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“INTEGRATION IN LIMBO”

Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian Migrants in Istanbul

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Abstract

Turkey has acquired a central position in the international irregular migrations systems in the last decades and thus has become a crossing point on a regional and international scale. This led to the inflow of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, mainly from politically turbulent and economically unstable non-European countries. Despite their increasing number, people who arrive to Turkey face a vacuum in terms of migrant and refugee reception policies due to the limited legal, financial and institutional capacities.

Given the weakness of state assistance and non-governmental organizations providing services for regular or irregular migrants, social networks have primary importance for migrants’ survival and socio-economic incorporation in Turkey. Since the first moments of their arrival, every migrants get into contact with informal reception mechanisms. The aim of our project is to investigate the ‘unofficial integration’ models of four specific migrant groups in Istanbul, namely Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants. We have chosen these four migrant groups because these are the most significant nationalities among irregular migrants and are ‘ineligible’ to acquire refugee status in Turkey due to the geographical limitation. We focus on how these four groups survive in an environment of extreme precariousness and what kind of resources they mobilize for incorporation into employment and housing markets.

Below, we first introduce the legal, social and economic background that migrants face during their stay in Turkey. We present the impact of changing patterns of migration waves to Turkey and the role of the vibrant informal economy, in particular the suitcase trade, in migrants’ insertion into economic sphere. Then in each individual chapter we depict group profiles of Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian and Maghrebi migrants in Istanbul, without disregarding fluidity and elusiveness among migrants’ status. In order to overcome the difficulty related to the vagueness among the boundaries of these categories we discern characteristics of flow diversities as well as the impact of migratory past and legal status on patterns of migrants’ integration.

The concept of ‘segmented assimilation’ of Portes & Zhou (1993), which we choose to read as ‘segmented incorporation’ provides a useful analytical tool to understand different patterns of foreigners’ insertion into Turkish society. Migrants’ incorporation necessitates some sort of bond between the migrants and the receiving society, or more correctly with a fragment of the society. The bridging social capital used for entering into the host society leads to a ‘fractional integration’: migrants who mobilize distinct social capitals (based on familial, linguistic, religious, ethnic or economic ties) are inserted into specific social niches in the receiving society.

Migrant incorporation is not a ‘straight-line progression’ but it is a process that often leads to multiple end points. Yet, it is certain that it is also an unequal and hierarchized incorporation, since de facto integration depends on migrants’ networking capacity. Differences in the content and impact of the ‘bridges’ (i.e. mediating agents) influence the success of the migrants’ incorporation process. The accomplishment of migrants’ incorporation also relies on the capacity of each social segment they incorporate.

We should underline that our findings on Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants do not illustrate a fully accomplished socio-economic integration for all of them. As a matter of fact, it is out of question to accomplish a full incorporation for the migrants who do have limited material or non-material resources, insecure legal status and no state-assistance. State policies and institutional arrangements bound the limits of migrants’ social networks. The
segmented incorporation of migrants via social networks is very precarious and contingent on policies as well as on the official treatment of foreigners in the country. Thus such an incorporation, even though it is highly important for the survival of undocumented migrants, is condemned to stay ‘in limbo’, unless a regularization in the migrants’ status does not occur.

In April 2005 the Turkish government introduced the ‘National Action Plan’, which defines the country’s short and long term policy towards refugees and asylum seekers. The Plan foresees the removal of the geographical restriction denying the prospect for non-European refugees settling in Turkey, in 2012. Genuine planning and preparation is needed to ensure a successful integration program by that time. We hope that our research on *de facto integration* of non-European migrants may shed light on the mechanisms of socio-economic incorporation and thus contribute to the new policy making process as well as the academic discussions.

**Keywords:** Segmented incorporation, non-European (Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian) migrants, social networks, Turkey.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

Turkey’s position has radically transformed in migration systems due to the changes in the volume and modes of migration waves to and via the country. The last twenty-five years have witnessed the emergence of new regions of origin and new flows fuelled by the country’s geographical position at the crossroads of Asia, Middle East and Europe (İçduygü 2003). Migrants from politically turbulent and economically unstable non-European countries account for a very sizeable component of overall arrivals in Turkey. Most of these migrants have been kept out of the legal structure, due to the lack of any regularization of undocumented migrants and Turkey’s geographical limitation to the Geneva Convention (Kirişçi 1996b). Despite this legal hindrance, increasingly restrictive immigration policies of EU countries result in the gathering of larger number of undocumented migrants in Turkey. However, there is a vacuum in terms of reception policies concerning migrants due to the limited financial and institutional capacities in Turkey. This lack of official reception mechanisms obliges migrants to seek their own ways of survival and incorporation, and they thus realize a ‘de facto integration’.

The aim of our project is to investigate ‘unofficial integration’ models of four specific migrant groups in Istanbul, namely Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian and Maghrebi migrants (the latter includes the Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian and Libyan). We have chosen these four migrant groups because these are the most significant nationalities among non-European migrants who do not have the right to settle in Turkey as a refugee due to the geographical limitation on Geneva Convention. We focus on how these four groups survive in an environment of extreme precariousness and on their mechanisms of incorporation into employment and housing markets. We analyze their patterns of networking and their struggle for economic and social inclusion in Istanbul.

In the following chapters, we depict group profiles and present socio-economic characteristics of Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian and Maghrebi migrants in Istanbul, without disregarding fluidity and elusiveness among the categories related to migrants’ status. The vagueness between the boundaries of these categories complicates the job of the researcher. One of our solutions to overcome this difficulty was to focus on each group’s migration history. In this manner, we tried to discern characteristics of flow diversities as well as the impact of migratory past and status on migrants’ integration patterns. Besides, we scrutinize social networks that the migrants benefit from to find employment and accommodation, since they constitute the main resource that these migrants

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2 The only source to evaluate their demographic significance is the statistics provided by General Directorate of Security Forces (see Table 1.1).
benefit from. We thus aim to reveal the patterns of unofficial integration of Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian and Maghrebi migrants in Istanbul and to contribute in the international literature by bringing to light the example of these overlooked groups and their conditions of sojourn.

