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# **THE SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN FAMILY RELATIONS FOLLOWING THE IMMIGRATION FROM THE BALKANS TO TURKEY: THE SIVAS CASE**

**Dr. Ferhan GÜNDÜZ**

The geography of the Balkans has been a scene of developments of utmost importance since three millenia. This region has been keeping its strategic importance from the times of classical Greece. All major powers in the history of this region desired to be the rulers of this geography and effected a series of social, political, religious and demographical procedures. Therefore, the immigration to or from the Balkans to other geographies can be analysed and evaluated within the scope of these events.

One of the important methods which the Ottomans applied in order to be the sovereign of the Balkans was to direct groups of Turkish population to settle in this region. The initial immigration extended from the 13<sup>th</sup> until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter the Ottoman authority began to decline and took a reverse course in the aftermath of the Russian-Ottoman war in 1877. Retro-immigration had started and is continuing since the last three hundred years.

The main aim of my presentation is the investigation of cultural interaction as the result of immigration from the Balkans to Anatolia, and the assessment of the ensuing lifestyle. The central problem is the status of women and its impact on culture. We shall take the settlement within the area of Sivas province as a typical case.

Immigrants from Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Bosnia have settled in Sivas since 1912. At that time they were numbering approximately fifteen thousand. These immigrants were sent to 18 villages of the 6 districts of Sivas, as shown on the map (see Map 1). Natives were residing in these units of settlement. The objective of immigrant settlement was to achieve co-existence by teaching the national language and thus securing their socio-cultural adaptation. This was done to a great extent during 90 years of integration. As can be seen in the statistical table attached, of the 18 villages only 8 have different customs pertaining to holiday greetings, meals and folklore. In fact, cultural manners of natives and immigrants have become intermixed.

Immigrants coming from the socially and economically more developed regions obviously brought their own cultural habits and the native people obviously had a culture of their own. Interaction between them started in many aspects, but certain policies of the state intended to

transform the immigrants from being consumers into being producers and to make them adapted to society as a whole caused the emergence of some problems. The state helped the immigrants to possess land, house, agricultural tools, seeds and money and exempted them for a while from military service and from paying taxes. This situation created some sort of jealousy on the part of natives but it was soon overcome and disappeared.

These developments and the lure of central cities, where immigrant population was rather more concentrated, caused a considerable number of immigrants to depart from Sivas and settle in cities such as İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara, Bursa, Tekirdağ and Adana (see Map 2). Nevertheless, Original immigrants still live within the research area.

The data on the immigrations from the Balkans to Sivas province since the foundation of the Turkish Republic were obtained during the first six months of 2003. Direct and widespread observation of facts and conversations with immigrants brought forth a general comparison which is shown on the attached table. Together with discovered ratios some determinants are pointed at, constituting a final evaluation.

In the long run the immigrants were not assimilated but integration resulted in the true sense of the term. In fact, even today the aged immigrants talk, in their homes, Greek, Bulgarian and Bosnian as well as Turkish. The differences observed in their clothing, cooking and kitchen work, marriage customs, holiday greetings and congratulations and folk dances become crystallized in their manners and behaviour, in short, in their lifestyle and order. The role of immigrant women is quite significant in the formation of this plurality.

An important part of immigrant families is the forming new families in accordance with the tradition of external marriage. Women carry their cultural habits to newly-formed families. As a result of these marriages there is even racial variety. It is quite evident that an important number of immigrants are blondes, some with light brown skin and different eye color.

Polygamy has not been seen among the immigrants. Although the families are patriarchal, the equality of sexes is to some extent observable. The basic reason for this equality is that the immigrant women participate more in economic activities. The immigrant women are so active in economical production that the native people find this somewhat strange. Within the immigrant families, the woman-man relationship seems to have a more democratic form. It can be

reported that the ratio of the participation of women in the decisions taken within the family is higher than that of native women.

Besides animal husbandry, the immigrant families are engaged in higher levels of agricultural activity. With respect to growing fruit and vegetables the immigrant women work as much as men. As a result, the production of dry fruit and vegetable has been made only by these women. In addition, the immigrant women, supported by native people, work single-handedly in the evaluation of animal products.

The passion of immigrant women for cleaning the house affect their lifestyle, too. Whereas among the natives, animals are placed on the ground floor or next to the house, among the families with an immigrant woman (usually as mother). Animals are kept separate from the family house.

It was observed that the women who have an active position in immigrant families are able to create intense interaction with native women. The rich variety of food, clothing, motifs of rug-carpet and the preparation of winter foods seen in villages with immigrant residents verify this observation.

