.

> *''One day the men in my village asked my boss his family name. When the poor man said he did not know, they came to the conclusion that he was from a slave family. I later learned that he was indeed from a family of slaves. At that moment, there was such tension in the air. Imagine, the man owned a big factory in Merter but he was just a slave to the people of my village. I felt embarrassed, of course. After this, the man never set foot on our village again and tried avoided interacting with me at the factory...''*[283]

In the next narrative told by a member of a noble family; It is argued that even in the 1960s, because of the class distinction that preserved its influence in the Circassian society, and the negative consequences of this division, the immigration to the big industrialized cities began to end slavery and open doors for assimilation. The narration tells an incident which happened in a village near Uzunyayla in 1959. While the men of the village were gathered in the mosque listening to the sermon, a man from a slave family entered the mosque and, probably out of forgetfulness, sat on the first row. Upon this, one of the noble persons of the village took him by the shoulders, dragged him outside of the mosque and repeatedly kicked him there. The whole village witnessed this and other lords tried to stop them but the lord did not listen to any of them. It is also narrated that he reacted by saying, *''Everyone must know their place! These slaves are spoiled. I've had enough!''*. Two days after this incident, even the imam of the mosque was too scared to interfere, this slave and his family left the village and did not return to the village or Uzunyayla ever again. The narrator pointed out that the slave families who found out about the

[283] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Istanbul, 2008.02.04.

family's departure went to Istanbul and after a while there was nobody left to do the chores in the village. In fact, one of the lords emphasized how industrialization and urbanization put an end to Circassian slavery with these words: *''Neither the sultan edicts nor the laws of the Republic... None of them harmed us as much as the infidel machines of Istanbul.''*[284]

Another oral history narration from a member of a free-born family mentions a woman from a slave family who was exposed to both class discrimination and assimilation. She avoided visiting her own village in order to forget her slave background and her roots before she was Circassianized. According to this narration, this woman was called 'Circassian Aunt' in her neighborhood in Sivas but 'Necibe the Slave' in her village. So, she only visited her village every other five years when a relative passed away. It is mentioned that this woman came from a family of Russian captives. She was known as Circassian Lady in Sivas and was respected as if she were royalty. She died in 1972.[285]

Apparently, the white slaves, originally Circassian or not, experienced a serious identity crisis. In their villages, they were regarded as second-class persons and were barely treated as human beings. In the new households to which they were sold, however, people called them by words of endearment such as 'Circassian mother', 'Circassian Lady' and 'Circassian aunt'. Although they were often forced to be confronted with their slave pasts by their mother-in-law, they were not as marginalized as they had been in their villages. The desire to break away from the village of one's birth was another expression of the desire to forget one's slave past. These slaves refrained from going to the villages where they were born. They were trying to exist as Islamized and Turkified identities in the new towns or cities to which they belonged.

However, some authors such as Halide Edip Adıvar mentioned in their writings that Circassians could never became Turkified or even Islamicized. Halide

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[284] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Istanbul, 2009.11.24.
[285] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2006.03.07.

Edip Adıvar, in her novel *Sinekli Bakkal*, describes an elderly Circassian concubine, as follows:

> *"This old Circassian does not know the meaning of the word 'religion'. She cannot even recite the full name of the Prophet. Her memory is so bad that she could not memorize the basic salah prayers. Although she had been in Istanbul for fifty-five years, she still could not speak Turkish properly."*[286]

While some Turkish writers such as Halide Edip Adıvar emphasized the fact that the Circassians were not able to become Turks and good Muslims despite having been in this society for many years, the situation varied by region.

As a result, the oral history narrations we have analyzed in this chapter present two types of assimilation in Circassian society. The first one consists of adults and children of Russian, Bulgarian, Armenian descent who were Circassianized during the enslavement process. The second one mentions the slave trade with Turks, social stratification, industrialization and rural-urban migration that caused slave and free-born Circassians to be Turkicized before the Ottoman period and Republic of Turkey. The industrialized society and migrations, in addition to its causal effects on the decrease in feudal and local bonds in all of Turkish society, caused Circassians to mix with the Turkish society and become assimilated. Some Turkish authors stressed that the Circassians could not become Turkicized or Islamized even though they had been in the Ottoman society for many years. This situation changed from region to the region.

When the Circassians migrated to the Ottoman territories, they brought 150,000 slaves with them.[287] It is thought that the Circassians, by selling most of their slaves from 1864 to the 1950s, caused them to join the Anatolian society and become Turkicized. According to the information we have obtained from interviews, no slave trade was detected in the villages after the 1950s. The white

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[286] Schick. ibid. p. 139.

[287] BOA, İrade-Meclis-i Mahsus, 1409.

slaves, who experienced a new identity acquisition process by learning the language, religions, and traditions of the households to which they were sold, were commemorated in many of the interviews as Circassian grandmothers or Circassian ladies.

4.3. Circassian Relations with the Imperial Court and the Reflections of the Edict of 1909

In the mid-19th century, the number of Circassians in Ottoman military and bureaucracy increased. Circassian slaves and concubines had been increasing their influence and forming a hegemony in the Ottoman harem since the beginning of the century.[288] This had a big impact on this increase. The Circassian hegemony in the imperial harem started during the reign of Sultan Abdulmejid and reached its peak during the reign of Abdul Hamid. Circassians used their power in the harem masterfully; they had ranks in the military, intelligence offices and bureaucracy in under just fifty years.

This situation is demonstated in our oral history narrations with different perspectives and examples. According to one of these narrations told by a member of a noble family, a Circassian lord settled in Izmit after the Exile and his sister entered the Palace as a servant. It is stated that this free-born Circassian woman, who managed to enter the Ottoman court as a servant and considered this to be a big career opportunity for herself, gradually created a slave trade network with her brother. These two used to raise slaves in the palace. They expanded their customer portfolio and started providing slaves for the wealthiest families of İstanbul. It is stated that this Circassian lord lived a very prosperous life even though he did not practice agriculture of livestock and he gained enormous profits through the slave trade he made with her sister to the imperial court and the wealthy households of İstanbul.

"Their relatives would never accept the fact that their great aunts and uncles got rich by selling slaves. But that was the case. I do

[288] Hasan Amca. (1953). ibid. p. 24-25.

not think that is something to be condemned. They placed the girls in rich mansions or the Ottoman imperial harem, where they would have a comfortable life and helped the families of the girls to come to Istanbul. Thanks to these girls, many men in our village made their way to Istanbul where they acquired prestigious ranks as officers...''[289]

The demand for slaves, which was quite high, directed this Circassian lord to various quests. It is understood that after selling all of his slaves, he first tried to meet this demand by selling the slaves in the surrounding villages and then the free Circassians living a difficult life after the exile.

According to many of the narrations, thanks to the influences of the women in the imperial harem, they also got their own families to be employed in the imperial court. Each time the topic of the women who were sold to the imperial court came up, the narrators always specified whether the woman in question was the daughter of a Circassian lord or of a free-born peasant. Apparently, these girls sold or given to the imperial court were separated into two groups as slaves or free-born peasants. The relationship between these slave and free women and the authority was always mentioned together with the fact that the families of these girls were employed in the imperial court or in prestigious positions of civil service. *''For example, Circassian Hacı Madmud Efendi, an Imperial Kalfa and the father of Cavide Hanım, was assigned as the Master of Ceremonies.''*[290] There were also ones who did not find this situation odd and narrated it as being one of the career tools utilized during this period.

A similar situation is mentioned in another narrative told by a member of the free-born peasantry. It is understood from this narrative that the Circassian lords included their own children in this process when it was understood that entering the palace and the elite families of Istanbul as slaves or concubines was an important opportunity. They were trying to form a line of descent with the imperial court and

[289] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Istanbul, 2011.05.14.

[290] Marşanoğlu. ibid. p. 36.

the elite families of Istanbul. In addition, the social isolation of these people from the Circassian society caused them to mingle with Ottoman culture and become assimilated.[291]

Another interview who was a member of the free-born peasantry, based on their own experiences, stated that these exported or sold girls were exposed to such assimilation and Turkification that they were unable to speak their mother tongue after a while.

> *''Whether given to the harem or the* konaks *of Istanbul, these girls returned to their villages after a certain period of time as Istanbulite ladies who could not speak a word of Circassian or Abaza. My mother told me in a sad tone that one of her girlfriends, who was married off to a Turkish man in Istanbul at a very young age, could not speak her mother tongue except for a few sentences when she returned to her village. She also stated that the girl did not speak a word of Turkish when she was given away as a bride. ... ''*[292]

According to another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry which mentions the Circassians in Balıkesir, the relationship between the Circassian communities and the Ottoman Palace is noteworthy. Circassian lords realized the significance of the relations slave girls formed in the Ottoman harem. By selling their own daughters as slaves to the imperial court, they gained financial benefits and were trying to gain influence through these girls. The Circassian phenomenon, which was effective during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz, also produced political effects. The mysterious murder of Sultan Abdulaziz following his dethronement and the bad treatment to his family caused Circassian Lieutenant Hasan, who was brother-in-law of the Sultan, to plot the assassination of the statesmen responsible for the Sultan's murder. These incidents played a significant role on the discourse of the Ottoman Empire. These murders and commotion caused Murat V to leave

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[291] Interview with a free-born peasant in Adapazarı, 2008.12.27.

[292] Interview with a free-born peasant in Sakarya, 2000.04.16.

the throne to Abdul Hamid II due to psychological disorders.[293] Another data provided by this narration is that the Circassian slave and concubines in the early stages of the Second Constitutional Era were taken from the imperial court and given their liberty thanks to the efforts of Circassian Cooperation Society. [294]

Another interview from the free-born peasantry explained that Abdul Hamid II was a very popular sultan among the Circassians and that Circassians regarded him as one of their own people:

> *"My grandfather called Abdülhamit 'the Circassian Sultan'. His mother, grandmother, nannies... they were all Circassian. He says that 3 girls were sold to the Court from this village alone. There were other villages, as well. So Circassians conquered the court of Abdülhamit and they did this thanks to those slaves whom they did not take very kindly of in the village!''*[295]

Another narrator from the free-born peasantry also reported his remembrance of Vahdettin, the last sultan of the Ottoman Empire. According to this narration, the last 'first lady' of the Ottoman Empire was an Abkhazian woman named Emine Marşan Nazikeda. It is known that Circassian slaves and concubines in the palaces of Vahdettin and his sister Ulviye Sultan were members of prestigious Circassian families and they were entrusted to the dynasty during the Russian invasion. It is also stated that these Circassian slaves and concubines entered the households of the Ottoman elite through marriages and Circassian slavery in Ottoman households maintained despite the sultan's edict in 1909 which banned slave trade.[296]

Another member of a free-born peasant family mentioned the distinction between Circassians and Abkhazians, who were given, sold or gifted to the imperial

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[293] Zürcher, Erik Jan. (2014). *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 29. Baskı, p. 116.

[294] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2012.09.16.

[295] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2003.04.04.

[296] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2014.11.05.

court. The interview stated that he met some of the 'Circassian and Abkhazian courtiers' who had served in the Ottoman court. The narrator expressed the differences between them according to what they said;

> *"Almost all of the Abkhazian girls I had met in the imperial court turned out to be the daughters of Abkhazian princes or nobles. Because Abkhazians had kingdoms and principals since the ancient times, they tried to establish a kinship with the Ottoman Palace via their daughters. They had practiced the same thing with the Byzantines and the Genoese. On the other hand, almost all of the Circassian girls in the imperial court were either descendants of the slaves of the Circassians, or the daughters of poor, deprived peasants... but later the Circassian lords also began to give their daughters to the imperial court in order to receive gifts and honor from the Court."*[297]

Following the declaration of the Second Constitution, Sultan Mehmed V issued an edict which banning slave trade under the pressures of the Unionists. This situation generated reactions among Circassian lords who made serious income through slave trade. Some of these reactions were recorded as a result of our oral history narrations.

A narrator from a free-born peasant family who stated that the Edict of 1909 was opposed by the Circassian lords expressed that the publication of the decree created a great joy among the Circassian slaves and that they applied to Kadı for the purpose of legally ensuring their liberty. However, the enactment only banned slave trade and made no remarks on the abolishment of slavery which meant that Circassian's joy would not last long. After the Circassians' dreams of liberation came to an end, the Circassian lords who benefitted from slave trade responded brutally to this situation. It is significant to note that the reason for these Circassians' anger towards the sultan's enactment was the abolishment of one of

[297] Interview with an Abkhazian intellectual in Istanbul, 2016.05.09.

their most rooted traditions. These Circassian lords who criticized the Sultan's enactment because of the decrease in income it caused, applied for a significant tradition in Circassian culture to justify themselves.[298]

Another oral history narration from a member of the free-born peasantry takes place in Sivas where a Circassian who was not pleased with the enactment of 1909 went up to the water fountain in front of the mosque and yelled, *''Sultan's decree does not apply to this village! Slavery is our custom, our Xabze, we have been practicing it for years, nobody can ban slavery!''* and the community including the Thamades supported him. Meanwhile, the slaves could not say anything in fear; there was not a slave revolt in the village except for some individual uprisings.[299]

> *"Of course the slaves were supposed to be silent, my son, what did you think? In the past, it was not possible for the slaves to speak to the lords. Even the free-born peasants were afraid to go and see these lords. For a slave to get up and stand up against his owner... These lords did not address their slaves with their names and called them 'mir', which meant 'it'. The old era was awful and extremely harsh. God blessed us when he demolished those lords and seigniory."*[300]

It is an interesting that a Circassian lord in a village of Sivas, a city in central Anatolia, had the courage to declare that he did not accept the Sultan's decrees. He clearly revolted against the Sultan who opened the doors of his country to his people 35-40 years ago and also carried the title of Khalifa. However, it is probable that this act did not reach the ears of government administrators in this introverted community. This attitude of the lord and the support that came from other men did not allow for the slaves to raise their voice. Although there were some slaves who tried to obtain freedom by fleeing the village, this situation was not common.

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[298] Interview with a free-born peasant in Sivas, 2015.04.11.
[299] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2014.01.25.
[300] Interview conducted in Sivas, 1998.09.17.