Table 1.1 - Irregular migrants apprehended by Turkish security forces during 1995-2001

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRAQ</td>
<td>2,128</td>
<td>3,319</td>
<td>5,689</td>
<td>14,237</td>
<td>11,546</td>
<td>17,280</td>
<td>23,444</td>
<td>77,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRAN</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td>5,281</td>
<td>6,825</td>
<td>8,504</td>
<td>22,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFGHANISTAN</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>3,046</td>
<td>8,476</td>
<td>9,542</td>
<td>22,158</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAGHREB (total)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>2,086</td>
<td>2,631</td>
<td>9,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGERIA</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>1,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOROCCO</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>1,401</td>
<td>1,905</td>
<td>7,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUNISIA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBYA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source: Ahmet İçduyu (2003). Irregular Migration in Turkey, IOM Migration research series, p.25 (based on data provided by General Directorate of Security Forces, Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum).</td>
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Among undocumented migrants in Turkey, the Iraqis have been the most populous group for the last decade. The Iraqi migration to Turkey started during the Iran–Iraq War with individual cases, and later continued with massive refugee flows in the 1991 Gulf War. The three main Iraqi groups in Turkey are Kurds, Turkmens and Assyro-Chaldean Christians. Kurds and Christians are mostly irregular transit migrants whose stay in Turkey ranges from a few months to a decade. Unlike them, Turkmens are more permanent thanks to their “Turkish origin”; they could obtain residence permits relatively easily until the last years and thus there emerged a small but established Turkmen community in the country. Afghani migration to Turkey commenced during the early 1980s after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the downfall of the monarchic regime. A limited number of Afghan migrants were officially invited to live in Turkey by the Turkish government in the early 1980s. These were Afghans of Uzbek and Turkmen ethnicity, who already spoke the Turkish language and shared a common Turkish ‘background’. These individuals were officially settled in various regions of the country, however many selected an internal migratory route and chose to live in the city of Istanbul. Asides from these official migrants, there is a group of Afghans, mainly composed of younger single men or single female headed families, who apply to the UNHCR and focus effort upon third country resettlement. There is also a group of Afghans, mainly men, who have either not applied to UNHCR and therefore lack status in the country or who have applied and been rejected status, thus slipping into an ‘unofficial status, lacking necessary
documents for a legal stay in the country. Maghrebis (here we speak about a "Great Maghreb", ranging from Libya to Morocco) have a triple presence in Istanbul. First of all, there has been an increase in the number of Maghrebi who use Turkey on their way to Europe, which can be observed in the statistics showing apprehended clandestine migrants (see table 1.1). Second, there is the Maghrebi ‘suitcase trade’. The Maghrebi are among the pioneers of shuttle traders who started the business of trading in spare parts back in the 1970s and 1980s in Yenikapı. Finally, there are ‘professional’ niches filled by Maghrebi who serve as an interface between suitcase traders and Turkish economic actors. Concurrently, there is a Moroccan nannies network, in particular in the French or French-speaking families of Istanbul. Iranian migration started after the fall of the monarchic regime and large numbers of Iranians transited to Europe via Turkey. Currently there are mainly two groups of Iranians in Istanbul: a small established community who acquired Turkish citizenship or permanent residence permits on the one hand and Iranian asylum seekers, mostly of religious and ethnic minorities, on the other. There are also Iranian cyclical migrants who take part in the suitcase trade.

1.1.1 Terminology

We first need to clarify some terminological points, since there are diverse expressions utilized to describe ‘undocumented migrants’. Academics and NGOs prefer to use terms, such as ‘irregular’, ‘illegalized’ or ‘illegally resident/working immigrant’, whereas state authorities draw on the term ‘illegal’. In this discussion, we rather utilize the term ‘undocumented’ or ‘irregular’ even though these migrants have very often been depicted by the press and security forces as clandestine or illegal migrants. During the fieldwork, irregularity of the migrants that we encountered was generally related to the absence of work and stay permits. For this reason, we refrain to use the term illegal since it leads to assume a connection with criminality.

“In the words of Nobel Peace Prize winner, Elie Wiesel, “there is no such thing as an illegal human being”, human beings can be tall, short, rich or poor, but not illegal. The term of illegal immigrant also subconsciously suggests a close linkage to criminality, which stokes fears among local populations.” (Italic in the original, Hofbauer, 2005:16)

In this research, ‘undocumented’ or ‘irregular’ migrants represent foreign nationals who stay and work in Turkey without having the necessary official permits for residence and work.

1.2 DESIGN and METHODOLOGY

Undocumented migration in Turkey is a new field that has been little analyzed sociologically so far. Except a few important studies which mostly
approached the subject with a macro perspective (İçduyuğ 1996, 2003, 2004; Kıriçci 1996, 2000; Erder 2000; Erder and Kaşka 2003), there is a serious lack of ethnographic studies on foreign migrant groups. Our field research on the de facto integration mechanisms of non-European undocumented migrants intends to contribute to fill this gap. Despite the enthusiasm of this intention, we should openly state that it has not been an easy task to fulfill. One of the major difficulties is related to methodological problems. First of all, little is known about the social and demographic characteristics or economic behaviors of undocumented foreign migrants, especially those from non-European countries, although they represent a significant proportion of foreigners in the country. Even the most rudimentary demographic information on these groups is either lacking or inconsistent. The only statistical source we do have about the size of these groups is provided by the Bureau for Foreigners, Borders and Asylum of the Directorate of General Security of the Ministry of Interior. Unsurprisingly, the collection and distribution of these statistics are shaped according to various concerns (see below, section 1.4.2, for the discussion of the accuracy and reliability of the statistical information about irregular migration in Turkey.)

The absence of precise information about the universe from which we are supposed to choose our sample leads us to use snowball sampling. This method is especially suitable for explorative studies and in situations where there is scarcity of knowledge about the field to enter. It is useful in cases where it is not possible to determine an exemplary quota to choose the sample. Last but not the least, snowball sampling method is certainly convenient and meaningful to work out the problem of confidence that emerge due to the precarious status of the interviewees.