As a result, the families who immigrated from the Balkans, an area which was more developed than Turkey in socio-economic aspects, settled in Sivas bringing their own culture. Today, this culture has become integrated with native culture. Since the immigrant women are economically active producers both in their original localities and where they are settled, they are relatively more equal to men in family relationships. The immigrant families having a tradition of external -marriage carried their inter-family relationships and their lifestyles to their newly-formed families especially by the encouraging works of women. Today it is possible to observe in the villages, where immigrants had settled, a rich variety in many areas ranging from material production to an interwoven cultural lifestyle.

**VILLAGES SETTLED BY IMMIGRANTS FROM THE BALKANS DURING THE PERIOD STARTING WITH THE FOUNDATION OF THE REPUBLIC**

|   | COUNTY  | VILLAGE   | NUMBER OF Houses | NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT HOUSES | IMMIGRANT POPULATION | DATE OF ARRIVAL | PREVIOUS RESIDENCE   | OCCUPATION        | ECONOMIC SITUATION | DIFFERENT TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS   | SITUATION OF IMMIGRATION TO BIG CITIES                       |
|---|---------|-----------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Divriği | Adatepe   | 40               | 2                          | 8                    | 1951            | Bulgaria             | Farming-Husbandry | Average            | With natives intermixed mode of living                                       | Majority immigrated to Istanbul and Ankara                   |
| 2 | Divriği | Güresin   | 19               | 1                          | 6                    | 1927            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming           | Good               | Same traditions and customs with natives                                     | Immigrated to Tekirdağ                                       |
| 3 | Divriği | Kavaklısu | 12               | 1                          | 5                    | 1927            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming           | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives                                     | Immigrated to Istanbul                                       |
| 4 | Divriği | Kesme     | 150              | 50                         | 150                  | 1924            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming-Husbandry | Good               | Difference of meals and pronunciation  | Majority immigrated to Istanbul and Ankara                   |
| 5 | Divriği | Maltepe   | 37               | 20                         | 100                  | 1927            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming-Husbandry | Average            | Differences in the order of settlement. Aged people speak Greek              | Majority immigrated to Istanbul and Ankara                   |
| 6 | Ulaş    | Boğazdere | 17               | 12                         | 70                   | 1938            | Bulgaria             | Farming-Husbandry | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives                                     | 9 families immigrated to western cities                      |
| 7 | Suşehri | Esenyaka  | 180              | 90                         | 300                  | 1924            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming           | Average            | Immigrant consciousness internalized. Perfect integration with local culture | 200 families immigrated to Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Bursa |
| 8 | Suşehri | Şarköy    | 35               | 10                         | 70                   | 1924            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming           | Average            | Interaction wiht natives realized  | 20 families immigrated to Istanbul and Ankara                |

|   |         |        |    |    |     |      |                      |         |         |   |                                    |
|---|---------|--------|----|----|-----|------|----------------------|---------|---------|---|------------------------------------|
| 9 | Suşehri | Gözköy | 70 | 20 | 150 | 1924 | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming | Average | Some differences in life style observed | 20 families immigrated to Istanbul |
|---|---------|--------|----|----|-----|------|----------------------|---------|---------|---|------------------------------------|

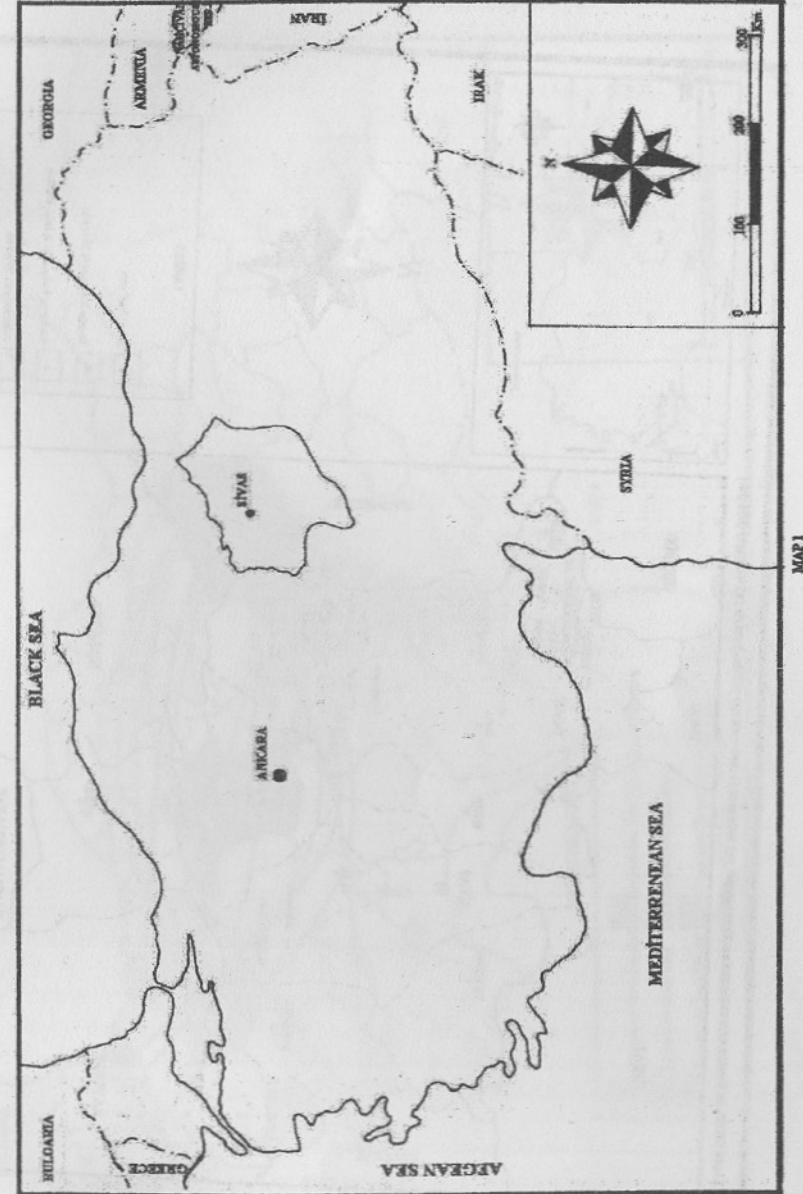
**VILLAGES SETTLED BY IMMIGRANTS FROM THE BALKANS DURING THE PERIOD STARTING WITH THE FOUNDATION OF THE REPUBLIC**