However, it is quite a significant response to come up to the water fountain on a Friday during prayer and declare the irrelevance of the sultan's enactment. This might have been a reason why this enactment became obsolete in this region. A narrator from a family of free-born peasants made the following remarks:

> *"I was born in 1922, and I stayed in the village until 1955. We are regular peasants and not a slave family. So I can speak freely about this subject. The law was practiced by* thamades, *the Circassian lords, in our village until the 1950s. They would get everything they wanted. They were the ones making the decisions regarding various situations in the village such as local disputes, fights, and marriages. This structure within the village resembled a military order and those who did not comply with this order were punished very badly. The* thamades *were very powerful until the end of the 1950s; it was impossible for a slave to stand up against this order. So the slaves would find a way to escape and covered their tracks."*[301]

Another oral history narration demonstrates one of the effects of the Edict of 1909 on slaves. According to this narration, some of the slaves and concubines in the wealthy households of Istanbul were living a better life compared to their previous lives and they did not want to lose this opportunity even for the price of 'freedom'. This situation demonstrates another aspect. It is difficult to estimate how many of these slaves and concubines wanted to remain free and return to their villages or tried to maintain their current life standards. A member of the free-born peasantry said, ''Probably, slaves living in rural areas were happy with the Edict of 1909 while slaves in big cities such as İstanbul, palaces and elite households were disappointed because of the concerns of losing their current life standards.''[302]

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[301] Interview with a free-born peasant in Çorum, 1996.04.16.

[302] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2012.09.24.

A narrator who stated that he was from a noble family expressed the dissatisfaction of the harems and mansions in Istanbul as follows:

> *"My grandmother served in the imperial court for two and a half years during the reign of Mehmed V, and then, I do not know how, retired at a young age which put her in a bad situation. So my grandfather took care of her and married her when she reached the age of nineteen. After he divorced his first wife, my grandmother became the lady of the house. She was very slender and tall; with her elegancy and pale skin, she reminded people of the artist Gene Tierney. We are the grandchildren of this noble Circassian lady. My late grandmother passed away in 1969. She told me that some stupid women in the palace wept and cried saying, "The government banned concubinage...". They would say, "What will we do now, where will we go, are we going to live in the streets? ... " These girls could not go back to their houses because they were torn from their parents, maybe they did not even remember them. My grandmother only knew that she was from Adapazarı. She used to say that she was Circassian, but I never remember her going to visit her relatives in her village."*[303]

A narrator, who stated that he was a member of the free-born peasantry although he was said by other people to be from a slave family, viewed the situation differently as a person who read about slavery. According to his narration, the true intention of the government was not to abolish slave trade but to weaken the resistance of Circassian lords who gained serious economic power from slave trade and ensure the integration of Circassian society by forcing them to obey the Ottoman laws. In addition, the government did not overlook the liberated slaves who migrated to territories where their slave backgrounds would not be used against them. On the one hand, the government tried to turn these people into Ottoman

[303] Interview conducted in İstanbul, 1996.11.13.

citizens in the communities they entered. On the other hand, it was a big step to ensure Circassian assimilation through the Turks who settled in Circassian villages. It is estimated that the abolishment of slave trade caused Circassian lords, whose biggest economic resource was taken away, to lose their old power and become regular individuals.[304]

As a result, after their exile to Ottoman territories, Circassians tried to gain influence through the slaves and concubines which they sold to the Ottoman palace and elite households of Istanbul. In addition to the financial profits of these sales, the influence that they achieved also provided great advantages for them. Because of this reason, the Edict of 1909 which prohibited Circassian slave trade was met with reactions in Circassian villages. It is clear that the Ottomans tried to assure Circassian assimilation by educating the slaves that they had bought and causing other slaves to be liberated in various ways.

The assimilation process of the minorities, which accelerated in the early 20th century, became one of the foundations of the authoritarian regime, especially during the one-party period. In the single-party period, politics in Turkey was trying to transform traditional and religious imperial conditions into an urban nation-state. Political leadership was aimed at transforming society with the slogan of creating a 'new person'.[305] However, the slaves were completely ignored in this project of creating 'a new person'.

4.4. On Sexual Exploitation in Circassian Slavery

Slaves are usually open for exploitation because of their vulnerability. Women, young girls and boys are known to be more prone to experiencing sexual exploitation. Ferhunde Özbay states the following in her article;

> *"Foreign girls at home are women who are considered to be family but marginalized. Their marginal positions are explained by their lack of blood relations with others, but most of them are also*

[304] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul in 2010.

[305] Ünver, Cennet. (2001). "Images and Perceptions of Fascism Among the Mainstream Kemalist Elite in Turkey 1931-1943". Master's Thesis. Boğaziçi University. p. 2.

from the lower layers of the society. They are "taken" by the family; they are purchased; they were taken because they were pitied on or liked. The decision to join the family is often given without their consent. These positions may not last throughout their lives; the system is based on this fact. The brides will become mothers; the slaves, the adopted will be apprenticed and married off... and after a time they will be the main women of the family. Thus, almost all women will go through a process during a short or long period of their lives in which their bodies and/or labour are in the possession of the both male and female members of the family. Their sexuality and labour will be exploited a little more than others because of being foreign girls in the house..''[306]

In the oral history interviews I have conducted during my research, I obtained data supporting the above findings of Ferhunde Özbay, namely that Circassian slaves also largely experienced sexual abuse. Talking about 'sexuality' was considered to be a shameful act among the Circassians. In addition, it is important that this issue was expressed more comfortably in the narrations about slavery. Apparently, those who conveyed memories of sexual exploitation preferred to talk about it in order to help us comprehend how awful this situation was for the slaves.

The first of the narrations which will be analyzed under this title mentions an incident which happened to a young girl who was sold as a slave in the early 1930s. According to this narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry, a lord in one of the villages near Maraş sold one of his slave girls to a man who came from Osmaniye. This man took this girl to Osmaniye saying that he would officially get engaged to her. However, it was later found out that the man never married this girl. In fact, both he and his brother repeatedly raped the girl. The two brothers started fighting when the girl got pregnant shortly after. As a result, the elder of this

[306] Özbay, Ferhunde. (2002). "Evlerde El Kızları: Cariyeler, Evlatlıklar, Gelinler". Inside *Feminist Tarih Yazımında Sınıf ve Cinsiyet*. Edited by. Leonore Davidoff. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları. p.18

house took the girl, despite her ongoing pregnancy, and sold her to a man from Antep. 'Pregnant Slave' was the girl's new nickname and she lived as a second wife -otherwise known as a '*kuma*' to a man and eventually died in 1964 in Kilis.[307]

Unlike the upper-class households in Istanbul, the wealthy dynasties of Anatolia did not occupy a positive place in the memories of the slaves. Apparently, the slave girls who were sold to these houses were more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Contrary to the dwellings in Istanbul, where female slaves who lived in the same neighbors supported each other, white slaves in Anatolia had to live in distant cities, and this put them in a weaker and unprotected position. As a result, they became particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. It seemed as if trouble followed the slave girls to wherever they went.

When we analyze this quotation, we find proof that slave trade was still practiced even after the Declaration of the Turkish Republic. This young woman is said to have lived her life as a second wife with the nickname given to her constantly reminding her of both her slavery and her exposure to sexual exploitation. This narrative touches upon many problematic areas regarding human rights. The selling of a young girl as a slave and the sexual exploitation of this girl by the people who had bought her are two of these problematic areas. The third problematic case is the reselling of this girl to another man regardless of her ongoing pregnancy. Having to live with the nickname of 'Pregnant Slave' in the environment to which she was sold is an indicator of yet another trauma this girl must have experienced.

Another narration told by an interview who stated that he was a member of the free-born peasantry although he was said by other people to be from a slave family, speaks of a similar situation. In the first years after the Declaration of the Republic, a Circassian lord from Konya sold a slave girl to the father of a man from Adana whom he had known since he was in the army. The old man promised to marry her officially since his ex-wife had passed away but then broke this promise by agreeing with those who said, *''There is no need to perform a marriage contract*

[307] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2001.12.29.

with a slave!''. When the old man's son started harassing this girl who was white and beautiful, father and son started fighting each other. Since there was no way of finding out the father of the child, the relatives interfered saying, *''We are ridiculed by all of Adana because of a slave.''* They then took the slave girl back to her village in Konya while she was still pregnant.[308] Being sexually exploited by father and son, experiencing an uncertain and probably unwanted pregnancy and the shame of being taken back to her own village with the responsibility of all these probably caused serious damage in the girl's psychology.

The narration which goes as, *"There is no need to perform a marriage contract with a slave!"* appeared in a few other cases. Apparently, these slaves were traded as 'concubines' after the Declaration of the Republic of Turkey. These slaves were not officially married in the name of the law, so they did not benefit from matrimonial law. Besides, the article stating that that these concubines could be liberated if they gave birth to their owners' children was completely ignored. The people who lived in the rural regions of Anatolia during the first years of the Republic applied the parts of slavery which benefited them and forgot about the parts that did not fit them. Thus, an undetermined slavery system was operated.

These slaves, bought and sold outside state authority and subjected to all kinds of harassment and abuse, were in a more vulnerable position than before. The Ottoman State came to the conclusion that the problem of white slaves was sold and slave trade was brought to an end with the prohibition of white slaves in 1909. Similarly, the Republic of Turkey, which was newly established in 1923, ignored them completely and continued its practices. The state, which did not recognize the Circassians as a minority, did not take any steps to solve the issue of Circassian slaves.

A narrator from a slave family, who did not specify his social class, speaks of a similar incident. According to this narration, a slave girl in Yozgat was sold to a wealthy man from Ankara via a Circassian who worked as an officer in Ankara.

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[308] Interview with a free-born peasant in Konya, 2007.07.22.

The Circassian working in Ankara said, *''This girl will be miserable in the village. Since you are slaves, nobody from the village will accept to marry this girl. Also, she will be more comfortable in Ankara.''* He then persuaded the girl's father and he agreed to sell his daughter. The narrator points out that the man who was 20 years older than the girl never made a marriage contract and they did not have a child. After the man became ill and fell to his death bed, his sons feared that the slave woman would want a piece of the will so they sold the girl to a brothel in Subayevler, Ankara. The Circassian officer who arranged this marriage was so ashamed after learning this that he could never go to his village again and the girl stayed in the brothel.[309] This narration is yet another example of a young girl being exposed to sexual exploitation. She was sold to a man who was 20 years older than her with the hopes that it would provide her with a better life but she was sexually exploited without getting married to the man officially. However, the real exploitation occurred when she was sold to the brothel by the sons of the man in fear that she would ask a piece of his will. Apart from sexual exploitation, depriving women of inheritance is a separate social problem.

Another narrator who is a member of the free-born peasantry mentions a situation which was never expressed extensively and only implied by some. Interesting information about the sexual exploitation of these white slave women in some places has been reported in this narration. In this narrative, it is mentioned that some slave-owning lords had the right to be alone with their slaves, or even have intercourse whenever they desired, that they could use their slaves as odalisque for themselves, and that in some cases some slaves could also be offered other lords who were guests in the house. It was added that the serving of a slave girl or woman as odalisque among Circassian lords at nights when they were hosting other lords was actually a rooted tradition. The guest lord could be with the slave girl or just sing to her if he wanted. It was also stated that such slaves were chosen from the lowest-class slaves, who were called "wuneut" and acquired during times of war as captives. In a way, the quality of the slave girls they offered to guests at night was

[309] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Ankara, 2013.11.24.

a big determining factor of the hosting quality of the Circassian lords. This tradition was not abandoned instantly after 1864 and there were occasions in which slaves revolted and caused bloodshed. In time, lords abandoned this right of theirs and this tradition came to an end. The girls from the slave families were used perversely in this way and this was the reason behind them not being picked as brides from other families. Especially, the slave owner lords never let their children marry slaves because there was always the possibility of them being siblings.[310]

This phenomenon which was called 'odalisque' and named *"jeş değuel"* in Circassian, was considered to be a tradition to some while others strictly rejected its existence as a tradition. Regardless, some people thought that this situation constituted the greatest obstacle in the establishment of marriage ties between the free Circassian families and the slave families. Additionally, some observers have argued that 'odalisque', a fundamental Circassian tradition, was among the reasons for the slaves becoming vulnerable to sexual exploitation. An interview who stated that he was from a noble family described this situation as follows: *"The Circassian lords were entitled to the bodies of their slaves not only for the first night, but for every night."*[311] This situation caused the slaves to be dishonored. The slave-owning lords and other individuals in the house all benefited from the services of the slaves. The children of these slaves were considered to be slaves regardless of whether their father was the slave owner or another free man.

The fact that the slave families were 'dishonored' or 'polluted' in this way was constantly remembered and reminded as a factor that had prevented the Circassian families from establishing marriage relations with the slave families. The manipulation of these families in this way, regardless of whether it was practiced as a part of tradition, remained in the collective memories of even the most assimilated Circassian villages. The families tried to prevent their children from marrying people from the slave families and encouraged them to find spouses among people of other nations. The families were doing everything in their power

[310] Interview with a free-born peasant in Çorum, 2008.04.21.
[311] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Çorum, 2016.06.14.

to prevent the establishment of marriage associations with slaves. An interview from the free-born peasantry made the following remarks:

> *"We used to live in central Samsun in 1987. One day, a man and his family came to our house to ask for my aunt's hand in marriage. However, it felt more like a funeral. When I asked my grandmother why she was so sad, she said, 'What else would I be sad about? These people are slaves!'', and refused to see the guests. Little did she know that the woman sitting in the living room was a white woman who looked nothing like Slave Isaura..."*[312]

Many free-born Circassians stated that they married people from the slave families even though the society excluded them for it: *"My family rejected me because I married a woman from a slave family. I could not to go to my own house for 12 long years. They put us through so much suffering..."*

It is understood that this tradition which was a part of the lifestyle in Circassia before the Great Exile of 1864 kept existing in Ottoman territories for some time after the exile. Circassian lords' unlimited right of disposition over slave women and the serving of slave woman to other guests are interpreted as examples of sexual abuse. This kind of sexual exploitation which was an inevitable part of slavery not only proposes a significant moral problem but also causes social problems. In addition, this practice caused people from slave families to always be looked down on, so it proposed a problem regarding discrimination in addition to the obvious problem of sexual exploitation.

During our oral history interviews, we have stumbled upon sexual exploitation of male slaves in addition to young girls and women. One of these narratives goes as follows. The interview who made it clear that he came from a slave family said, "There is no point in hiding it. My grandfathers were slaves, but I have worked and now I, the grandson of those slaves, am the richest man of this village!". The narrator expressed an event which happened in his village as follows:

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[312] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2010.11.24.