Undocumented migrants are vulnerable groups that are trying to survive in precariousness. In some cases, they are suffering of stigmatizations and often perceived as ‘illegal’ persons. The fact that they do not have the required papers to stay and work in the country, create a constant fear towards ‘foreigners’. Snowball sampling method helps the researcher to overcome the anxiety of the interviewees and facilitates the entry into groups. Our first step in using this method was to find out ‘entry points’ or ‘hooks’ to be able to penetrate into our specific migrant groups. In some cases, these entry points has been migrant neighborhoods such as Zeytinburnu (for the Afghans), whereas in others we started at the places of economic activities such as Lalëli-Aksaray or Osmanbey (in particular for the Maghrebi and Iraqi Turkmens). We also used some associations (for the Iraqi and Afghan Turkmen and Iraqi Kurd) and churches (for the Iraqi Assyro-Chaldeans) to make the first step into the group. In most cases, to be introduced by a person whom they know helped to alleviate the fear of migrants and resulted in a relatively smooth internal acceptance. In short, snowball sampling has been our main instrument to overcome the greatest difficulty of the research, i.e. getting acceptance by the migrant groups.3

After we made contact with migrants, we conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews based on open-ended questions. We did more than hundred forty in-depth interviews. Given the variation in the size of the four migrant groups, we

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3 Nevertheless, we should state that while this method has functioned quite well in some groups, such as Iraqi Turkmen and Christians or Afghans, it did not suffice for creating an atmosphere of confidence in more precarious groups, such as Iraqi Kurds or some Maghrebi groups.
conducted around seventy interviews with Iraqis, forty with Afghans, twenty with Maghrebis and ten with Iranians. The interviews were conducted in neighborhoods that are mostly inhabited by foreign migrants such as, Aksaray-Laleli, Zeytinburnu, Tarlabasi-Dolapdere and Osmanbey in Istanbul. These localities appeal to irregular migrants due to the predominance of informal economy and abundance of low-skill jobs in textile and leather shops. They also provide the possibility of a more permanent shelter to a wide variety of migrants. In addition to these interviews, we conducted a number of case studies in order to deepen the knowledge on the details of everyday life and personal stories. We also benefited from ethnographic method of observing human interactions in their social settings and activities. We believe that the open-ended questions of in-depth interviews allow us to discover the nature of these migrant populations in Turkey and their ways of socio-economic incorporation.

During the interviews, each researcher has benefited from his/her specific resources in order to get in contact with the migrants. An important obstacle shared by each researcher was the difficulty to wipe out the fog of suspicion that prevails among undocumented migrants. Most of them were afraid of talking to ‘researchers’, whose work was unclear and dubious for them. We had to explain our objectives over and over again, in order to convince them that we are not working for security forces. At that point, we tried to bring our ‘capitals’ into play to access the migrant world, like migrants do for their incorporation into the receiving society. Cherie Taraghi had the advantage of speaking Farsi and Dari as well as having Iranian origin to create an environment of confidence. Being a ‘foreigner’ and talking the same languages (even though she mostly utilized Turkish), she could easily build the bridge of trust. Thus she made her first contacts while wandering in the streets of Zeytinburnu and later on visited the houses of these persons. To enter into the field was relatively easier for Jean-François Pérouse, since he was undertaken a research on Mahgrebi suitcase traders a few years ago. He realized new interviews thanks to his old contacts in Laleli and Aksaray. Yet some national groups were more difficult to build a connection. Despite the facilitating factor of the French language shared by the researcher and the interviewees, some Maghrebi migrants, in particular the ones who intend to cross to Greece clandestinely were aloof and unapproachable. Unlike Taraghi and Pérouse, Didem Danış did not have linguistic contact with her informants. Besides her Turkish citizenship has been a disadvantage in building confidence, except for Turkmens. For each Iraqi subgroup she looked for specific entry points: the Turkmen Association, Kurdish persons of Turkish nationality and the head of the Turkish Chaldean Church (for the last one, she had contacts since late 2003). After building these links, she could conduct interviews at the houses or workplaces of Iraqi migrants, in various localities of Istanbul, such as Tarlabası-Dolapdere-Elmadağ-Kurtuluş for Iraqi Christians, Aksaray-Laleli-Osmanbey for Turkmens and Tarlabası-Aksaray for Kurds.

Another difficulty shared by all researchers was the misunderstanding about our research. After we built confidence, some migrants were insistent to think that we are working for the UNHCR or some migrant associations that came to field ‘for choosing the ones to be granted acceptance’. In some cases, their desperate search for any light of hope, had also affected us psychologically. In such cases, we sometimes refrained from asking our standard questions to make them believe that we are not working for a migrant organization.
During the field research, we tried to reach a saturation level in order to assure the representativeness of our groups. Thus we conducted interviews until we began to hear similar responses to our questions. In each interview, we tried to ask questions about the characteristics of his or her group, so that to increase our knowledge about each migrant group. Below in each chapter, we present data on the migratory patterns and approximate size of migration flows of each migrant population. Nevertheless, we do not go into a detailed statistical study; we rather use statistics provided by General Security Directorate and some Turkish researchers. By combining quantitative information based on secondary sources with our in-depth analysis rooted in qualitative survey and ethnographic method, we try to portray profiles of each migrant group.

The interviews with these four groups are composed of three main sections:

1. Migrant profile: The objective of this first section is to identify the group profile of each migrant community in order to observe the impact of migratory experience on their socio-economic incorporation. We thus explore the socio-economic, ethnic and religious characteristics of migrant groups in order to examine the social borders; the markers of exclusion and inclusion in these four populations. Whenever possible, we also ask questions on basic demographic characteristics.

2. Migration history and further migration plans: In this section, we gather information about the migratory journey by asking questions such as why and how they left their homeland, why they chose Turkey, the ways they use to arrive in Istanbul (visas, passports, transportation modes, etc), individuals who accompany them during the journey, and so on. The objective is to present itineraries, patterns and modes of migration. We also inquire about their intentions concerning the continuation of their migration journey. Which countries do they prefer to settle in, why, which methods do they plan to use (official applications for refugee status and family migration or irregular methods such as smuggling), whether they have relatives in these countries are among the questions asked. Here, we try to see the impact of social networks on the further migration plans.