|    | COUNTY    | VILLAGE    | NUMBER OF Houses | NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT HOUSES | IMMIGRANT POPULATION | DATE OF ARRIVAL | PREVIOUS RESIDENCE   | OCCUPATION        | ECONOMIC SITUATION | DIFFERENT TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS  | SITUATION OF IMMIGRATION TO BIG CITIES                               |
|----|-----------|------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---|--|
| 10 | Suşehri   | Eskişar    | 45               | 43                         | 154                  | 1924            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming           | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives  | 70 families immigrated to Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir                 |
| 11 | Suşehri   | Yeşilyayla | 80               | 78                         | 395                  | 1924            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming-Husbandry | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives except marriage and holiday ceremonies | 300 families immigrated to Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir                |
| 12 | Suşehri   | Bostancık  | 100              | 10                         | 50                   | 1924            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming           | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives  | 15 families immigrated to Istanbul                                   |
| 13 | Akıncılar | Sevindik   | 35               | 28                         | 150                  | 1923            | Thessaloniki /GREECE | Farming           | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives  | Immigrated to Izmir and Tekirdağ                                     |
| 14 | Gemerek   | Tekmen     | 150              | 65                         | 260                  | 1928            | Bulgaria Yugoslavia  | Farming           | Average            | Spring festivals - special days congratulated with dinners                      | 20 families work outside Turkey and come once a year during vocation |
| 15 | Gemerek   | Dendil     | 85               | 80                         | 330                  | 1924            | Bosnia               | Farming           | Average            | Differences in meals and marriage ceremonies                                    | Immigrated to Adana, Ankara and Kayseri                              |
| 16 | Zara      | Dereköy    | 15               | 11                         | 70                   | 1924            | Yugoslavia           | Farming-Husbandry | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives  | Immigrated to Istanbul   |
| 17 | Zara      | Kayadibi   | 24               | 24                         | 150                  | 1924            | Bosnia               | Farming-Husbandry | Average            | Same traditions and customs with natives except folklore and meals              | Immigrated to Istanbul, Izmir and Adana                              |

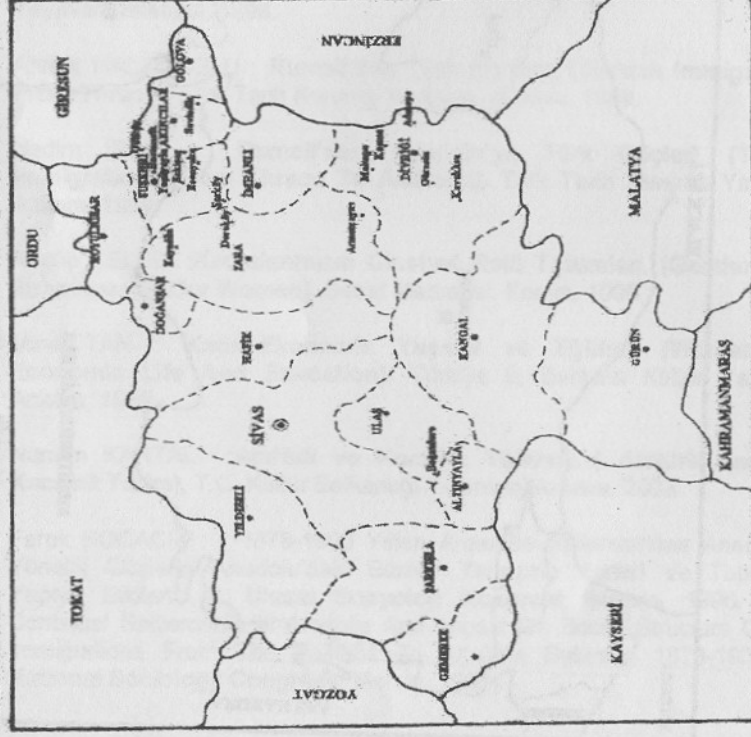
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|----|------|-------------|----|----|-----|------|------------|-----------------------|---------|--|------------------------|
| 18 | Zara | Armutçayırı | 23 | 23 | 112 | 1924 | Yugoslavia | Farming-<br>Husbandry | Average | Interaction with native (Local) culture achieved | Immigrated to Istanbul |
|----|------|-------------|----|----|-----|------|------------|-----------------------|---------|--|------------------------|