"After the '93 War, some of the Circassians who were sent from the Balkans were relocated in Sivas along with their slaves. Some wealthy people who came from Malatya to our village in order to buy horses negotiated with the lords and bought two slave girls." There was a boy around the ages of eleven and twelve who took care of the lord's horse. He had colored eyes and pale skin. The buyer insisted that he would buy the boy as well. The Circassian told him that he was not for sale but could not persuade the buyer. The buyer persuaded the lord saying that he did not have a son and he would take care of the boy just like his own. He paid twice as much for this boy and they left. In the evening, the mother of the Circassian lord found out and got mad at him saying: *''What kind of a man are you? Don't you have any morals? You are no son of mine.''* The woman suspected an act of pederasty. The Circassian lord realized the mistake he had done eventually and sent men after the boy to get him back. However, he was not found. The old woman was still mad at her son when she died.[313] Although it is impossible to obtain clear information about what happened to the boy afterwards, it is not entirely incorrect to assume that he could have been a victim of sexual exploitation.

There is another narration similar to this. In this narrative, a crop merchant from Çorum in the 1930s tricked a father from a slave family in a Circassian village saying, *''There is nothing your son can do in this village. The republic has been declared and you still work here as slaves! If you don't want your son to end up like you, give him to me and I will register him into a military school in İstanbul''*. The father was persuaded and sold his son to this man without any payment. In the rest of the narration; the crop merchant took this pale, brown-haired and beautiful boy and sold him to a bathhouse in Ankara instead of putting him into a military school. Also, the peasants learned about this many years later but they left the son to his own devices since his father did not have enough money to take his son back.[314] In this narration, an attempt which was initiated with the hopes of a better life in a governmental job turned into sexual exploitation in a bathhouse in Ankara. This

[313] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Kayseri, 2009.03.11.
[314] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2012.11.14.

situation once again showcases the vulnerability of slaves to helplessness and exploitation.

According to another sexual exploitation narrative told by a member of the free-born peasantry, during the last stages of the Ottoman Empire in a village in Sivas, an orphaned boy from a poor family and sold to a slave merchant by his uncle in order to provide him with a better living. The child was around the age of five, the slave dealer took him to Istanbul and sold him to a pasha's harem after being castrated for hope that he would make more money. This male slave lived in the pasha's harem until the Ottoman Empire was collapsed. Pasha's house in Istanbul scattered in 1928 and the slave became homeless. He worked in various jobs but eventually had enough and wanted to go back to Sivas. He came back to Sivas in the early 1940s, tutored the children of wealthy families and achieved the nickname 'The Tutor from the Palace' by the people of Sivas. He caught pneumonia during his first winter in Sivas and was hospitalized. After it was known that he was castrated, The Tutor from the Palace escaped the hospital, probably out of shame, erased all his tracks and never came back to Sivas again.[315] This narration mentions castration which is another topic of sexual exploitation. The castration of a person not only means the end of his sexual life but also prepares the end of his social life. This narration strengthens the assumption that this person was exposed to a different and abnormal treatment in a community which knew that he was castrated.

As a result, slaves were often victims of sexual abuse due to their vulnerability and need for protection. Apparently, this unjust treatment reached a much higher level in 1909 when the trade was being carried out illegally after its official abolishment. There had been institutions to which the slaves could report complaints related to these unjust practices. During this period, however, the slaves turned into commodities that were bought and sold from one owner to another as a component of an illegal trade mechanism. It is understood from the oral history narrations that material interest, traditions and personal ambitions caused this

[315] Interview with a free-born peasant in Ankar, 1999.02.21.

situation. These narrations also reveal that the Circassian slaves were vulnerable to sexual exploitation, which brought along many moral and social problems.

4.5. Circassian Slavery and Trafficking of Children

Child-selling is seen in societies in which slavery is a common practice. Trafficking of slave children which was common among Circassians provided an opportunity for the selling of free-born children due to hardships experienced during the Great Exile. One and a half million refugees, the last survivors of a genocide, entered the Ottoman territories together with their fragmented families, widowed women and orphaned children after suffering from an exhausting amount of misery, poverty and famine during exile. Some of the families had to choose between death and slavery. Moreover, a considerable number of children and women were being kidnapped from their convoys and sold as slaves. It was also reported by the officers that lords began to sell the slaves and and their children in order to lessen the negative effects of this calamity.

Some Circassian lords continued to practice 'selling their slave children' in the Ottoman lands to which they migrated. In the quotations obtained during our oral history research, we found many examples regarding this subject. Some examples we have obtained touch upon instances from pre-exile and post-exile periods while others mention the child-selling practices which occurred during the Republic period. Our first oral narration tells of the story of a child-selling which continued until the end of the exile.

According to a narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry, a few years before the exile of Circassians, a woman whose husband was killed by Russians came back to her father's home with her four children. However, the harsh war conditions, poverty and misery pushed them to the edge of death. The woman's brother told her that they could not possibly take care of all the children so she should take one of them and the rest of them he would take to the coast. The woman resisted but eventually she had to take the youngest child, leaving the three children to their uncle who sold them to a slave dealer in Anapa. The woman could not stand

to be apart from her three children and died. That child was banished to Sinop at the age of six with his uncle. He lived in Sinop and died in 1951. He told people how his siblings were sold to slave dealers in Anapa and searched them everywhere for years.[316]

In the collective memory of some Circassians, 'to be taken to the coast' stood for being sold as a slave and never being able to return to the Caucasus again. This expression was often used as an idiom. It was stated in an interview made in Maraş that a Circassian man once scolded his naughty grandchild by saying, *"If you keep misbehaving, I will take you to the shore!"*. This man, born and raised in Maraş, considered the coast to be a terrible place. He was relieved when he visited Mersin and saw the coast for the first time. Apparently, the traces of slavery were sometimes triggered by the sight of the sea.

Furthermore, the colonial activities of the Russians worked to the Circassians' disadvantage and led to the massacre of many Circassians. The Circassians not only wished to forget the memories related to genocide, slaughter and defeat but also refrained from narrating these incidents during the interviews. In many interviews performed in various places, narrators talked about people who had migrated to various regions as a result of this defeat. This narration demonstrates the devastating effects of Russian attacks in Circassian territories on Circassian communal life in the period before Great Exile. The hunger, poverty and misery experienced by Circassians during that period while resisting Russians and the fact that a mother was obligated to sell three of her four children all showcase the gravity of their social trauma. Few interviews admitted at the end of the long conversations that some Circassians had to sell their children because of poverty and famine.

Child-selling among Circassians increased with the harsh living conditions brought by the Great Exile. The oral history recordings provide examples of this situation. In one of these examples narrated by a member of the free-born peasantry,

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[316] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 1999.07.17.

the wife of a free-born father who was not from the slave class died. After being left all alone with seven children, the man listened to his relatives who said he should sell some of his children so with the hopes of being able to save the rest of his children, he sold his two ill children. In this narration which the narrator heard from his grandfather, this man nicknamed 'Mustafa the Yellow' kept uttering the names of his children, who were taken to İstanbul by a captive merchant after they were sold, until the day of his death.

> *"It is told that some bandit-looking men used to wander around the fishing boats that stretched along the pier in front of the Grand Mosque of Samsun and practiced slave trade. These men, when they saw a Circassian visiting the mosque along with a couple of children, immediately fought each other to buy these children. So many slaves were sold in Samsun..."*[317]

It is very difficult for a father trying to hold on to life in such harsh conditions to sell his children in order to be able to take care of the rest of his children and feel the pain of this until the end of his life. The noteworthy aspect of this is the fact that this advice was given to the father by his relatives. This situation demonstrates that this awful practice was a common and ordinary thing.

In another narrative told by a member of the free-born peasantry, a Circassian lord who was living in bad conditions under the hardships of the exile was tricked by an Ottoman military officer with the hopes of providing a life for him and the women and children left in his family who was mostly slaughtered by Russians. This Circassian lord who was trying to provide a better life for the remaining members of his family could not stand to see that his family was in the hands of a slave trader and sold to a merchant in Muş so he died shortly after the incident.[318]

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[317] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsu, 2001.12.25.

[318] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2001.12.16.

Some of the people who agreed to talk about slavery, while mentioning the women and children who were sold, added that the people who sold their children *'died from grief'*. This was either true, or the narrator had believed that the person who sold his children must have died from grief and, after a while, started to narrate what he believed as reality. Some urban Circassian intellectuals who agreed to talk about slavery tried to explain this situation in relation to the conditions of the period and justify this practice by cause and effect relations. They made long statements accepting that slavery was a Circassian tradition. However, these statements were usually followed by general excuses.

Another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry tells the story of yet another family falling apart as a result of the Great Exile. According to this narration, a young woman whose entire family was slaughtered by Russian soldiers and left alone with her three children managed to join Circassian convoys and arrived at Trabzon and Samsun respectively. This Circassian woman was a free-born peasant who was not from the slave class preferred being sold as a slave in order to prevent the death of her children. In many of the narrations, the same causal relationship was established; perhaps it was an inner relief for them. She was captured by slave traders in Samsun who sold her to a man from Bafra and her children to other families. According to the narrative, she looked for her children for many years but was never able to found them so people around her called her 'Circassian Mother' and she died in 1941 without ever finding her children.[319] It is clear that this woman, who preferred to be sold to slavery along with her children rather than dying, experienced a life-long trauma when her children were sold to other people by slave merchants.

Another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry addresses Ottoman administration's relocation policy regarding Circassian exile and the treatment of Circassian orphans. According to this narration, Ottoman Empire preferred to relocate Circassians specifically to prevent population density. In this

[319] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2006.04.20.

process, the exiled Circassians were absolutely not allowed to settle in Istanbul.[320] Ottoman Empire's practice of putting Circassian orphans into Muslim Turkish households can be considered as an operation of assimilation. However, the same narrator's statements saying that some of these children were raised by Circassian slaves who had been taken into these households diminishes these possibilities. It is not very surprising for a child who was raised by Circassian slaves to maintain his Circassian characteristics.[321]

According to a Circassian intellectual living in the city who stated that he was from a noble family, the Ottoman Empire allowed the assimilation of Circassian by disallowing the Circassians resettlement in Istanbul and distributing the orphans and widows to the households in Istanbul. Many individuals stated that these women and children who were distributed to various houses inevitably Ottomanized and Turkified.[322] An intellectual from the free-born peasantry whom we interviewed made the following statements:

''After the Circassian exile, the imperial harems were filled with white women, the military with loyal soldiers, the security intelligence with meticulous hitmen and rich households with orphaned children and concubines waiting to be married... Any statesmen in their right mind would encourage such a migration, and so did the Ottoman administrators.''[323] Thus, this matter was open for discussion once again after many years. It was understood once again that the issue of white slaves and the Circassians was an equation with many unknowns which included in itself various interwoven topics.

According to oral history narrations, child-selling continued to be practiced through illegal methods in the era of the Republic. These quotations which we recorded from the narrations of a free-born peasant provide evidence showing that child-selling was being practiced even in the mid-20th century. The families who

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[320] Grassi. ibid. p. 91.

[321] Interview with a free-born peasant in Adapazarı, 2005.02.21.

[322] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Istanbu, 2010.04.09.

[323] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Istanbul, 2010.04.10.

were not able to conceive a child tried to make up for this by buying three-year-old children from slave families. Also, the family of the child was living a miserable life and probably saw this offer as an opportunity for themselves and wanted to prepare a good future for their children – even if this meant that they would have to sell them to prosperous families. It is also significant to note that the ethnicity of the child was questioned by the narrator. The narrator emphasized the importance of the role of Circassians who mingled with social events after the Great Exile and stated that he did not know if the child was from an enslaved Russian family, a Bulgarian who was enslaved in the 1870s, an Armenian family who was taken care of during the incidents of 1915 or if he was coming from a pure family line of Circassians.[324]

Most of the interviews have argued that the slaves were not of Circassian and Abkhazian origin.[325] These arguments were expressed in such a way that would lead one to think that the slaves could be exposed to all kinds of treatment because they were not Circassian or Abkhazian. The conversation was ended by remarks such as, ''You should not be surprised by such things...''. Many of the interviews seemed to think that slavery was a saddening and unacceptable practice when interpreted from a modern perspective. Moreover, they stated that the slaves were sold more easily because of their Circassian heritage.

Another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry dating to the Republic period mentions a Circassian child being sold as a servant. In this narration, a family decided to buy a child to keep company to their son but they faced the obligations of their family elders who said, *''You must not get a child from just any nation.''* and insisted on buying a Circassian child. This family found a girl from a Circassian family via a friend and preferred to buy her from her father and not the Circassian lord. This situation shows that the significance of lords was in decrease. It is also stated that this slave girl studied in law school, became a judge

[324] Interview with a free-born peasant in Kayseri, 2007.03.26.
[325] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Istanbul, 1999.11.23.

and took her two siblings to provide them education.[326] Although many cases of child-selling result in bad ways, this narration resulted in a positive way. The social changes happening in the country can also be seen in this situation. These developments such as the decline of the importance of lords among Circassians and the increasing emergence of women in public spaces should not be overlooked.

As a result, it can be said that the intense hardships experienced by Circassians during and after the Great Exile triggered child-selling. This practice which was common in cases of disaster continued to be practiced in normal living conditions. It is a worrying fact that child-selling continued its existence even 20-30 years after the declaration of the Republic in a process which made the government more public than ever and introduced modernization to communal life.

4.6. Being 'White' in Anatolia

It is expressed in the oral history interview with an individual from the free-born peasantry that a white-skinned slave was considered privileged and the Turks paid more money to the white-skinned slaves. This narration also confirms that Circassian lords kept engaging in slave trade after the Exile and visited nearby Circassian villages in order to exchange their slaves. Even among free-born Circassians, a person with very pale skin was said to be *'as white as a slave'* and Turks paid much more money for white slaves. The narrator states that his grandfather once left the village and returned with a couple of slaves. He then married some of them off and directly sold the rest of them.[327]

Although the group which was known for being white-skinned consisted of Circassians, the majority of the people used the term 'white as a slave' to describe such persons. During the interviews regarding this matter, the narrator has pointed out that this term could have been used refer to Russian and Kazakh slaves. While the interviewer stated that he belonged to the free peasant class, others who knew him expressed that his father belonged to the slave class. The struggle of the father

[326] Interview with a free-born peasant in Yozgat, 2010.01.22.
[327] Interview with a free-born peasant in Kayseri, 2005.03.22.

of the interviewer to keep the slave past hidden was also recorded as data. There were also interviewers who wanted to talk about slavery but did not mention their grandfather's past.