3. Living status / integration possibility in Istanbul: In this section we mainly attempt to understand how the migrant and his/her household members experience the migration process and temporary or permanent stay period in Istanbul. Questions about previous and current accommodation and employment conditions (where they work, how they find the job, how are the employer-employee relations, whether their work conditions affect their familial setting) are raised in order to investigate migrants’ survival strategies in a situation of extreme precariousness. The findings of this section are used to evaluate various capitals (social, economic or human) they have and social networks they build.

In addition to these semi-structured interviews, we interviewed some officials, such as the representatives of the UNHCR in Istanbul, representatives of Foreigners’ Department of Ministry of Interior Affairs and various NGOs working particularly on transit migrant groups (Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly- Refugee Bureau, IIMP, Caritas, ICMC) in order to see structural factors, such as legal and political attitudes that affect the performance of migrant networks and integration. Besides, we benefited from the news archives at the French Anatolian Studies Institute (IFEA).
1.3 THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

1.3.1. Incorporation of migrants in developing countries

Integration of migrants in developing countries is a poorly studied topic. Integration literature is almost exclusively concerned on the cases of migrants in Western final settlement areas (Van Hear 1998, Faist 2000). The few studies on undocumented migrants’ incorporation in developing countries are conducted in the African continent (Sommers 2000, Dick 2002, Lindstrom 2003). Given the high ratio of refugee and migrant populations in various developing countries, the case of undocumented or ‘transit’4 migrants necessitate a thorough analysis of the subject.

The existence of plenty of researches conducted about migrant integration in final destinations provides a starting point for our theoretical framework. According to Maja Korac (2001) there are two main theoretical approaches to conceptualize integration: race relations and minorities literature on the one hand and refugee studies on the other. These two are distinguished on the basis of cultural integration vs. structural and institutional integration models. The former describes integration as “the process of change that occurs when two groups of different cultures are in some way forced to co-exist in one society” (Korac 2001, 31). This culturalistic perspective focuses on issues such as acculturation, identity and belonging (Berry 1997), whereas the latter’s emphasis is put on practical or functional aspects of refugee settlement (Brink, 1997). The focus of structural integration model is on social protections provided to refugees. Maja Korac specifies assistance in housing, language training, education and re-training, and access to the labor market as main areas of social protection offered by state agencies.

In our project we conceive integration by focusing on its practical and structural aspects, rather than cultural. In other words, we concentrate on the access to employment and housing markets as indicators of social participation into the wider society. Non-European migrants in Turkey face serious difficulties during their stay in Turkey. They are experiencing multi-faceted vulnerability. Social and economic problems as well as legal exclusion (being status-less) worsen their conditions.

Irregular migrants in developing countries are unlikely to receive official assistance provided to refugees and migrants in the West. Similarly, Turkey does not provide any kind of formal assistance to migrants, except some very basic aid provided to the recognized refugees. The lack of a government-based integration policy and the limits of available help by UNHCR leaves very few options for migrants in Turkey. Thus migrants need to rely upon their own resources –be this material resources they have brought with them, their physical body as a means to

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4 As we observe in many cases, most of the irregular migrants claim to be in transit in Istanbul, even though this ‘temporary’ transit period lasts sometimes over five years or consists of cyclical journeys.
work, their educational background or the housing and employment networks established by fellow religious, ethnic or national people.

In the absence of official assistance for integration, there occurs a ‘de facto integration’, a term that we borrow from Karen Jacobsen (2001). Non-European migrants construct and benefit from social networks to overcome their socio-economic difficulties and to supply their basic needs. Migrants mobilize various social capitals (ethnic, religious, and so on) to activate de facto integration. Despite the positive connotations of the term, it should also be reminded that de facto integration is often a partial and incomplete incorporation. Social networks that foster such incorporation are bounded by social and legal limitations and reliant upon external factors, such as police keeping a closed eye to the workshops where irregular people are employed, sectarian peace permitting the functioning of informal schooling at religiously oriented associations.

The de facto integration of non-European migrants in Istanbul depends on the capacity of their social capital. Migrants’ social capital used for entering into the core society can be distinguished as bridging or bonding, as expressed by Putnam (2000). Bridging social capital includes networks that link migrants with the wider society and bonding social capital enhances the communication and solidarity of migrants with each other. Bridging social capital is of considerable importance in the job search, and illustrates the strength of weak ties in securing employment (Granovetter 1974).

The bridging social capital leads to a ‘fractional integration’: migrants who mobilize distinct social capitals are inserted into specific social niches in the receiving society. The concept of ‘segmented assimilation’ of Portes & Zhou (1993), which we choose to read as ‘segmented incorporation’ provides a useful analytical tool to understand different patterns of foreigners’ insertion into Turkish society. As Portes & Zhou claim, migrant incorporation is not a ‘straight-line progression’ but it is a process that often leads to multiple end points. Non-European migrants in Istanbul exhibit a ‘segmented incorporation’ in terms of their occupational as well as residential incorporation. Thus we observe a clustering of the migrants both in the economic and spatial distribution in the city. Yet, it is certain that it is also an unequal and hierarchized incorporation. Differences in the content and impact of the ‘bridges’ (i.e. mediating agents) influence the success of the migrants’ incorporation process.

1.3.2 Social networks

Social ties are an important factor that migrants benefit from in difficult times. Social networks of migrants, that forms channels facilitating the migration process and relieving the burdens of it, is one of the topics being studied in full measure by international migration scholars (Kearney, 1986; Brettel, 2000). Earliest studies about migrants’ networks focus on the role of social networks in sustaining the continuation of migration after it started out and increasing the likelihood of mobility of non-migrants (Massey et.al. 1993). Aside from this, Massey and his colleagues assert the advantages of having some kind of familial or amicable affiliation which brings a significant social capital owing to the familial and friendship values that compel the migrant to provide support to newcomers (Massey et.al., 1993: 448). Various researches conducted on this field also attest to the facilitating and encouraging role of the migrant networks (Gurak
& Caces, 1992; Böcker, 1995; Pessar, 1999, Boyd 1989). Nevertheless, what is lacking in the overall social networks approach is a focus on the role of networks built and used by migrants during their stay in transit countries.