## KAYNAKÇA (SOURCES)

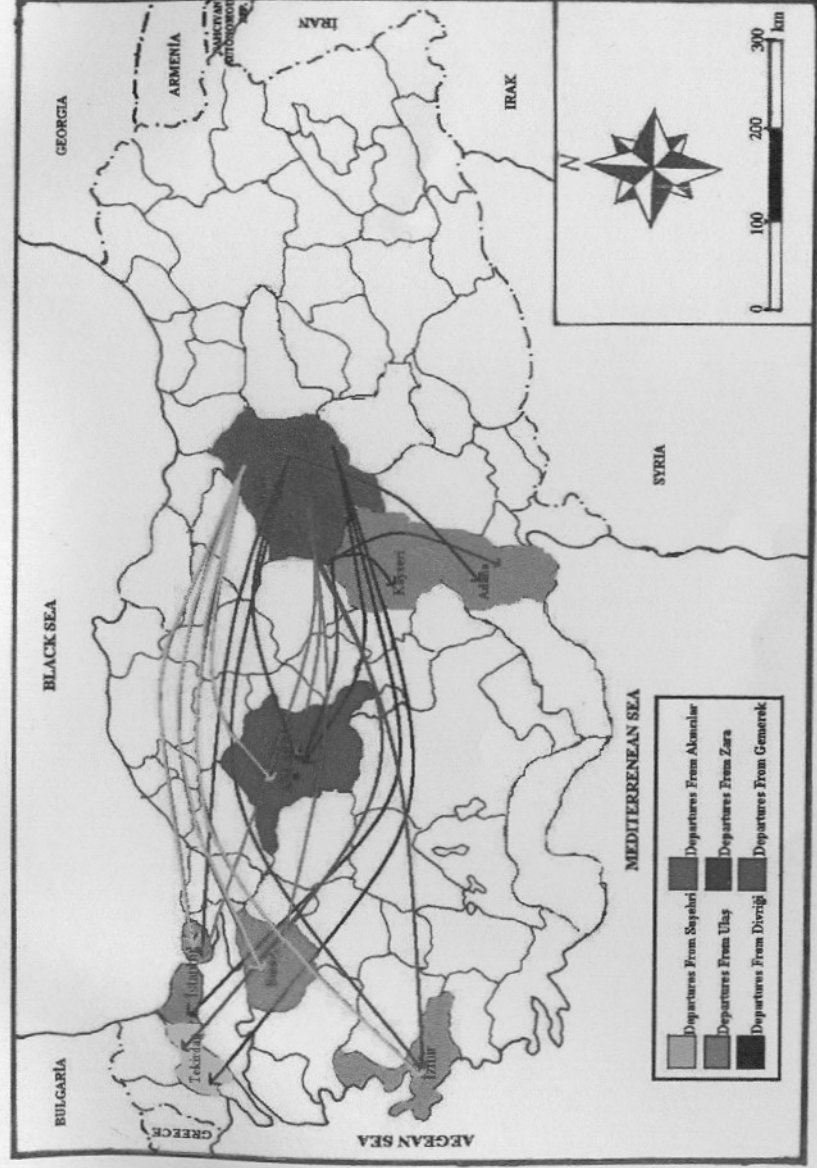
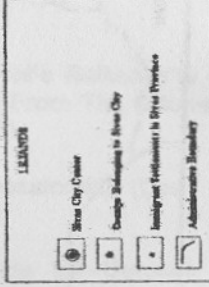
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VILLAGES SETTLED BY IMMIGRANTS FROM THE BALKANS DURING THE PERIOD FOLLOING WITH THE FOUNDATION OF THE REPUBLIC (1924-1931)



MAP 2



MAP 3

