

Minorities and Diasporas in Turkey

Public Images and Issues in Education

edited by

Fulvio Bertuccelli, Mihaela Gavrila, Fabio L. Grassi



Collana Convegni 64

STUDI UMANISTICI

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In copertina | *Cover image:* Meeting of the Caucasian diaspora in remembrance of the Circassian genocide. On the banner in foreground: “21 May 1864 - We didn’t forget the genocide and the exile of the Circassians, we will not forget it, we will not allow it to be forgotten...”. Istanbul, 21 May 2018. Photo: Fabio L. Grassi.

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Alessandro Saggiaro,

Director of the PhD program in History and Cultures of Europe

Thank you prof. Grassi for inviting me to introduce this conference. Thanks also to prof. Gavrilă for her help and participation in this conference: I have the pleasure of meeting her today for the first time, but I think we have many common interests, and this first occasion will be a starting point for future fruitful cooperation. I would also thank the dean Prof. Marci for his introductory words, that I share and appreciate. I am forwarding you the greetings of the director of the Department of History, Anthropology, Religions, Art History, Media and Performing Arts prof. Gaetano Lettieri, and I present you all my personal greetings and welcome you as director of the PhD program in History and Cultures of Europe. Reading the program and understanding the idea of this conference, I need to say that I'm very proud of the work realized and deeply looking forward to know more from your valuable speeches. I am very thankful to prof. Fabio L. Grassi for his generous effort in organizing it and to dr. Fulvio Bertuccelli for his valuable contribution to the management of the conference and his role as admin in this online meeting. I would also like to thank the distinguished colleagues that will talk during this afternoon.

I think that the topic that you have chosen is very interesting for many different reasons. As I said, I am in charge of coordinating a PhD program in History of Europe, in which the topics of minorities and majorities, diasporas and education are common themes that we meet in the works of many PhD researchers and are part of our teaching programs and research as well. The topic of majorities and minorities is also very important from the point of view of my field of studies in History of Religions. I've been leading two projects in Sa-

pienza: one aimed at defining religious pluralism and another one aimed at defining religious minorities in the frame of religious pluralism both in our days' society and in general through history. During these projects we had many occasions of scientific meetings and as concrete outputs we produced some publications which can help discussing religious pluralism face to the challenges of present societies. In 2017 I edited the special issue of the Journal of Sapienza University "Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni", *Defining Religious Minorities* (SMSR 83/2, 325-330); in 2021 I edited the book *Definire il pluralismo religioso* (Quaderni di SMSR). I cannot resume here today the results of these projects, but I would like to stress the general idea that was at their basis, and that is important to stress when we organize scientific meetings on a global scale. Democracy and peaceful coexistence constitute the agenda of Europe, and they are the basic values that should be considered in every situation as the root of the idea of Europe. Europe does not mean only a small portion of territory of the world but a territory that through history has had contacts, interactions and conflicts with countries and cultures from all the continents. This long story has contributed to discuss, challenge and building values and principles. After the terrible events of the two World Wars of the last century, not in a day, but following a complex series of democratic processes, Europe has accepted and spread the principles of democracy and respectful approach to all kind of communities and groups. These processes are still on their way to a future to come, in which freedom, rights and dignity should become more and more a common condition for every citizen and for all those people that from different parts of the world head to the "old" continent full of hope and concrete necessity. That is why I am sure that your speeches during the conference will be very useful both for us as historians and for the goal of designing a more inclusive historical approach in general. In the intellectual and scientific context, it is necessary to study and understand the complexity of our world and plural cultures: that is why a scientific meeting can have larger responsibility and answer to questions that have a relevance for the society at large. With these ideas in mind, I wish you a fruitful interaction: your contribution in the conference today will be a precious fabric for many future studies.

I really hope that the proceedings of this conference are published, and I encourage you to do so, with the wish to discuss the proceedings in Rome, one day. I hope therefore to welcome and meet personally the friends and the colleagues that are going to talk today. Online meetings are not real life and we hope we can substitute them as soon as possible with the concrete interaction among our universities, our countries and our beautiful cities. My best wishes and thank you all again for sharing your knowledge with us, our students and the public attending this praiseworthy conference.

The Republic of Turkey was born on 29 October 1923 as the final outcome of a very troubled historical process. The Muslims of Anatolia and Eastern Thrace had faced the risk of disintegration and submission. The father and leader of the “new Turkey”, Mustafa Kemal, felt the plurality that had characterized the Ottoman world as a source of weakness and danger. In these nearly 100 years Republican Turkey has scored many admirable accomplishments, but her genesis left a permanent imprint in the political and social development of the country. Thus, the Turkish State has perpetuated a suspicious and repressive attitude towards the particular identities. This book, stemmed from a conference held in November 2021, presents two introductory papers and six specific contributions where the issues of education and public discourse are among the main topics.

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