Vertovec (2002: 3-4) notes that social networks benefited by migrants vary according to local history, national circumstances and common socio-cultural features of the groups. In our case, two main components that play a significant role in the migrants’ networks are the existing social diversity in Istanbul and various social capitals that migrants do have. The social and economic heterogeneity in Istanbul, which came about due to the influence of internal and international migrations, provides the necessary milieu to nourish various social networks.

In terms of social capital of the undocumented migrants in Istanbul, we need to talk about social, religious or ethnic ties that are mobilized to create networks in/with the host society. There are various grounds of building social networks. First and foremost, there are familial networks even though some family members become impoverished in the course of migration. Still, for many migrants familial ties furnish the primary support for the exigencies of survival and incorporation in Istanbul.

An important capital for some migrants is related to the ethnic affiliations. For instance, having a ‘Turkish origin’ turns to a precious capital thanks to the 1934 Law of Settlement which states that only persons of ‘Turkish descent and culture’ have the right for immigration and refuge to Turkey. It is clear that being turcophone becomes an important capital in Turkey thanks to this law. Nevertheless, the ethnic capital is not a fixed resource: the category of migrants ‘having Turkish descent’ is very vague and migrants of Turkish origin are treated differently in distinct periods, as will be seen in the chapter on the Iraqi Turkmen.

Ethnic affiliation is not always a constructive social capital, as is clear in the case of Kurds from Iraq or Iran. Unreceptive policies of Turkish authorities towards Kurdish undocumented migrants seem to affect the achievements of their networking mechanisms. Another factor that influences the weakness of Kurdish ethnic networks is the disadvantaged status of local Kurds in Istanbul. Internal Kurds, who came to Istanbul with involuntary migration waves of the 1980s and 1990s, are dwelling in inner city slums, such as Tarlabasi, where poverty and deprivation prevail. Impoverishment during this traumatic migration together with their lack of educational credentials and professional competences in urban setting seem to dissolve all kind of possibility for building a basis of solidarity with Iraqi or Iranian Kurds.

Another basis of network formation is related to the linguistic capital. Knowledge of local language creates a sense of cultural closeness with the receiving society and helps to emphasize ‘ethnic closeness’ with the hosts. In this sense, we may give the examples of Iraqi Turkmen, Iranian Azeri or Afghan Turkmen who, thanks to their linguistic skills, i.e. Turkish comprehension, become incorporated relatively easily. The advantages that linguistic capital brings are not limited to Turkish language. Knowledge of Arab language becomes a linguistic competence for migrants, in particular for the persons who are working in the re-flourishing shuttle trade which is increasingly attracting clients from Arab countries, mainly from Maghreb and recently from Iraq. The case of Mardinli and Iraqi Turkmen (two Arabic speaking migrant groups with different
migration pasts) are interesting in this sense, as they are the two biggest competitors in Laleli and Osmanbey to attract Arabic speaking clientele.

Last but not the least we need to discuss religious ties that undocumented migrants benefit. In terms of religious networks non-Muslim, to be more precise Christian, networks seem to be better functioning than other religious ties. Contact to various local Christian communities and organizations provide a basis of networking for some groups, such as Iraqi Assyro-Chaldeans and Iranian Christians.

The American literature on migrant incorporation provides us some fruitful theoretical tools. Being an ancient country of immigration, there have been several studies on migrant integration in the United States since the 1920s. The early concepts such as assimilation that were introduced by Robert Park and Milton Gordon were later on criticized and there occurred four major shifts in the American immigrant incorporation theory in the last decades, which we think is illuminating for our research too:

“1) A shift from focusing on immigrants and their efforts to adapt to their new environment, toward focusing on the interaction between immigrants and the structure of American society. 2) A shift from an undifferentiated and amorphous conceptualization of the latter to one that takes into account existing economic (in particular labor market) ethnic and class structures and inequalities. 3) A shift from focusing primarily on cultural variables to emphasizing structural/economic variables, that is, the conditions of labor markets and the skills of immigrants. 4) A shift from a single model identifying various steps and stages in the process of incorporation (i.e. assimilation) to the coexistence of several models, projecting a variety of conditions and possible outcomes.” (Schmitter Heisler 2000: 79)

The theoretical tools developed by the American incorporation scholars draw attention to the importance of studying the interaction between migrants and receiving society and emphasize the role of structural factors to understand migrant incorporation. They also warn us about the incorrectness of attributing a homogenous, monolithic character to migrant groups or to the host society. In order to better grasp the interaction between the migrants and receiving society, we need to discern changes of the migration waves, reception policies and attitudes towards migrants. Below we first focus on changing migratory patterns and how the recent migrants are perceived and received in Turkey. Then we present the socio-spatial and economic setting that migrants face in their arrival and during their incorporation in Turkey.

1.4 CHANGING PATTERNS OF MIGRATION WAVES TO TURKEY

1.4.1 ‘Muhacirs’: Welcomed migrants of nation-state formation era

Turkey has a long history of immigration, even though it is known in the Western countries as an emigration country. During the retreat of Ottoman Empire from the territories in the Balkans, Caucasuses and the Middle East, there have been many Turkish-speaking or Muslim people who migrated to Istanbul and Anatolia (McCarthy 1983 and 2001). Emigrations from former Ottoman territories into the new Turkish state continued significantly in the early Republican period (Danış & Pérouse 2005). According to the Government statistics provided by Kemal Kirişçi
(1996) more than 1.6 million persons immigrated to Turkey from 1923 to 1997. Most of these immigrants were from Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Romania, in other words from territories that were once part of the Ottoman Empire, as seen in the table 1.2. Kirişçi (2000) argues that the migration policies of the young Turkish state intended to create a homogeneous population out of an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous Ottoman population. To realize this objective new administrators gave priority to immigrants having Muslim and/or Turkish background. During this formal reception period groups who were most welcomed were the ones who were supposed to easily melt into a Turkish identity. Thus, Albanians, Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks and Tatars from the Balkans were embraced whereas the ethnic and religious groups such as Gagauz Turks (Turkish speaking Christians of Moldova) were not encouraged to immigrate to Turkey (Kirişçi 2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Approximate number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>480 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>374 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>269 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>121 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 244 000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Akgündüz 1998: 112