> *"I have witnessed elderly women silently looking at each other and saying 'white as a slave' to each other when they saw a pale blond child with blue eyes. However, there were not many people with blonde hair in blue eyes in our village; the local children usually had white skin, auburn hair, black or brown hair and brown or amber eyes. One time I heard another elderly women refer to such a blonde girl and say, "If this child was born forty years ago, they would kidnap her and sell her as a slave." and laugh. At the time, I thought that she was joking''*[328]

'Being white' was an obsession for some older women. The preaching of whiteness in a society which generally consisted of white-skinned persons seems to be a separate contradiction. While caressing babies and children, they would use the expression, *"Dahe me dahe, kabze me kabze, fiji ma fiji"* which means *'how beautiful, how clean, how white'*. I have witnessed this phrase being used in various regions of Turkey and even among Circassians in Syria. An interview who stated that he was from the free-born peasantry made the following remarks:

> *''It is told that the slaves with the lightest skin color were favored the most. The ones with darker complexion were rarely enslaved. They were mostly employed as shepherds. Although I cannot be certain, I think that the obsession with slavery could be a remnant of this case. Why else would a Circassian woman, who was herself very white, caress her children by using the phrase "How white!" as an endearment?''*[329]

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[328] Interview with a free-born peasant in Ankara, 2009.03.14.

[329] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Istanbu, 2009.01.12.

The issue of 'whiteness' came up in interviews which were not related to slavery. Among boys and girls, 'the whitest ones' were favored. An interview who stated that he was from the free-born peasantry made the following remarks:

> *''When my late mother visited Mersin during the summer, we would go to the beach for a change. My mother would never go out in the sun. She sat under the umbrella in order to avoid getting tanned. She would scold me by saying, "My foolish daughter, you made yourself and the children get brunette!". According to my mother, one had to have white skin in order to be beautiful.''*[330]

I realized that the relationship between whiteness and beauty was not just an obsession of old Circassian women when I came across the works of Irvin Cemal Schick. He made the following expressions in his work:

> *''Alexander William Kinglake, in Eothen, a famous product of 19th-century travel literature, refers to 'a man with the proper and handsome facial features that were now the characteristics of the Ottoman race', and adds a footnote:' These people marrying Georgian and Circassian beauties suppressed the ugliness conveyed by their Tatar ancestors.''*[331]

In the interview with another member of the free-born peasantry, the interview stated that many slaves were sold and that there were many people in big cities of Turkey who looked like Circassians as a result of these 'external marriages'. When curious Circassian women asked, "Are you my daughter, you are Circassian?", they would usually say: "My mother's mother was Circassian, my father's mother was Circassian...". An elderly woman whom I have interviewed used the following expressions:

> *"I see so many Circassian-looking people as I walk down the streets of Samsun that I don't know which one to look at. I no longer*

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[330] Interview with a free-born peasant in Adana, 2012.12.23.

[331] Schick. ibid. p. 77.

ask them if they are Circassians because most of them reply by saying, "No, I am from Samsun!".[332]

Although not as extensive as Orientalists of the 19th century, ordinary Circassians were also very knowledgeable about the subject of whiteness. Irvin Cemil Schick attributed the 19th-century Orientalists' ever-mounting interest in the Circassian whiteness to their own observations.

> *''The female Circassian slaves who were sent to the houses in the Middle East were chosen very carefully in order to fit the aesthetic measures of the markets to which they would be sold, and white skin was undoubtedly a valuable asset in this respect. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the Orientalists who traveled to the Caucasus mentioned different skin colors than the travelers who made observations in the Ottoman territories. The fact that the slave prefered white-skinned slaves and the image contrast between the Circassians and the other foreign slaves (especially of Arabs and Ajams, but also Turks) caused the Circassians to be perceived as the whitest group. Indeed, we can deduce that many white-skinned Circassians were employed in the rich houses in Istanbul, Damascus and Cairo because of the slave owners' appreciation for white skin and the popular practice of marriage between the slave owners and their slaves That is why the travelers came to the conclusion that the upper-class Circassians were more light-skinned than the lower-class Circassians. Moreover, as the number of Circassian house slaves increased in the 19th century, this perception might have been strengthened during this period.''*[333]

Many different authors in different sources provided similar descriptions in the narrations regarding the subject of whiteness and beauty. Beyond the

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[332] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 1998.05.16.

[333] Ibid. p. 87-88.

Orientalists' descriptions, Circassian definitions of whiteness and beauty were also significant. Jabaghi Baj;

> *"The Circassians have a saying,* "Csöz pkıjer Tlepk qhekvued", *which means "The frail woman spoils the family." Therefore, no matter how noble or wealthy a woman is, they will not take a frail, incapable girl as a bride. They usually look for a strong body and an ever-lasting stature rather than facial beauty. They do not like fat girls because they can be lazy."*[334]

Jabaghi Baj stated in the data he had gathered from the Circassians that it was difficult for frail women to find husbands. An interview who was a member of the free-born peasantry said, *''The Circassian women, slender and tall, would wear Circassian corsets and followed a diet in order to maintain their beautiful shape."*[335] Additionally, the following statements were made while describing the physical appearance of the Circassians in an encyclopedia of three volumes named Totes les femmes: Etudes, 1902;

> *"No Caucasian race can pass the Circassians in beauty. Their men are as beautiful as their women. They are tall and wiry. Pale-skinned and long-necked, their thick hair is usually black, red-brown or yellow."*[336]

The 'tallness' and 'white skin' features, which are often found in Orientalists' expressions, were a significant part of the portrayal of Circassian, despite not being a total obsession. The narrators have stated that the calpack and high-heeled shoes, which could not be seen when worn under a long skirt, might have made the Circassians appear taller. It was also stated that the shape of the body was preserved by wrapping around the waist Circassian corsets and belts, and this might have had an influence on the foreigners' perception of Circassians as slim waisted and

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[334] Baj. (2000). ibid. p. 40.

[335] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Istanbul, 2011.12.18.

[336] Schick. ibid. p. 72.

slender. Additionally, the most beautiful and handsome individuals of the Caucasus were enslaved and sold because they made more money. It is a strong possibility that the people perceived all Circassians as such beautiful and handsome people when they saw these slaves in the slave markets.

4.7. Circassians, Armenians and the Rûm [337]

During World War I, the Ottoman government deported most Armenian communities to Syria. During this exile, the exiled Armenians faced many attacks and massacres. During our oral history research, we have found data suggesting that many Circassians were directly involved with these attacks and massacres.

Following the year 1912, Muslim nationalism increased in the regions within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. After the wars, at least one quarter of the Muslim population of Anatolia consisted of the children of the refugees who came from the Balkans, which was conquered by Christian nations, the Black Sea or the Caucasus region. This situation added anger and resentment to existing ethnic tensions.[338] In addition to having lost their homeland, these refugees now also suffered from the loss of their families. Thus, it was quite difficult to expect them to have mercy on the minorities, especially Christians, in the regions to which they were settled. Those minorities, who had already been having problems with the indigenous Muslim people, would experience the main trouble with the newcomer refugees from the Balkans and the Caucasus.

In regard to the fact that the orphans who survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915 were feeding white slavery in some aspects, Ceyda Karamürsel conveys the views of Mehmet Fetgeri Şenu, one of the Circassian intellectuals of the period, as follows:

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[337] For Circassians-Ottoman minorities relations, see also:. Karamürsel. (2016). ibid. p. 155; Dündar, Fuat. (2001). İttihat ve Terakkinin Müslülamları İskan Politikası (1913-1918). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

[338] Zürcher. ibid. p. 179.

"When the Circassian author and intellectual Mehmet Fetgeri Şuenu reported the persistence of the sale and purchase of Circassian slaves in 1914, he attributed it to the rich mens' (the elites') fancy of slave women and their belief that they could not live without them. "Just like the slavers of the old days," Şuenu asserted, "many a butcher and monster, who took up slaving as their profession, are still making profit out of it." Merely a year after Şuenu's assertion, following the Armenian Genocide, there emerged a new source of poor, orphaned, alienable girls who were appropriated as slaves with ease."[339]

Another narration from an interview who stated that he was a member of the free-born peasantry but was actually said by other people to be from the slave class, touches upon this subject. In this narration, especially after 1915, some Circassian lords took up orphan Armenian boys who came from Tokat, Amasya, Yozgat and Sivas to prevent them from dying. It is narrated that if they were left alone they would die but Circassian villages were like castles; even rural policemen did not have the courage to enter them; it was one of the safest places for these Armenian orphans. Since no one in the village spoke Turkish or Armenian, these orphans had to learn Circassian. They grew up with Circassian customs and traditions. The lords would usually put them in slave households. The orphans would stay there for a while and some would be sold as Circassian slaves. It is probable that some Armenian orphans who were rescued from deportation were sold to Turks under the disguise of 'Circassian slaves'.[340] This oral history narration proves that Circassians took part in attacks against Armenians during Deportation. Also, slave traders caused yet another case of fraud by selling Armenians as Circassian slaves to Turks who did not like Armenians.

''They would die if we did not buy them." was one of the arguments we have stumbled upon in many places. It has been stated that children, mostly Armenian

[339] Karamürsel. (2016). ibid. p.155
[340] Interview with a free-born peasant in Amasya, 1998.04.27.

and some Rûm, were rescued, taken or kidnapped by Circassians 'while children and women were being taken away by soldiers''.[341] Some interviews even interpreted this situation angrily by saying, *"They did not commit a crime by taking care of these children!"*. According to them, what mattered was that these children were kept alive. Some narrators also pointed out that a considerable amount of these children were not tended to inside the house but 'in the households of the slaves'. An interview said, *"Slave or not - what difference does it make? The soldiers were about to slaughter them but my grandfather took them and employed them as shepherds!"* and added that one of the shepherds in question later married a girl from a slave family and they both remained in the village."

Ulaş Sunata has encountered with various expressions about these Armenian children who were left to the Circassians during the oral history studies they carried out:

> *''There are Armenians living in Gürün but there are no Armenians in this village. However, if you go to the cemetery, you will notice that some tombstones do not face Mecca. The Armenians left some of their children in this region during the forced migration. They were raised by Circassians. I once knew an Islamized Armenian named. M... in the M... Village...''*[342]

The 'Islamized Armenian' narrative has been mentioned in some of the interviews. It was usually expressed by emphasizing that the Armenians became Circassianified in time. Some interviews said, "They are now Circassians! Their grandfather, was brought to this village as an Armenian child but became more and more like Circassians among us." In addition to those who stated that the Armenians, and to some extent the Rûm, were usually left to the village or found on the road, some interviews arguedd that they were actually taken or kidnapped in the military. The narrative of 'bringing these children to the village' usually ended

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[341] Çiçek, Kemal. (2012). *Ermenilerin Zorunlu Göçü 1915-1917*. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society. p. 169.

[342] Sunata. ibid. p. 38.

with most of them 'joining the households of the slaves'. There exists two main narratives which state that these Armenian children were later sold as Circassian slaves and became Turkicized or remained in the village and became Circassianized.

The Armenian and Circassian relations in 1915 were often accompanied by stories of conflicts, plunder and massacres in the resources. The descriptions in many different regions of Ottoman lands were filled with similarities.

> *"The group consisting of Armenians arrived in Zile in three days and in Şarkışla in the next two days. Here the men are separated from the crowd. There was no information about their state. Afterwards, the Circassians attacked and kidnapped 5 or 6 girls, but the gendarmerie, guardians of the convoy, clashed with the Circassians."*[343]

While giving information about the kidnapped children and women, I have stumbled upon narratives similar to the Turkish thesis which argued that the Circassians clashed with the gendarmeries and the military was trying to protect the guards from these attacks. In these arguments, the Bulgarian-Circassian conflicts that took place before the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-78) were interpreted as a conflict between the Circassians and the Christian minorities.[344]

Some of the Circassians I have interviewed often referred to heroic explanations such as, *"Our grandfathers cleaned these mountains from Armenian bandits.''* According to this narrative, Anatolia, which had been cleared from the Armenians, was being established as a more 'Turkish' region. The dissolution of the remaining orphan children and women in local Muslim villages or Circassian slave dwellings had to be a part of this policy. This 'clearing' problem was part of a deeply-rooted issue that went as far back as to the ideology of Unionism.

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[343] Çiçek, Kemal. ibid. p. 107.

[344] Ibid. p. 121-122.

''Both Talat Pasha and Enver Pasha supported the 'cleansing of Anatolia' by using various means. According to Talat Pasha, we had to get rid of these foreign people if we wanted to continue our life with what we had left. It can be argued that this understanding had various consequences such as the Armenian massacre, the deportation of the Greeks and the Turkification policies.''[345]

The Circassians were placed among the problematic yet strategically important minorities in Rumelia and Anatolia as a part of the Ottoman resettlement policies. Many of the villages were built in former Armenian and Rûm villages or neighboring regions. As Ulaş Sunata mentioned in his studies, *"Although some villages were established along with Circassians, the villages we now know as 'Circassian villages' had been former villages of the Rûm in the north, Armenian and Afshar in the interior Uzunyayla, and Armenian and Alevi villages in the south. In the southern and eastern Marmara regions, the Yörük and the Rûm villages are noteworthy. In the Central Anatolia, the Circassians settled in former Armenian villages once again."*[346]

It has been stated in many interviews that Circassians, who had been placed to live intertwined with Christian minorities, interfered with events as the 'gendarmeries of the state' during the periods when these minorities were revolting or being forced to revolt. During the interviews performed in various regions, the speakers used narratives such as, *"My grandfather was not employed as a gendarmerie officer, but it is said that public order in this region was mostly provided by my him and not the gendarmeries."*

As mentioned above, a new and peaceful state could finally be established in the territories in which 'mountains had been cleaned', 'the residues had been wiped off' and 'orphans had been enslaved'. The 'Turkist' politics that emerged in Turkey during the Union and Progress period began to be re-applies with a racist

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[345] Maksudyan, Nazan. (2005). *Türklüğü Ölçmek Bilimkurgusal Antropoloji ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Çehresi 1925-1939*. İstanbul. p. 50-51.
[346] Sunata. ibid. p. 37.

rhetoric in the post-1923 single-party period. Through a series of social and cultural reforms, the multinational structure of the empire was abandoned. Anatolia was defined as 'a new nation based on the ethnicity of the Turks, whose geographical boundaries have narrowed'.[347]

A similar narration toldy by a member of the free-born peasantry speaks of an incident which happened in Amasya. On one of the darkest days of 1915, a Circassian peasant returning from Merzifon found Armenian boys and girls hiding under a bridge on the road to Gümüşhacıköy. The man took pity on them, took them to ..... where he raised them and sold them as Circassian slaves to various buyers. This situation is interpreted as another fraudulent act because the children were sold under the name of Circassian slaves.[348] Furthermore, an account of the year 1915 told by an interview from a noble family expresses the story of a Hamidiye cavalry who saved the life of an Armenian girl and raised her. He went on to add, *"My child, the Circassians did not harm women and children even in war! They usually took them and included them in the households of their slaves."*,[349] thus emphasizing the fact that Circassians during the period never harmed the Armenian women and children.