Sema Erder (2000) reminds us the significance of the term ‘muhacir’ to demonstrate the differences between the government-supported migrations which continued until the 1970s and the recent irregular migrations into Turkey. Whether iskânlı or iskânsız, muhacirs of those years were warmly welcomed and relatively easily incorporated into Turkish society. The incorporation of muhacirs was facilitated by various arrangements. First of all, on the legal level, newcomers were easily granted Turkish citizenship. On the economic level, resettlement of iskânlı was assisted by the authorities and they were assigned farmland and house. This was mostly valid for the ones who arrived as a result of Greek-Turkish population exchange of 1922-1924. Iskânsız did not benefit from government-assistance for their resettlement, yet they could bring into play familial and social networks mostly interwoven around having common homeland origins. Another factor that contributed to the smooth incorporation was the social and demographic diversity that prevailed during the years of muhacirs arrivals. Zürcher (2003) indicates that “at the time the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, over twenty percent of its population had a muhacir background”. Compared to newcomers in recent years, the migrants of those early Republican years could incorporate relatively smoothly into the highly heterogeneous society.

1.4.2 Non-European undocumented migrants in Istanbul

There has occurred a striking shift in the immigration history of Turkey in the early 1980s, when new migrant and refugee groups poured into Turkey in
unexpected volumes. Unlike the migrants of early Republican years, most of the post-1980 migrants were ‘un-invited’ and unwelcome. One of the reasons of this un receptive attitude was related to the fact that Turkish authorities were not willing to receive any more migrants, even Turkish and/or Muslim ones, since they believed that population growth in Turkey has reached its optimum and there were not anymore lands to distribute to newcomers (Apap, Carrera & Kirişçi 2005; 33). However, these new population movements were triggered by factors that the authorities did not have a great control: Dissolution of the Cold War brought about a global political and social turnover. The destabilization of political equilibriums in the Balkans and the Middle East resulted in the massive and continuous emigration from these regions. Refugee and migratory waves related to political disorder affected Turkey as well. Beginning with 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, followed by 1980 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, 1988 Halabja massacre, 1989 Bulgarian mistreatment of its Turkish-speaking citizens, 1991 Gulf War, wars in Bosnia (1992), in Kosovo (1999 and 2001) and lastly American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the last two and half decades have been characterized by constant political and social instability for Eastern, as well Western neighbors of Turkey (Corliss 2003). The result was massive and sudden forced migration. In most cases, population movements that begun as abrupt flows helped to build new migrant networks that facilitated emigration of potential migrants at their homeland. Consequently, the asylum movements continued later on as irregular transit migration.

The irregular migration transiting via Turkey towards Europe has been a hot issue of discussion between Turkish and EU authorities. Especially in the late 1990s and 2000s, Turkey appeared as a major route of irregular migration towards Europe. The agenda on migration and asylum issues in EU have concentrated on curbing irregular migration towards EU member states. One of the main methods of EU to fight against these movements has been pressurizing neighboring countries to strengthen their border controls against undocumented crossings. Among many, European Council Presidency meeting in Seville during 21-22 June 2002 has witnessed bitter discussions on the subject; in this instance Turkey has severely been criticized for not controlling well enough their borders (Dannış 2004). The massive pressure of EU countries to prevent irregular transit migration via Turkey has included demands such as improvement of border controls, construction of reception centers, signing of readmission agreements with countries of origin as well as with the EU (Gresh 2005).

In spite of the hot debate on how to control and manage irregular migration, we still do not have precise information on the amount of irregular migration in Turkey. All the numbers given are only estimates. For instance, Kemal Kirişçi argues that the number of irregular migrants in Turkey varies between 150,000 and 1 million, whereas Nilüfer Narlı estimates a population of 4.5 million irregular foreigners in 2003 (cited by Gresh 2005: 13). Ahmet İçduygu (2003) highlights the difficulty of calculating the volume of irregular migration flows due to its complexity and overlapping categories. The difficulty of this calculation is also related to statistical manipulations of different interest groups, as mentioned by Michael Jandl:

“Despite these strong arguments for the production of more reliable estimations, in most European countries policy-making in the area of illegal migration is based on guesswork and rumors rather than
sophisticated methods of estimation. Moreover, all actors in the field of illegal migration have their own interests in producing certain numbers on illegal migration. Some may deliberately overstate the size of their estimates; others may want to understate it. In the best case, this will render policies on illegal migration merely irrelevant. In the worst case, the lack of reliable information will lead to misguided policies that will aggravate the problem.” (Jandl, cited by Gresh 2005: 11)

The only exact figures that we have about undocumented migration in Turkey are the statistics provided by Turkish Security Directorate about the foreigners apprehended for being irregularly present in the country. According to the figures presented on the website of the General Security Directorate, half a million foreigners are arrested by police between 1995 and 2004 (see table 1.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Arrests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>11,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>18,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>28,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>29,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>47,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>94,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>92,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>82,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>56,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 (until 22.9.2004)</td>
<td>31,686</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The numbers of irregular migrants apprehended by the authorities have steadily increased until their numbers peaked in 2000 with almost 95,000. Since then the trend has turned steadily downwards and became 56,219 in 2003. In addition to the decrease in the trend of irregular migration via Turkey there is also a transformation in the country of origin of undocumented migrants since 2001: While the number of undocumented migrants from the Middle Eastern countries has decreased, the share of citizens from former-Soviet republics has increased (see table 1.4).
Based on the size of irregular migration flows, Ahmet İçduygulu (2005) distinguishes four periods of the irregular migration trends in Turkey. According to him, the first period takes place between 1979 and 1987 and is called ‘fertilization period’. Secondly, in 1988-1993 there is a ‘maturation period’, followed by ‘saturation period’ in 1994-2000/2001. And lastly, since 2001 there occurs a ‘degeneration period’ due to the decrease in the number of irregular migrants entering Turkey. Despite the significance of such a categorization based on the quantity of irregular migrants, we believe that it is necessary to nourish this periodization with the social, political and legal background of these flows. For instance, as will be seen in the following chapters, from the undocumented migrants’ perspective, the recent years seem to be more of a maturation period rather than degeneration in the sense that they improve their contacts with the host society.