"Ownership" of Armenian orphans under various names is one of the applications which was referred to by the Turks, Alevis and Kurds and an activity which was beyond Circassian slavery. Furthermore, an account of the year 1915 told the story of a Hamidiye cavalry who saved the life of an Armenian girl and raised her. Some elderly people said, *"My child, the Circassians did not harm women and children even in war! They usually took them and included them in the households of their slaves."*, thus emphasizing the fact that Circassians during the period never harmed the Armenian women and children.[350] However, in particular, there was much information about the Armenian children and women being

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[347] Maksudyan. ibid. p. 53.

[348] Interview with a free-born peasant in Amasya, 1999.12.20.

[349] Interview with an elderly member of a family of lords in Sivas, 2004.11.04.

[350] Zürcher. ibid. p. 132.

kidnapped, taken away, and married in the process of 1915 from around Turks, Alevis and Kurds. It was stated that 'the Kurds would take all the young girls and women, and loot the convoy until the last penny."[351] The witnesses who reported the events in some of the attacks carried out on the deported guerrillas in the Armenian process in 1915 stated that some Armenians who had been "kidnapped" in order to be sold had survived because of this reason.

> *"...the courier was then sent to Incirli. On August 27, these women and children were besieged by the mixed Turkish and Circassian peasants, male and female, in the southern part of Karahacılı. Here they were subjected to a great slaughter. Only a few young girls and children who had been kidnapped for sale were freed from this slaughter."*[352]

In some interviews, it was stated that some Armenian families were relinquishing their children as "entrusted" to their neighbors, and some children and women were "bought" from the soldiers. In addition, during some interviews, the fact that the children and women were "hijacked" by the soldiers was told with pride. Although the issue of the military abducting women and children has been spoken, it has been stated by interviewers that not all of these abductees were sold as Circassian slaves. The interviewer, a member of a noble family, who mentioned kidnapping of children and women by the military used the following statements:

> *"Come on, you go and kidnap a man from a military unit and see what happens to you! But our family were the masters of this business back then... I know that there were Armenian children who were abducted during their military service and forced to be mixed with the slaves in the village. We used to call one of them Uncle ..... He worked at a mill for years and went to Istanbul in 1961. Our grandparents and uncles abducted him from the military out of pity; I do not think that they thought of selling him as a slave. Because I*

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[351] Çiçek, Kemal. ibid. p. 179.
[352] Kevorkian, Raymond, "Armenian Genocide", İstanbul, 2015, p.724.

witnessed that they were not sold... My son, the Circassians do not murder women or children even during battle since they are chivalrous. I think that is why they abducted these Armenian children and decided to raise them..."[353]

The matter of the Armenian women and children "sold" by the Circassian gendarmerie, soldiers, intelligence or bandits during the period of 1915 were less vocal in the interviews. Once this topic was up for discussion, the statements ended with a counter-argument which went as, "If they were not sold to the peasants, they would die!"[354]

"The Armenian people of this village were evacuated a month ago and the Circassian gangsters registered in the the Special Organization remained in the village. These gangsters were under the command of a person named İlyas. About 1,000 exiles were regularly slaughtered here. A few young women and children who were spared were later sold to Boğazlıyan Turks for about eight to ten medjidiye."[355]

The issue of the Armenian women and children who were abducted from the military during 1915, some of whom survived in the Circassian villages and some of whom sold as Circassian slaves and some were sold to other villages, is a very important issue that needs to be evaluated in a separate study. Another oral history narrative told by a member of the free-born peasantry helps us to understand the influence of 1915 on the Circassian slavery and was again set in Amasya. In another narration, a similar incidence is mentioned. In this narration, during the summer of 1915, some of the Armenians which were sent to Sivas from Merzifon were killed in the Tersakan Valley before they arrived at Amasya and one of the bandits somehow took two of the children and brought them to his village. The narrator emphasized that the father of the soldier, even though he was not happy

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[353] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Ankara, 2014.03.17.
[354] Interview with a member of a family of slaves in Adana, 2005.02.14.
[355] Ibid. p.724

with his son bringing Armenian children to his home, did not hesitate to sell them as Circassian slaves. Furthermore, the narrator also added that the father boasted for years saying, *''I sold those worthless Armenians for a lot of money!''*.[357] It is understood from these implications that many Armenian children were abandoned during the incidents of 1915. Even though some people were reluctant to take care of these children because of their existing financial constraints, some of them took care of these children despite all kinds of hardship. It is also significant to note that the Circassian father did not hesitate to utilize this 'unpleasant' situation and he boasted with this act of his.

The next oral history narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry mentions a similar event. In this event, the Armenians from Kayseri were on their way to Aleppo in 1915 when they saw that someone in the convoy abducted an Armenian girl. He then brought her to an Abkhazian village and fell in love with her despite the disapproval of his parents. The girl became pregnant shortly but the young man went away to do banditry. The girl delivered her baby during this process and the family of the young man separated the baby from its mother. The narrator adds that one year passed and the family lost all hope on the return of their son. It is also stated that the young man's father took the Armenian woman to Sivas where he sold her to a Turk as a Circassian slave and that they raised her baby in the village as a Circassian.[358]

Another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry mentioned a Circassian slave who caused the enslavement of another slave while trying to free himself. In this narration, a slave in 1915 went up to his owner saying, *''Free me! I will give you the money you ask!''* and worked in Adana for four years to pay this price. It is also stated that the slave was never able to collect the amount of money and joined a Circassian gang near Maraş-Adana to do banditry. This slave who was now a bandit went after Armenians, gave them the required money and gave the lord an Armenian child in order to gain the freedom of his family. The slave took

[357] Interview with a free-born peasant in Amasya, 2003.10.04.
[358] Interview with a free-born peasant in Sivas, 2004.06.11.

his family and left the village saying, *''I am no longer a slave so I will not stay in this village''*.[359] This narration also confirms that Circassian bandits were active in the events of 1915 and that these actions were done in search of financial gain. In addition, the liberated Circassian leaving his village that represented his slave background and migrating to another place is significant from a social standpoint.

According to an interesting narration, a Circassian slave, who desired to be liberated, took advantage of the incidents of the period and kidnapped an Armenian. Later, he delivered the Armenian man to his owner as the compensation for the manumission price. This person, who freed himself by enslaving another, preferred not to stay in his village. There are many accounts of survivors of slavery that abandoned their old village in order to break away from their past as a slave. The complete separation of the slave background of the slave resulted in the abandonment of the old slave settlements.

Another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry tells the memory of Armenian orphans who were protected and then sold as Circassian slaves. In this narration; upon Armenian riots in Zeytun during the 1890s, the Circassians in Maraş and Adana ran to suppress these riots. The government did not interfere with the situation since Circassians were known to be good at hunting down bandits. Zeytun Mountains were surrounded by Circassians. The narrator states that his grandfather, on his way back home from these events, took pity on two Armenian girls and took them to be raised as Circassians. When these girls reached the age of marriage, the grandfather sold them to a merchant as Circassian slaves. The merchant took one of the girls for himself and gave the other girl to one of his relatives. It was also narrated that these girls, who were aware of the poor life they would live, did not mention their Armenian roots and lived prosperous lives in the houses they were brought to as Circassian wives.[360]

A similar narration told by an interview who stated that he was a member of the free-born peasantry and said by others to be from the slave class, mentions

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[359] Interview with a free-born peasant in Adana, 2002.07.19.

[360] Interview with a free-born peasant in Adana in 1997.

Rûms. In the same time period in Bafra, the parents of Circassians who were in a Turkish gang that fought Rûm gangs took Rûm children, raised them in their own villages and sold them as Circassian slaves. One sentence in this narration is very interesting: *''... it is a very complex issue whether one is a Circassian slave, or the slave of Circassians...''*[361] It is known that many Armenian and Rûm children were taken, raised and sold as Circassian slaves in the same way. It is probable that these children lived their lives keeping their identities a secret. Similar cases diminish the legitimacy of the idea of a 'pure ancestry' in Anatolia.

As a result, these oral history narrations show that Circassians played an active role in the attacks against Armenians and Rûms in the turbulent period between 1890-1895 and 1910-1923. In addition, some Circassians who participated in these attacks took care of Armenian and Rûm orphan children; they raised these children by relying on their traditions or they had in mind the opportunity of selling them as slaves in the future. Thirdly, these Armenian and Rûm orphans who were taken and raised by Circassians were then sold as Circassian slaves and that buyers, most of whom were probably Turks, were deceived during this selling process. Also, these children who could not survive in this country in that period were given a chance to live even though they had to hide their true identities.

One point that had been overlooked in all these accounts was that quite a large number of Armenians and a smaller number of Rûm children and women during this period did not convert to Islam despite becoming members of local households. It did not matter whether 'they' were taken, saved or kidnapped from Turks, Kurds or Circassians. Although the reasons for taking these slaves into their own homes was not an effort to help others, they certainly saved a lot of lives.[362]

4.8. The Production and Trade of White Slaves

Because slavery has been a continuing phenomenon throughout history, various slave production mechanisms were necessary to provide this cycle.

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[361] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 1999.08.04.

[362] Zürcher. ibid. p. 178-179.

Acquisition of prisoners in war and kidnappings of children and adults from neighboring communities were the major slave production mechanisms used by Circassians. Since children born inside the marriage of slaves were directly given the slave status, this was used as another slave production method.

We tried to understand the slave production methods and processes in Ottoman territories by examining the narrations related to slave production methods used after the Exile of 1864. A Circassian intellectual who is a member of the free-born peasantry made the following statement: *"Because they sold all their slaves, they had to acquire new slaves. Even the government did not expect them to give up their slaves and slavery all at once."*[363]

I have already stated that Circassian slaves are two groups and their laws are different. In the post-exile period, these two groups converged and evolved into a single 'slave' class by marriage. In the interviews, the narrators stated that the word *'wune'ut'* was now used as an insult and that the word *'pşıtl'* was used for the slaves in the village. Another remark was that the *wune'ut* slaves, acquired from prisoners of war, were the first to disappear from the villages because they were sold more. When they disappeared from the village, they were left with the names of 'wune'ut' that could only be used as cursing and that came out of the mouth in anger. To a lesser extent, some of the interviews stated that the the families of the wune'ut slaves still did not completely disappear.

According to one of these narrations told by a member of the free-born peasantry, slave trade was practiced by some gangs in the pre-exile Caucasia. These gangs usually worked together with the local Circassian and Abkhazian gangs under the command of Circassian lords because it was not possible for Turkish, Laz and Rûm slave merchants to enter the Caucasus and acquire slaves from this region. The interview said he heard from his grandfathers that the gangsters who were involved in the production of slaves in Circassian society had carried out this production not in the village, but in the remote farms in the snowy mountains. The

[363] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Istanbul in 2015.

interviewer said that the slaves had been held in these places which he had expressed in the form of "slave farms", and that he heard from his grandfather that the slaves were brought to the shore when spring arrived. He stated that slave trade was not regarded as a legitimite occupation by Circassian peasants and that those who practiced it did it under the hand and was condemned. It is also stated that there are small villages established for slave production and transfer in various parts of Caucasus, and that those who were kidnapped or captured from neighboring regions were transferred from these villages to the Ottoman monuments in the coasts and distributed from there.[364]

It has been stated during the interviews that many men from different nations were involved in the slave trade. A common feature of these men was that they were all outlaws who operated as part of an armed gang. These Laz, Rûm and Turkish slave traders, who arrived at the shores of Abkhazia and Georgia in their small ships, bought slaves from the Caucasus in order to sell them in Ottoman lands. There were also illegal fugitives who lived around this region, who had escaped from the Ottomans, organizing slave trade.[365]

These lines demonstrate how slave production and trade were carried out under the control of the Circassians in the Caucasus before the Circassian Exile. In addition to the abduction activities of some Circassian lords who cooperated with Ottoman slave merchants, they planned to produce pure and beautiful slave children by pairing the most beautiful slave girls and the most handsome slave boys in these slave production plantations. This practice was reminiscent of to the German aryan race project.[366] Children who were born as the produce of this project would be sold as the most expensive slaves. These practices also emphasize the fact that white slaves had been a source of income for Caucasian communities for centuries.

> *"They took the orphaned girls and women to their own possession. They would breed them with Russian captives and sell*

[364] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2015.08.12.
[365] Iberieli. ibid. p. 47.
[366] Ibid. p. 51.

their children, called 'toka', *to slavery. The Circassians did not sell their own children but adulterous women were sold along with their children."*[367]

In the interviews we made, statements supporting them were used. It was stated by an interview who stated that he was from the free-born peasantry but was said by others to be a member of a slave family, stated that he studied slavery and slavery production. The interviewer used the following statements in this regard:

"It is probable that some lords in the Caucasus owned remote plantations where they produced the most beautiful slaves from foreign prisoners. Because they could not do this work so easily in their own villages, they tried to do it in desolate places. Therefore, it should not be assumed that the production and sale of these slave were carried out by the cooperation of all the lords and the peasants. It was practiced indeed, but one should not generalize by saying that it was done by all of the Circassian lords! I have heard from my grandfather that the lords who practiced slave trade and those who rejected it would fight because of this subject, years after they settled in ... ..."[368]

The next narrative provides information about the slave production process and the characteristics that Circassian lords looked for while choosing slaves. According to this narration, a Circassian lord in the Caucasus during the pre-exile period would choose a slave girl on visits to other villages. He usually picked the most beautiful, whitest and tallest slave girl serving in that household. Broad wrists signified fertility while small wrists signified frailty and illness. Slaves were chosen in accordance with these perceptions. *"Slaves were priced according to their appearance. A perfect slave had to be tall. The short ones were sold for less money."*[369]

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[367] Çelik. (2012). p. 52.
[368] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Ankara, 2014.09.13.
[369] Çelik. (2012). p. 52.