All these debates about the number of irregular migrants highlight the importance of constructing analytical categories pertaining to undocumented migrants. Until now, there have been very few attempts to categorize migrant groups in Turkey. One of the first accounts on the subject is provided by Sema Erder, in an article, where she argues that Turkey is more of a ‘waiting room’ rather than a genuine ‘receiving country’ (2000). According to her, international

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**Table 1.4 - Breakdown of irregular migrants arrested by Turkish security forces between 1995 and June 2004 by their nationalities.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRIES</th>
<th>THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>28,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>13,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>28,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>22,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>99,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>50,18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>197,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>9,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Soviet Republics*</td>
<td>100,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asian Countries**</td>
<td>6,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>3,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>9,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>19,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>24,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>107,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>477,849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: J. Apap, S. Carrera and K. Kirişi (2005; 34) Data obtained from the Foreigners Department of MOI.

* Former Soviet Republics: Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia.

** Central Asia Countries: Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan
migrants who come to Turkey can be categorized under three main groups, based on their motivations of migration. These are ‘political refugees’ who arrive in the country in massive waves and seek asylum in a third country; ‘transit migrants’ who come to Turkey in small groups or with their family members, with the aim of moving to a developed country with better economic opportunities and higher life standards; and lastly ‘suitcase traders’ and ‘temporary clandestine workers’ who come to the country in cyclical patterns to do commerce.

Erder’s classification provides the first full-fledged categorization on foreign migrants in Turkey, however her clear-cut separations do not seem to fit to what we observed during the fieldwork. In the first place the term ‘political refugee’ is misleading because few of the ‘refugees’ in Turkey are in fact here for political reasons. Refugee claims include persecution due to political, social, religious, gender/sexual orientation, etc reasons. It is also difficult to argue clear distinction between ‘refugees’ and ‘transit migrants’. The claim can be made that some of the ‘refugees’ in fact choose to apply for refugee status in Turkey due to the ‘geographical restriction’, thus acquiring the chance to resettle in a ‘wealthier, more advantageous’ country of the West. Also as argued by Aslan and Pérouse (2003), legal, social or economic status of migrants may easily change during their period of stay in Istanbul. There are many examples for the fluidity and elusiveness among migrants’ status. For instance, many recognized asylum seekers or transit migrants began to work in various jobs without having necessary work permits, out of mere obligation of survival. Or correspondingly, there are irregular transit migrants who are waiting to arrive in Greece or any EU country to make their refugee application. Last but not the least, suitcase trade and other economic activities of foreign migrants are not as strictly detached as expressed by Sema Erder. For instance, Iraqi Turkmens (who have already became Turkish citizens or received long-term residence permits) run export/cargo companies in Laleli and Osmanbey or work as salespersons and translators in shops serving foreign clienteles from Arabic-speaking countries. Besides there are many undocumented foreign migrants (‘transit migrants’, as called by Erder) who are working as unskilled workers in textile factories or other related domains such as belt or button producing sweatshops.

These migrants who produce the goods that are sold in Laleli or Osmanbey shops to foreign suitcase traders are thus serving to supply the huge foreign trade sector of Istanbul. These transit migrants provide the most suitable reserve labor pool for temporary, unskilled, low-wage jobs in the manufacture sector, which goes up-and-down according the tides of global neo-liberal economy. They thus make it possible to change the level of production quite flexibly in proportion to the number of suitcase traders in Istanbul. Yet, any flight of clients to new and cheaper global markets, to China for instance, results in joblessness of foreign undocumented migrants. In short, whether transit migrant or asylum-seeker, as defined by Erder, or whether documented or not, most of the migrants do contribute to the growing economic domain related to the foreign trade and informal economy.

In his more recent article, Kuvvet Lordoglu (2005; 109-110) categorizes migration motives of ‘clandestine foreign workers’ in Turkey under three groups: On the first group he mentions transit foreigners who mostly come from the Eastern neighbors of Turkey, such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and who prefer to do small business and to be self-employed. Secondly he writes about clandestine
workers from ex-Soviet countries entering into the country with a tourist visa and work temporarily during their visa period. They do cyclical movements and go back and forth between their home country and Turkey, in order to comply with visa requirements. And lastly, there are migrants of Turkish descent from countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, Azerbaijan and Iran who get into the country with tourist visas and then stay in Turkey and acquire residence and work permits thanks to the opportunities provided to them5.

Our findings collected from the field indicate some deficiencies in the Lordoğlu’s conceptualization regarding foreigners’ employment in Turkey. It seems that country-based categorizations are not effective and eloquent due to the subgroups of migrants from the same origin countries (e.g. Turkmen, Christian and Kurdish migrants from Iraq incorporate in very distinct ways into the labor market). Besides, it is clear that there are many overlapping cases because of the fluidity and vagueness among the categories, for instance among the cyclical workers there are many who continue to stay in Istanbul despite the expiration of their visa periods. In the research report on “Clandestine Migration in Turkey”, Ahmet İçduyuğ (2004: 48) provides examples of cyclical workers who overstay their visa period and thus refutes Lordoğlu’s categorization.

Evaluation of Sema Erder’s and Kuvvet Lordoglu’s (2005) categorizations points at the inevitability to pay attention to the fluidity and elusiveness between categories. An attempt to conceptualize migrant types and their employment prospects in Istanbul has to take into account the general social, economic and legal background that migrants join in.

1.5 SOCIO-SPATIAL and ECONOMIC SETTING for MIGRANTS’ INCORPORATION

1.5.1 Urban scenery: Istanbul, home for migrants

The heterogeneity and dynamism of urban areas where there is a wide range of ethno-linguistic, national and economic varieties offer many advantages to irregular migrants. Abundance of interactions in cities raises the possibility of new identities and novel forms of social organization whereas the anonymous crowd provides the best occasion to stay away from the eyes of authorities.