It is also added that lords would negotiate their way into buying the slave they liked and they would abduct them in the rare cases. This is said to be the reason for the Circassian proverb, *''When someone wants to buy your slave, sell her!''*. The narrator, who stated that his grandfather was liberated when he paid his disenthrallment cost in the 1920s defined himself as a member of the free-born peasantry. The narrator stated that the lord would bring the slave to his village and would immediately marry her off to a slave he had chosen in advance in order to produce children from them as soon as possible. After all, the more slaves one had, the more money he would make from them. Also, it is also stated that healthy children with pale skin and colored eyes were sold for very high prices in the slave market and the experts of this business would raise beautiful slaves as if they were raising purebred horses. Following the exile, this slave production was practiced among Circassians who were relocated in the Balkans.[370] The interviewer, as an exception, did not hide his grandfather's past, and made it clear. He also mentioned the subject of the liberation of white slaves by giving an example of a white slave who paid his liberation fees and became freed. According to what he reported, the white slaves were able to liberate themselves by paying "head money" to their lords. However, as in many cases, the slave families preferred to migrate from their villages as a result of this liberation. The interviewer described this immigration as his grandfather's escape from his slave past and his complete liberation from slavery.

The slave production system which operated in these ways in the Caucasus before the Exile faced many complications following the exile. The exile damaged the societal balance; it was impossible to tell slaves and free-borns apart from one another. Many free-born people who faced big hardships during the Exile had to accept being sold to slavery in order to provide a living for themselves and their families. Especially, one of the narrators who is a member of the free-born peasantry pointed out that these events were very common in Samsun and that many

[370] Interview with a member of a family of slaves in Sivas, 2011.08.15.

people in this city who identify as Turkish actually have Circassian or Circassian slave roots.

> *"Take a walk on Çiftlik Street. When I look at the faces of the people of Samsun, I see the grandchildren of a Circassian slave who had been sold as a slave. This caught the attention of our guests from the Caucasus; they would say, "The people in Samsun look so much like Circassians.". They agreed with me when I told them of this observation of mine."*[371]

Another oral history narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry mentions the significance of Sinop for Circassian slave production in pre and post Exile periods. The beautiful slaves who arrived at Sinop would be immediately sent to Istanbul and the ones who remained were sold to neighboring cities such as Bafra, Kastamonu and Çorum. This narration demonstrates clues about the local slave trade network. It is also stated that a slave market near the dungeons of Sinop was called 'Wife Inn' for a long time.[372]

Similar to the slave trade market in Sinop being called 'Wife Inn', another oral history narration told by an interview who stated that he was from a noble family tells of an example in Istanbul. According to this narration, the Istanbul street on which Circassian slave trade was practiced was called 'Circassian Slave Market Street' and that the name was changed in 1969 by the local administration following the individual appeal of Rahmi Tuna.[373]

In the next oral history narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry, it is mentioned that some of the Circassian gangsters who were relocated in the Balkans by the Ottoman government following the exile tried to maintained the slave production mechanism by abducting Bulgarian girls and children from nearby settlements and this turned into a mafia-like formation because of an

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[371] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2002.10.21.
[372] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2008.08.13.
[373] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Çorum, 2015.07.22.

authority gap.[374] It is known that these gang-like structures called 'Bashibazouk' were composed of Turks, Tatars and Circassians and operated especially in the Balkans. Hakan Erdem used the following expressions regarding this subject:

> *''One of the slave production methods applied during the war was the enslavement of the non-muslim citizens as a punishment for their revolts. The classical dhimmi status was abolished in 1856, when all the subjects of the Sultan were recognized as being equal before the law. Therefore, the state could no longer endorse and legitimize the enslavement of rebelling non-muslims by asserting that they had violated the terms of the debt contract. However, there is substantial evidence supporting the non-Muslims who revolted around the time of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) were actually enslaved by the bashibazouk.''*[375]

According to another oral history narration told by a member of a noble family, after 1878, some slave-trading Circassians who were exiled from the Balkans and settled in Anatolia considered the Armenian revolts that took place in 1895 as an opportunity because they could not enslave the Muslims and tried to continue the practice of slave trade through the rebel Armenians that they had captured.[376] In addition, Circassians who wanted benefit from the decrease in Ottoman's central authority and tried to maintain the continuation of slave production mechanisms in order to take advantage of this situation.

According to another narration told by a member of a noble family, Circassians who settled in the Balkans oppressed the Orthodox population because they wanted to take revenge. They considered them to be equal to the Russians who were the main cause of their exile and wanted to maintain their slave production mechanisms. It is understood that Circassians paired the slaves they abducted with the slaves brought from Caucasia in order to revive the slave production

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[374] Interview with a free-born peasant in Kayseri, 2013.05.11.

[375] Erdem. ibid. p. 65.

[376] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Adapazarı, 2004.06.17.

mechanism, and these slaves were sold under the name of Circassian slaves. Many Bulgarian white slaves who were sold in this manner were known as Circassians and they mixed with society by marrying externally when they gained their freedom in 1950.[377]

Consequently, it is understood from these accounts that Circassians practiced the slave production methods, which they had developed during their time in the Caucasus, on the rebellious Bulgarians and Serbians in the Balkans, and Armenians the Rûm (to a small extent) in Anatolia. It is stated that these activities of the Circassians served the state's purposes. The revolting minorities were neutralized by these outrageous Circassian associations; additionally, the flow of slaves and concubines needed was maintained.

4.9. National Campaign, Ethem the Circassian and the Slaves of the Circassians

The National Campaign period (1919-1923) branded Circassians with the label of 'traitor' which would open one of the biggest wounds in the Circassian subconscious. The Circassians who got stuck between Ottoman government and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara would face many revolts including the conflict between Ahmet Anzavur[378] and Ethem 'the Circassian'[379] and the revolts in Düzce-Adapazarı. Circassians who were in favor of the imperial palace lost the battle on both fronts and this caused Ethem 'the Circassian' to rise in value before GNAT.

We have observed that Circassians are more eager to talk about Ethem the Circassian. However, we did not expect Ethem the Circassian to come up during a

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[377] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Istanbul, 2012.05.18.

[378] Related to Ahmet Anzavur Riot and his life: Güven, Zühtü. (1965). *Anzavur İsyanı*, Ankara: İş Bankası Yayınları.

[379] For detailed information on Ethem the Circassian and his life: Kutay, Cemal. *Çerkes Ethem Dosyası*. İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları. vol.I-II; Çerkes Ethem. (1994). *Anılarım*. İstanbul: Berfin Yayınları.

discussion regarding slavery. In the interviews, a narrator from the free-born peasantry made the following statements:

> *"So many slaves fled with the hope of being free during that time... They went after Ethem, of course. He revolted against the Sultan; a Circassian lord was nothing to him! He was so influential that there were almost no slaves left in the village because they all took their horses and left after him. My father used to tell me this and I have not heard from the escapes ever again. They probably either died in the war or got married and settled in somewhere."*[380]

The myth of Ethem as causing great stress to the Circassian lords, and hanging the lords from trees and watching them with a cigarette in his mouth must have been interpreted as a method of salvation and liberation by the slaves who could not get rid of their lords no matter what they did. As stated by Murat Belge;

> *"The method of collecting troops used by Ethem the Circassian proved more effective during this war. Mustafa Kemal was establishing up a regular army, but Ethem utilized a guerrilla tactic. Ethem's campaign was fighting against a domestic class issue as well as the outsider enemy itself. Ethem the Circassian would come to any village, hang the lord and say, "Come on, split this land among yourselves and join my troops."*[381]

Ethem Bey, one of the most favored members of the Special Organization, showed great success in the guerilla campaign he initiated along with Rauf Orbay who was a Circassian as well. He gathered many Circassian youths. He fought pro-Palace Circassians in most of the uprisings against the GNAT government and hanged them in the square with a cigarette in his mouth, like he did during the riot in Düzce. Ethem Bey was a typical soldier, a man of the cause. In fact, he was so far from the idea of being 'Circassian' that he banned speaking in Circassian in his

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[380] Interview with a free-born peasant in Yozgat, 1998.08.11.

[381] Belge, Murat. (2006). *Linç Kültürünün Tarihsel Kökeni: Milliyetçilik*. İstanbul. p. 95.

troops. One of the remarkable points about the Ethem Bey period was the emphasis on Ethem's former membership of the Special Organization. It was stated that Ethem Bey, who knew that many Circassian slaves had served in intelligence, did not have difficulty in recruiting troops from slaves. The interviewer who stated that he was from a noble family explained this situation as follows:

> *"The state loved the slaves of the Circassians more than the Circassians and employed them! After all, the most basic feature the state was looking for was 'absolutely obedience', especially in the intelligence community, and there was no one who knew this better than the slaves of the Circassians."*[382]

According to oral history narrations, a significant amount of Circassian slaves were among those who supported the campaign of Ethem the Circassian during this period. According to this narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry, while Ethem the Circassian fought for the independence of the nation by the assignment of GNAT Government, many white slaves who joined his side fought for their own liberation. Ethem Bey gained more slave support especially after he started to abolish pro-Palace Circassian lords. It is thought that slaves who fleed their villages in order to fight in the troops of Ethem the Circassian did not return to their homes after the end of the war but formed new and free lives for themselves. After the remaining Circassian girls was sold by Circassian lords to Turks, slavery in villages and slave production was eliminated.[383]

Another oral history narration regarding the National Campaign period mentions the relationship between Abkhazians and Georgian slaves in Adapazarı. According to this narration told by a member of a noble family, a military troop belonging to the Greek army which occupied Adapazarı entered an Abkhazian village. Since the men of the village were either serving in the military or doing banditry in the mountains, this troop was greeted and served by the elders of the

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[382] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Düzce, 1998.06.12.

[383] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2004.08.20.

house. The Greek commander liked one of the slave girls and asked to take her from the elders. As a result, they gave the girl to this commander without taking into consideration the Abkhazian lord who owned the slave. When the soldiers left the village, the Abkhazian lords criticized this lord. The lord did not oppose the situation saying, *''That slave's family is not Abkhazian. They were Georgian captives. So do not worry about it. We gave the girl away, we saved the town!''*.[384]

The National Campaign period was a time of fractions that left quite deep marks in the memory of Circassians. Ethem Bey would remain a reappearing figure in the Circassians' memory. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Circassians tried to exist with their new identities in the new nation states established in Anatolia and other former Ottoman lands. This identity was assigned to them by preparing the conditions foreseen to become Turkicized or Arabized over time. In the first quarter of the 20th century, when the empires were destroyed and many nation states were established, it was aimed that the Circassians, a Muslim minority in Turkey and the Middle East, should become loyal citizens as a result of the integration and assimilation policies of the new states over time.

4.10. Surname Law, Remembering and Breakage

The Surname Law, which was issued in the Republican period, also produced different results within Circassian society. The first break in this process occurred when the Circassians were not allowed by the state to officially take the surnames they had used for thousands of years. Circassians were unable to use their archaic surnames as a result of this law, which was perceived as part of the state's "Turkization" policy. However, there were some exceptional cases. The officers used the surname of the family by changing a few letters of the Circassian words into Turkish. This first breakage was overcomed and the issue of slaves and slavery was once again up for discussion during the choosing of the Turkish surnames.

Surname Law which was introduced during the Republic period caused various interactions within the Circassian society. Majority of the Circassian lords

[384] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Adapazarı, 2016.05.14.

did not share their new surnames with their slaves. Another one of our recorded oral history narrations told by a member of the free-born peasantry touches upon this subject. According to this narration, registrars would go from village to village often making Circassians draw lots from a bag full of pure Turkish words and give those words to them as surnames. It is stated that a Circassian lord in a village near Maraş fed the registrar officers and managed to get a surname which was similar to his original family name but did not want this surname to be given to his slaves. When the slave family took the surname *'Hür'* (meaning 'free') upon the suggestion of the elder of their family, they were in dispute with the ir lord and some of these slaves migrated to Adana after this incident.[385] It was stated during the interviews that some slaves had been using the surname of their lords before the Surname Law was issued in 1934. According to a narrator who was a member of the free-born peasantry, the lords did not object to this since these slaves belonged to them. In the case of the Surname Law, most of the lords were reluctant to give their new surnames to their slaves.

> *'My father used to tell me in the village that ..... Bey, when he could not get the officers to accepts his old family name, agreed to have the surname that he picked from the bag randomly. As for the slave family who were in line, he said that they were his family, and thus prevented them from acquiring a surname of their own.'*[386]

Another interview with a member of a free-born peasantry pointed to a different aspect of 1934. The lord families and their slaves took the same surname in this process. The lords even said, "These are my family. They will take the same surname as we do.". However, the peasants made efforts to keep their slave households apart from their lords. Even today, the slaves carry the surname of the lord's family, however, they are reminded of their slave pasts during issues such as marriage.

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[385] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 1999.08.16.

[386] Interview with a free-born peasant in Düzce, 1998.10.11.

''There are slave households in our village which had been given the same surname as their lords. Yet we know who is of slave origin and who is not. The surname application of the Republic of Turkey are irrelevant here...''[387]

4.11. Transition from Slave Trade to *'Vase'* (Bride Price)

Vase was one of the rooted Circassian traditions practiced in Caucasia. This tradition, which meant 'bride price', was used as a means of financial aid in the old social life of Caucasia. One would ask for articles of value such as money and cattle in order to aid the newly-wed couple. The tradition of *vase*, which produced positive outcomes in the Caucasus, experienced a change in the period following the Great Exile. The poverty, illness, misery and problems in adaptation experienced during and after the exile caused significant changes in Circassian social life and enabled *vase* was abused.[388] Especially during the Republican period, since there were no slaves left to sell, some Circassian lords sold their own daughters to slavery under the name of *vase*. Even though this violation of *vase* caused reactions in the overall Circassian community, it was still practiced especially among Circassian lords. The increase in vase prices in the 1950s prevented young men and women from getting married and in a way caused a social crisis. Some Circassian intellectuals who were distressed by this situation reflected their reactions in articles written in various media organs.[389] In our oral history interviews, we came across some disturbances in Circassian community caused by this corruption. According to one of these interviews with a member of the free-born peasantry, a Circassian lord from a big and well-known family who owned slaves until the 1940s was left without any money after selling all his remaining slaves. He then sold all three of his daughters to slavery under the name of ''*vase*'' and married them off to three men from notable families of Sivas. Also, the selling of daughters under the name of *vase*

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[387] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2000.05.12.

[388] Güsar, Dr. Vasfi. (1953). "Soysuzlaşan Bir Adet: Başlık (Vase)". *Kafkas*. No:7. (July 1953). p.2.

[389] For detailed information V. Güsar, Dr. Vasfi. (1953). "Soysuzlaşan Bir Adet: Başlık (Vase)". *Kafkas*. No:7. (July 1953). p. 2-3; Bir Köylü, "Evlenme ve Vase Derdi", *Yeni Kafkas*, No: 10, August 1958, p. 10; Tuğuj, Hilmi. (1957). "Vase". *Yeni Kafkas*. No: 3. (June 1957). p. 17-18.

became a very common source of income for family elders. A lot of free-born Circassian girls were sold under the name of *vase* in the period between 1940 and 1960.

> *''When he had no more slaves to sell, he began to sell his own children under the name of* 'Vase' *to anyone who brought the money. I prayed the God to punish him and He did... My son was such an awful man that as he passed in front of the mosque, the imam would pause the azan in order to escape his wrath. There were many lords like him: Constantly furious and up to no good... What can I say? They tormented so many innocent people... ''*[390]

According to another oral history narration, a girl who was sold by a Circassian lord to one of the wealthies families of Tokat. After the young man of the house married this girl, she arranged the marriage of other girls from her village to the wealthy families in Tokat. After they were brides in wealthy households, the other free families in the village started a race of getting their daughters a similar future. It is also mentioned that these external marriages causing from financial benefit deteriorated the Circassian structure of the village.[391]

Another oral history interview was with a narrator who stated that he was a member of the free-born peasantry but others stated that he was in fact from a slave family. This narration touches upon the social discrimination against people from slave families in the 1960s, selling of free-born women under the name of *vase* and the tradition of abducting girls among Circassians. According to this narration which takes place in the 1960s in Uzunyayla, a man who had four daughters told his friends that his fifth child would be a girl. Upon this, his friends joked with him saying, *''Of course you are jolly! If you ever need money, you can just sell one of your daughters... ''*. It is also added that these men were allegedly from a slave family and that this way why they were making those jokes. However, it was also

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[390] Interview with a free-born peasant in Ankara, 2013.01.14.

[391] Interview with a free-born peasant in Amasya, 2003.02.21.

added that giving daughters to outsiders was a common practice among not only slaves but also some free-born Circassians.[392] A narrator who was a member of the free-born peasantry used the following statements:

> *"They talk about slaves selling their daughters left and right, but they do not say they give their daughters away in exchange for vase! Vase is the bride price given to the girl's father. I believe it is the same as selling your daughter. When vase started to caused too much trouble, the youth started to get married by fleeing the village. What else could they do? There were not many families in the village who could pay for vase. When there was an abduction, especially if the couple was from different social classes, there would be a hell lot of fighting. Both slavery and vase hurt many people in our village. Oh, and these lords loved to blame the slave families for all the bad and shameful things. When somebody did something bad, people immediately asked if they were slaves. As if they were as innocent as angels..."*[393]

Another interview with a member of the free-born peasantry mentions the end of white slaves. The interview made a connection between the end of slave trade in Anatolia and the lords starting to sell their own daughters under the veil of *vase*. It was also added that the youth who reacted to this situation were silenced by expressions such as, ''Haynapa! Do not interfere with the business o elders!'':

> *"I can surely say that there were no slaves left to sale in Circassian villages after the World War ended in 1945. I know Uzunyayla, Maraş and Sivas fairly well since I have been there multiple times. There were slaves but there was no selling. The lords had run out of slaves to sell. Since there was no slave production, there was no trade, either. The remaining slaves worked in agriculture*

[392] Interview with a free-born peasant in Kayseri, 2010.07.18.
[393] Interview with a free-born peasant in Ankara, 2000.11.23.

and livestock. Some families in the lord class was so used to this practice that they finally started selling their own daughters under the name of 'vase'. We were young back then. We wanted to oppose to this situation but we were told this was 'haynapa' and we were silenced. Nobody listened to us. I mean, I would not mind it if they sold their daughters to good men. However, all the prosperous but old men in the town was all over Circassian villages. It hurt to look at their faces. What do you expect? Once they sold slaves to these men and now their own daughters... I think the slaves sold in those times cursed their owners because for all those years the daughters of those lords faced tortures way worse than actual slaves...''[394]

Another oral history narration mentioning the practice of *vase* was with an interview who stated that he was a member of the free-born peasantry. The narrator points out that this dowry money had turned into an indicator of dignity:

''Circassians were selling their own daughters and what was this practice? Wealth is of importance while the consent of the girl is irrelevant. There are people who prioritize money above anything else in all nations – there have been in the past and there are today. The girl would be given and the money would be taken; this was vase. I have been in these meetings. People said such things like, ''My daughter is no less than this muc'', ''They paid 5000 to that girl, so we want 5000 as well''. This is why there were so many cases of abduction. The two sides would make a deal and escape. In that case, the dowry would be less. In late periods, the given money would be spent on the girl. If you spent it on yourself, you would be shamed. Dowry exists in Hitites, they even legalized it. If the bride's side broke off the agreement after the engagement, they had to pay all the expenses. The side to break the deal had to pay all the expenses....''[395]

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[394] Interview with a free-born peasant in Adana, 2001.09.16

[395] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Çorum, 2015.01.21.

Another oral history narration told by a member of the noble class demonstrates the unrest caused by the practice of *vase* in the Circassian community in the 1950s:

> *"In* vase, *Circassians take money... One day they gathered in our house when I was in the ninth grade. Turks would come and they weren't decent at all. They would say things like, ''Take 3000 liras, give me this girl'' and take away the girls. The Imam would perform the engagement ceremony right there and then before the girl even saw the groom... There were men who made money off this business, they would take the girl and leave... They gathered in our house to discuss this situation and I was serving them. 23 girls were married off outside the village in similar ways. The eldest hodja was my uncle. He would say: ''Allah writes who is going to marry who on the Sacred Plate. If a person goes against this, he will surely be a heathen!''. So I timidly asked my uncle, ''Can I ask a question?''. They were mad at me and tried to shush me up immediately. A preacher in the room helped me and I asked: ''Is God Turkish?''. There was a whip hanging on the wall. My father's uncle said ''Give me the whip now!'', they were mad... I said, ''You sold 23 girls to Turks and got 3000 liras. Despite the 23 Circassian girls, there wasn't even one Turkish girl. What kind of thing is this?''. So we formed a gang in the village. We broke the brakes of the cars of some people. We made people cut the ears and noses of some brokers... There was a rumor that Circassians cut those who were on their way to ... ... After that, neither Allah wrote nor one Turkish girl came to the village. A noble man from Maraş said that he was ashamed. He told me that he went to see her daughter in the house he gave her but there was no groom to kiss his hand. He asked her where he was but she said he would be back shortly. A man came at last. He had a limp since one of his legs was cut. He told this to his uncle...*

A shoe shiner swore against Circassians and we were all surprised. Then the shoe shiner pointed at the Circassian women crossing the street. ''Those are Circassian women,'' he said. My uncle was a mufti at that time. We phoned somewhere and went to the houses of those Circassian women. They told the women to show them the groom. We went inside and found the groom lying on the bed with his hands tied with a rope. They said, ''You see, these are the kind of men to whom we gave our daughters. That is why the shoe shiner is cursing all Circassians.''[396]

As seen in these interviews, the Circassian lords kept on selling slaves in unofficial ways in the Republic period. In the 1950s, the Circassian lords who had sold all their remaining slaves were unable to maintain slave production and experienced serious financial hardships. In order to overcome these hardships, they referred to '*vase*' which was an old Circassian tradition. This practice was stripped away from its original purpose and used for the selling of the daughters of Circassian lords. The corruption of the practice of *vase* for this purpose received reactions from the overall Circassian society and especially the Circassian youth. External marriages were started to be made and this was among the leading factors for the assimilation of Circassian society.

4.12. The Issue of Nobility-Slavery and the Evolution of Slavery

We have mentioned in previous chapters that Circassian society is separated into certain social classes. It was understood in oral history narrations that this class discrimination which was applied effectively in Caucasia was maintained to some extent in Ottoman territories following the Exile. It has been found in the oral history narrations that in the core of this Circassian social discrimination lies the issues of being free-born or slave. Even though social classes melded into each other during the exile to Ottoman territories, the discrimination against slaves

[396] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Istanbul, 2014.10.15.

continued existing. The oral history narrations we have obtained are full of examples that demonstrate this situation in detail.

It has been stated that the state, with or without a certain political agenda in mind, separated the family lines during the Circassians' resettlement process. The strong social network between the same families that settled in different regions generated personality association while noble-slave stratification caused dissociative identities. [397]Ulaş Sunata mentioned the class discrimination and split villages in his oral history study. "Even today, the noble-slave distinction manifests itself as a social status and dominance factor in rural areas. This situation has triggered rural-urban migration and, in race occasions, caused divisions within the village."[398] The first of the oral history narrations we will analyze contains enlightening implications regarding the conditions of slaves in Circassian society. It is said that Circassians hold their slaves and horses in the same status or they value their horses even more than their slaves. The narrator who is a member of the free-born peasantry also added, ''The Circassian lords did not regard the free-born Circassian peasants *called 'Fekol'* to be true Circassians; the slaves were not even in the status of second-class citizens. Even the free-born peasants were looked down upon, you can figure out what kind of a life the slaves led.''[399]

> *"The lords did not approve of the slaves. They refused to form familial ties with us. I mean, even the free-born peasants were considered unworthy of their children. There were such customs in our tribe. Many of my Abzakh and Shapsugh friends have told me they had never witnessed such things. I am telling you my experiences. I do not speak for anybody else."*[400]

Another anecdote related to İsmail Berkok Pasha who was one of many Circassians to serve in Ottoman military demonstrates that a slave would still be

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[397] Sunata. ibid. p. 39.
[398] Ibid. p. 30.
[399] Interview with a free-born peasant in Çorum, 2014.12.05.
[400] Interview with a free-born peasant in Ankara, 1998.03.17.

treated as one in their village even if they became an Ottoman pasha and that this was the harsh reality of being born into the slave class. Circassian lords who wished to maintain their own positions tried to legitimize these actions by the use of their own traditions. These actions caused people from slave families to isolate themselves from their own territories and society and mix with the Turkish society. According to this narration by a member of the free-born peasantry, İsmail Berkok Pasha, who was from Yağlıpınar Village in Uzunyayla, visited his village after long years. He was seated in the lowest part where slaves sat on the entrance of *haçeş*. When some people disapproved of this, the lords said *''That cannot happen. He is a slave. Even though the is a pasha, he will know his place!''*. The narrator states that the pasha took his last relative in the village after this incidence and never set foot in the village again.[401]

> *''My father has told us many times about this event which he witnessed on that night. If these lords put Ismail Berkok Pasha through such suffering, imagine what they would do to his slave back in his village. The man did not set foot on the village ever again. They should be thankful that the whole village was not sent to exile in the east.''*[402]

Another narration told by a member of a noble family shows interesting instances in which Circassians from slave families went beyond the roles assigned for them. according to this narration, before the World War I, there used to be horse races held in Aziziye and a slave man named İshak won this race. However, the peasants beat him saying, *''How dare you pass your lords in this race!''*. It is stated that the slave man, rescued from the hands of attackers by police officers, ran away from the village in order to join the military and never returned to the village again. The departure of the slave man whose success was overlooked and violated because

[401] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Samsun, 2015.11.25.
[402] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2015.11.26.

of his background as a slave is another example showing that oppressive class discrimination practices caused assimilation.

> *"It was unacceptable when slaves joined the horse races along with their lords. These slaves were of course beaten because their win would harm the lords' honor. But that was how things were in this region; I cannot speak for the other peasants. Kabardians practiced Circassian slavery in a stricter manner while the application of it was less preeminent in Hatuqwais. This practice was almost absent in the Abzakhs. That concludes all I know about the subject."*[403]

In the next narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry, interesting examples are given suggesting that the existing class distinction among Circassian affected the outer world. According to this narration, some free-born Circassians serving in the Ottoman military found out that their commissioned officer came from a slave family and violated all military rules by disobeying the commands of the officer and beating him up. It is stated that they often boasted about this situation in their own villages after their discharge from the army saying, *''We beat up a slave officer back when we were in the military!''*. It can be seen that class discrimination was even above military discipline.[404]

In another oral history narration showing that class distinction among Circassians maintained in the Republic period, it is mentioned that even the people who gained their liberation were treated as slaves and that this family had to abandon their village by mixing with the society in another city. This narration, told by an interview who said, ''I identify myself not as a free-born or slave Circassian, but a Turkish citizen.'', touches upon the escaping process of the slaves and offered a memory from his own family. According to this narration, shortly after the declaration of the Republic in one of the villages in Maraş, a slave family paid money to their lords and were liberated. Because they received a new last name

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[403] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Kayseri, 2012.07.16.

[404] Interview with a free-born peasant in Çorum, 2009.11.24.

with the new surname law, they should have been treated as free-born people. Nevertheless, they were still being treated by the peasants as slaves. Even though they wanted to be treated as free citizens, this attitude of the peasants caused the family to leave the village in the 1940s in order to settle in Antep to mix with the society.

> *"I encounter with slaves that have disappeared completely in the Circassian society. Sometimes I meet a man who says that his grandmother or grandfather were Circassian. Most of them do not know the name of their family, and most women state that they did not talk to their relatives or visit their villages; they were leading completely disconnected lives. This is very interesting because the Circassians are very strict about kinship, and it is very important for them to pay visits to one another. I suppose most of these women were sold slaves. I choose to remain silent because I know that my grandfather also migrated from his village and settled in Antep as a result of this process. I am not interested in anyone's slave past..."*[405]

The next narrative about oral history told by a member of the free-born peasantry speaks of a similar situation, even though it was experienced in a different geography. The slaves were still belittled and despised by the community even when they acquired their freedom, which caused them to leave the Çarşamba district of Samsun and their society and settle in Istanbul.[406] There are many instances of class discrimination and stratification in the period following the year 1950. According to another narration told by a member of the free-born peasantry, a Circassian lord, upon finding out that his son was dating a girl from a slave family, said, *''A lord family cannot have a slave for a bride. I cannot live with this shame!''*. This lord sold the slave girl to a man from Kayseri and gave the money to her father on a day when his son was away in Sivas. The young man found out about the situation when he came back and left the village to settle in Ankara after a big fight

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[405] Interview with a Circassian intellectual in Ankara, 2000.12.20.

[406] Interview with a free-born peasant in Samsun, 2011.12.26.

with his father. It is also stated that he lived his life without marrying and away from Circassians.

> *"In many families, there were disputes related to the issue of slavery-nobility. Some people left their homes. The sons of the lords would fall in love with slave girls, and wanted to marry them. The families would never allow these marriages. So the problem got even bigger. I could distinguish slave girls very easily when I went to a wedding in another village. They were more white, taller, more attractive, and had a rather prudent attitude. Yes, I can admit they were more beautiful than the daughters of the lords."*[407]

According to another oral history narration, the interview identified as "a free individual of the secular republic", stating that he was from a slave family and that his family escaped the village in 1967 and settled in Ankara and then Istanbul.it is argued that the Circassian slavery system was ended by Republican reforms and schools in the Republic era:

> *"I was a smart child. My primary school teacher persuaded my father and registered me to Pamukpınar Village Institute in Sivas in 1943. Of course, I studied so hard at that school that I became a revolutionist. Our family was called a 'slave family' by Circassians. We waited at the doors of the lords. The lord of my father did not look at his face for months just because my father sent me to school without the permission of the lord. So my father had committed 'haynapa'. You know, my father had to ask his permission since he was our owner! Anyways, I studied in school, graduated and went to a village as a teacher. I can never forget how happy my parents were. I was the first person in the village to go to school and become a teacher... Of course, I was a young man then – and a quite handsome one too and there were many weddings in the village during summer. However,*

[407] Interview with a free-born peasant in Sakarya, 1999.10.21.

hatiyako *did not let me dance, after all I was a slave! I was a devoted Republican – there was no way I would conform to slavery! There was some scuffle when I entered the dance circle quickly. They hit me and I hit them. I didn't let them bully me. But they punished me and didn't let me in weddings anymore. I had a* kashen *back then. We saw each other a few times and the royalty subject was mentioned. I said, ''Let's run away together'', but she didn't want it. So I left the village. I married a revolutionist like me in the first place I was assigned. My family left the village in 1967 and no one from my family remained there. We did not set foot in the village for years. As you can see, what ended slavery was the schools and revolutions of the Republics, not the edicts of the Sultan!''*[408]

A similar case can be seen in the next narration told by an interview who identified as 'Turk' although his grandfather was from a slave family. According to this narration, a boy from a slave family started elementary school. His classmates seated him in the back row even though the boy was very short. The teacher placed him in the front row only to find him in the back row the next day. When the teacher asked for the cause of this, the class captain said, *''Teacher, he cannot sit on the front, he knows his place and goes to the back row.''* Upon this answer, the teacher beat the class captain with a stick and seated the slave boy in his own chair. It is stated that the slave boy became a soldier, never returned to his village and lived in Ankara without getting close to Circassians again.[409]

There are narrations suggesting that the biggest problematic factor in this class discrimination among Circassians is the subject of marriage. According to one of these narrations told by an interview who stated that he was from a noble family, the son of a lord who was from a family line of Abkhazian princes lived in Adapazarı. He went to a wedding in Düzce where he fell in love with an Abkhazian girl. When he learned that the girl was from a slave family, it was impossible for

[408] Interview with a member of a family of slaves in Istanbul, 2011.06.14.
[409] Interview with a member of a family of slaves in Ankara, 2014.08.14.

this lord's son, who was not allowed to marry someone from his own class of a family line of princes, to marry a slave girl. Even though this was fairly known, people reacted harshly to this situation. It is stated that this modernized family reacted badly when they heard about this possible union. Even the ones who had socialist approaches told the young man that this was unacceptable. The girl's father got her married to a Turk from Eskişehir, assuring her that no one would insult her there because of her slave background. It is also pointed out that the Abkhazian lord's son insisted on not marrying anyone for years until he finally married a Turkish woman from Adapazarı when he turned fifty.[410] A similar narration told by an interview who stated that he was from a family of slaves stated that he identified as a 'Turkish citizen' and made the following remarks:

> *"He sent me* lokum *(Turkish delight) during the wedding. I understood that she wanted to be my* kashen *but I sent it back since I was from a slave family and thought that he wouldn't accept me anyways. They came to our village two months later and he sent me* lokum *once again. I accepted them since he insisted a lot. The year was 1974, we started seeing each other, thinking that everything had changed and that maybe his parents wouldn't oppose to the situation. We liked each other, indeed. He was a very nice man. He told the situation to his family after some time and they said, ''these don't have a family name, their lineage is unknown, so they are a slave family!''. Of course, his family objected and said that they wouldn't let it happen. This went on for almost two years but he couldn't oppose to his family. After that, we separated. Of course, I was very sad. I was so sad that I got sick. I couldn't even leave the house. Think about it – the year was 1974 and they were still talking about slavery. From this day on, I have been cursing everyone who cared about royalty and slavery. It took me three years to recover. My parents sent me to stay with my brothers in the town. A neighbor wanted me after four*

[410] Interview with a member of a family of lords in Istanbul, 2008.04.21.

months in the town. I was still mad at my ex kashen *so I married that Turkish man in the heat of that anger...* "[411]

Political, economic and social shifts experienced in Turkey during the 20th century affected human relations in various ways. All of the components of Circassian society were affected by these shifts. According to an oral history narration, a Circassian from a slave family, one of the first families to leave Uzunyayla, settled in İstanbul Esenler and had a prestigious job. After 20 years, someone from the family of the previous lord of this slave also settled in Esenler and started working as secretarie to this business man. One day on a meeting with his Circassian friends in his office, the business man calls the secretarian girl to serve them saying, *''Look, this girl is the granddaughter of my grandfather back in the village and now she is my secretary. Once we were their slaves. Life is very interesting, isn't it? I only make the girl do chores like preparing coffee and tea; I don't torture her like the lords did to our women''*.[412]

Another oral history narration told by a Turk who is not Circassian but stated that he had many Circassian friend states that slavery in Circassians and its effects were felt until the 1900s:

"I had a Circassian friend who studied in Ankara University in 1900. He came from a wealthy family and lived with four young men who were from his village. I became friends with all of them in time. There was one boy who used to do all the chores in the house. Then I learned that this young man came from a slave family and did not have a prestigious family name while all the others had interesting Circassian surnames. He used to do all the chores; they used him like a servant in that house for four years. I warned them many times but they would not listen. The young man was struggling financially and he graduated from university at the same time while serving them for four years. He lived in the house without paying rent. One of the other

[411] Interview with a member of a family of slaves in Ankara, 2006.06.20.
[412] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2001.11.19.

men said to me: ''Slavery is in their blood. Even if we don't tell them to do things, they will not be comfortable and end up still serving us. You wouldn't possibly understand our traditions.''[413]

According to some narratives, the ghost of being descended from a slave family in Circassians haunts these people no matter how modern the times are. In this narrative told by a member of the free-born peasantry, a elderly Circassian in Samsun known as 'Slave Necmi' died in 1988. The narrator stated that when he asked his father what kind of a nickname that was, he said: *''His father was a liberated slave. That is why his nickname passed on to his son.''*. According to the narrator, it was impossible to detach oneself from the label of slavery even though one was liberated.[414]

As a result, it is understood that class discrimination against people of slave families among Circassians and especially discriminatory policies were practiced in the Anatolian territory. Especially when people from slave families went beyond the boundaries of their assigned roles, they reacted badly and their slave backgrounds were reminded to them regardless of their identity. A man being treated as a slave in his own village to which he returned with the rank of Pasha in the Ottoman army, another man being beaten for beating his lord in a horse race and similar instances caused them to distance themselves from the Circassian society and eventually diminish all their bonds. An Ottoman officer of free-born descent being beaten by free-born peasants shows that this free-slave distinction between Circassians violated the Ottoman military discipline. In the Republic period, the lords' reluctance to give their own surnames to slaves with the emergence of the Surname Law can be analyzed as another reason of detachment of slaves. The ongoing maltreatment of slaves even after their paid liberation caused many families who struggled in marriage to migrate to big cities, which were big attractions because of industrialization, and live a life away from Circassians and integration into Turkish culture.

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[413] Interview with a non-Circassian in Istanbul, 2009.07.12.
[414] Interview with a free-born peasant in İstanbul, 2011.07.18.

It has been found that the Circassian society was usually against marriages with those of slave families. It is thought that these oppositions caused the Circassian youth to alienate themselves from the Circassian society and be open to assimilation. Reforms of the Republic and the generalized education opportunities paved the way to create awareness against class discrimination among Circassians. Especially thanks to the education of people from slave families enabled them to distance themselves from their environment and form free and modern lives. It is also stated that with the rural-urban migration happening during the political, social and economic shifts experiences in Turkey; people from slave families were able to reach a certain degree of economic strength and even employed those who came from their previous villages where they worked for their lords. It is understood that even though Circassian slavery has been abolished, this distanced attitude towards people from slave families continued in the 20th century despite all the social changes and modernization that happened during this time.

CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSION

In this study, firstly, a variety of information has been provided about the historical backgrounds, language, customs and traditions of the Circassians, the peoples of the Caucasus. I have presented the significance of *habze* and *thamate* which were major components of the social life of the Circassians, the Islamization process of the Circassians and the deep-rooted Circassian slavery system in detail. I tried to explain the process of the Circassian slavery system, in which the last white slaves in the world were produced, from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day. I have mentioned the ways in which Circassian slavery system and the Ottoman slave system differed and demonstrated how the Circassians who lived in the Ottoman territories after the Great Exile adapted their own slavery system to the Ottoman slave system. The stages of the white slaves and slavery customs brought to the Ottoman lands by Circassians during the Exile of 1864 have been discussed in accordance with their historical background.

Because resources have shown that almost all of the slaves offered for sale in the Ottoman territories found buyers to pay exorbitant prices by being marketed as 'Circassian slaves'. Later studies have shown that the slave merchants' desire to generate more revenue by marketing all the slaves brought to the Empire from the Caucasus, whether Circassian or not, as 'Circassian' slaves, caused these slaves to be generally referred to as 'white' rather than 'Circassian'. I have expressed throughout this study that the term 'Circassian slaves' is a problematic use and chose the term 'white slaves' instead. Thus, when talking about the white slave trade in the Ottoman Empire, it is actually referring to the trade of the Circassian slaves. It is known that the Ottoman statesmen who, influenced by the pressure of the British, brought restrictions to the black slave trade throughout the 19th century, and then banned it completely, resisted to abolish Circassian slave trade for a very long time. I have stated that an increasing number of white slaves were sold as 'Circassian slaves', and employed in the imperial harem and the rich houses since the beginning of the 19th century, thus forming a power structure of slaves. I have

explained that the reign of these slaves who became the *Kadınefendi* (lady) of the imperial harem and ladies of konaks triggered the slave trade, so white slave trade was not banned until 1909.

The misery, hunger, disease and poverty that the Circassians suffered during the Circassian Genocide and subsequent Exile of 1864 caused many Circassians to be consented to enslave one or several of their own children in order to survive. I have expressed that the free-born individuals fell into the hands of slave traders because they lost their families and relatives in this process. Following these social disturbances during the exile, the state intervened in the disputes between the Circassians and the slaves in the Ottoman territories and generally acted in favor of the slaves. The Ottoman state administrators applied various practices to break Circassian communities and subordinate them to the authority of the state, and to ensure that slaves moved away from the Circassian society and became assimilated. I have stated that the imperial edict which was issued in 1909 following the establishment of the Second Constitutional Era prohibited Circassian slave trade but failed to abolish slavery. I have also included the efforts of the Circassian Union and Solidarity Association in this regard. I have expressed that, by providing information gathered from interviews and the recollection of memories, some of the concubines living in the harem and rich *konaks* dissatisfied with the work of the Union and were afraid of losing their positions. I have expressed that, by providing information gathered from interviews and the recollection of memories, some of the concubines living in the harem and rich *konaks* dissatisfied with the work of the Union and were afraid of losing their positions. I have emphasized that Circassian slavery was practiced and perceived differently in the imperial court, rich households and the rural regions. I have argued that a uniform definition of Circassian slavery is a problematic use.

It has been stated that it would be wrong to use generic and accusing statements such as 'that the Circassians used to sell their own children'. I have also stressed in various sections of this study that the slaves sold in the market as 'Circassian slaves' were more likely to be non-Circassians, the children sold also

were likely to be the children of the Circassians' slaves and the Circassians had no traditions such as kidnapping and selling children. Nevertheless, the absence of the tradition of selling children does not mean that this has not happened in the historical process. The wars before the Exile of 1864 and the chain of disasters that followed could have separately led to these sales.

The most important point that distinguishes this thesis from other studies and makes it more significant is the oral history narrations that are evaluated in the fourth section of this thesis. These oral history accounts recorded during the interviews conducted with Circassians from various social classes, such as free-born and nobility, and Circassian intellectuals from 1996 to 2017. I have emphasized that slavery is a sensitive and private subject and argued that noble-slave family distinctions were affective in the subject of marriage, and slavery cannot be forgotten even today. As a result of these oral history accounts, I have stated that there are two types of assimilation among the Circassians. The first one was the assimilation of Russian, Kazakh, Georgian, Bulgarian, and Armenian captives by selling them as 'Circassian slaves'. The disassociation of white slaves inside the Circassian society is interpreted as an escape or liberation from their slave pasts. It has been expressed in this frame that once liberated, the Turkification or Arabization of these slaves did not mean much.

Thanks to the oral history narrations, I have determined that the Circassian slaves were vulnerable to sexual exploitation in addition to assimilation practices, and this had various moral and social consequences. The possibility that white slaves were open to sexual exploitation constituted the greatest obstacle for these slaves to establish marriage relations in Circassian society. Thanks again to these oral history narrations, I have determined that the sale of children, which had a significant increase due to the great troubles and poverty encountered during the Great Exile, continued to be practiced unofficially after the establishment of the Republic separately in some areas.

Another fact that these oral history accounts reveals is that Circassians were on the frontline in conflicts with non-Muslim minorities such as the Rûm and

Armenians during World War I. Another important fact that oral history accounts reveal is that the Rûm and Armenian children who were enslaved and raised as Circassian were later sold to the Turks as "Circassian slaves". The sale of these prisoners of war, which was one of the major resources of slave production, as "Circassian slaves" gave them the opportunity to live with new identities they acquired. Until the end of most of his life, lurking in these false identities. Thus, most of these slaves lived within the limits of these false identities all of their lives. Following the establishment of the Republic, some Circassian soldiers who had run out of their slaves practiced '*vase*' by selling their own daughters.

Consequently, I have concluded that Circassian slavery, which became an integral part of the Ottoman slavery system, continued its existence for a long time even though its influence diminished in the Republican period. Circassian slavery has been lifted as a result of strict class-separation rules among the Circassians, migration to the growing cities with industrialization and the widespread of modern education. However, the distance maintained between the free-born Circassians and the slave families. I can state that this thesis, in which I have tried to show the progress of white slaves and Circassian slavery from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day, is a beginning. This study once again shows that Circassian slavery has a long history. I am hoping that this system, which produced the last white slaves in the world, will interest researchers as an equation with many unknowns and initiate various future studies.

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(296) 2016.05.09, İstanbul, interview from the free-born peasantry, 67, Female, Retired Teacher.
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(300) 1996.04.16, Çorum, interview from the free-born peasantry, 84, Male, Farmer.
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