Istanbul is one of the major cities in the region that provides a favorable environment for all kinds of exchanges thanks to the anonymity and availability of encounters (Pérouse 2004). Aslan and Pérouse (2003) designate this Eurasian metropolis as a hub of opportunities and networks that offers both material and non-material resources to enhance initiation of mobility and circulation. The supply of legal services (such as travel agencies, translation offices, consulates, airline companies) is infinitely diverse. Istanbul is also well-known for its illegal services (such as fake passports, smugglers and so on). This ‘burgeoning gigantism’ allow migrants to find the means of contacting people who furnish the necessary resources to cross the borders. In short, Istanbul is the principal loci of

5 Lordoğlu claims that migrants of Turkish descent began to fall into irregularity after 1997, since before that year they could easily acquire residence and work permits based on the Law no. 2527, signed in 25.9.1981. ("Türk soylu yabancıların Türkiye’de meslek ve sanatlarını serbestçe yapabilmelerine, kamu, özel kuruluş veya işyerlerinde çalıştırılabilirmelerine ilişkin kanun).
international migration systems in the region and it functions like a relay and a switch where the migrants not only accumulate economic, but also social, linguistic and professional capital in order to create the necessary conditions of the next step of their mobility (Aslan & Pérouse 2003).

However, many migrants are excluded from the public spaces of the city despite its vivid diversity. Undocumented migrants seek invisibility due to their fear of facing police; very few of them feel free of strolling in the streets or visit other districts than their own. Even the Afghans, a large number of who acquired Turkish citizenship, live in a quite limited space in Zeytinburnu. The police raids in public spaces prevent foreign migrants to meet in open places. The exceptions are hotel lobbies, shops, workshops, coffeehouses or churches (e.g. Algerian coffeehouse in Laleli, Churches for Iraqi and Iranian Christians in Beyoğlu.) Neighborhoods where most migrants feel more secure are Aksaray and Laleli; they offer a segregated spot in the city, reserved mainly for various foreigners. Thus it is relatively easier for the migrants to get lost in the crowd of these places. The anxiety of facing police is one of the reasons that we do not encounter migrant shops in the city. Except, marginal cases of street sellers (işportacı), there are very few migrant small businesses (i.e. shop ownership). Concealed places for work such as sweatshops located in the basements create a more intimate employer-employee relationship and decrease the risk of facing police at the cost of increasing migrants’ vulnerability. For female migrants, child or elderly care work in private households provides this kind of discretion and isolation from the rest of society.

Undocumented migrants seek ‘invisibility’ also in their residential choices. What we observe for many undocumented migrants is a kind of integration into the host society from the periphery (Sommers 2000). This peripheral aspect of undocumented migrants’ stay in Istanbul is further underlined by locations of their residences (Tarlabası, Kurtuluş, Dolapdere, Zeytinburnu, Kumkapı). Even though these districts are geographically at the center of the city (unlike the gecekondu of internal migrants built in the urban outskirts), they are in the underprivileged and impoverished areas of central districts. In this sense we prefer to call these locations as ‘the periphery of the center’.

Landau (2004) notes about the co-existence of marginalized internal migrants and undocumented foreign migrants in particular neighborhoods. Actually this is what we observe in shabby neighborhoods such as Kumkapı or Tarlabası. These run-down districts are known for their Kurdish population who migrated from Southeast Anatolia after the 1980s due to the armed clashes between Kurdish guerilla and Turkish army (Yılmaz Bayraktar, 2006). Both foreign and internal migrants of these neighborhoods share a similar destitution and poverty. Nevertheless, despite the socio-economic similarities between internally displaced Kurds and undocumented foreign migrants, the latter are in a worse condition due to their lack of residence permits. The precariousness of legal

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6 During the rural-to-urban migration of the 1960s and 1970s, the self-built gecekondu houses had compensated the absence of state assistance to housing problem. The populist and clientelist politics of the pre-1980 era had encouraged the spread of informal housing (Keyder 2005). Yet since the 1990s, the gecekondu cycle slowed down and many involuntary migrants of Kurdish origin lost the opportunity of getting socially incorporated through constructing a gecekondu on public land.
status of foreign migrants contributes to their exclusion from public education and health systems.

Undoubtedly, one area that does not require citizenship for participation is the informal employment market. The intensity of unregistered economic activities in Turkey provides employment opportunities for foreign migrant, as will be seen in the next section.

### 1.5.2 A vibrant informal economy: a pole of attraction for all migrants

The extent of informal economic activities and flexibility of regulations in the country are the two factors that pull many migrants to Turkey. The absence of strict regulations, supervision and law enforcement contribute to the spread of informal economic activities. In Northern European countries, which present a shrewd contrast to Turkey, the control against unregistered economic activities is much stricter, and thus there is less room for migrants’ informal integration into labor market (Boissevain and Grotenbreg, 1987). In the Turkish case, the weakness of state control on labor markets provide a relatively flexible environment for migrants in Istanbul, compared to the strict regulations in the Northern European countries. Thus the deficiency of state provisions, i.e. the nonexistence of rights to housing, education or work for migrants is in some way compensated by the flexibility of labor and housing markets where they can participate owing due to the widespread informality in these sectors.

The vividness of unregistered economic activities provides employment opportunities as well as other possibilities for the relatively smooth incorporation of migrants into the host society. Rural-to-urban migration in Turkey in the 1960s had created a similar environment of informal incorporation into labor and housing sectors. At those years, the modernization paradigm suggested that the spread of informal labor among internal migrants is a temporary short-term phenomenon that would vanish and become formalized in due time (Keyder 2005: 125). However, as we observe in the years 2000, informal labor market did not fade away, yet on the contrary became more and more entrenched throughout the globalization era.

In 2000, Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (İTO) claimed that there were around 10.5 million of workers that did not pay taxes and were not registered into any social security system. According to this report called “Artifical Employment and Employment Policies in Turkey”, informal economy is spreading into all economic sectors and accompanies problems of low income, poverty and employment. According to Turkish Statistical Institution (TURKSTAT), 55.4% of the employed in Turkey are working in the informal sector, i.e. unregistered economy. In the third quarter of the 2004, 22.2% of the salaried workers, 91.5% of the daily workers (yevmiyeli), 25% of the employees and 91.5% of the unpaid family workers were informally employed. In 2004, 48.2% of the male workers, and 74.4% of the female workers were employed in the informal economy.

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7 Radikal, 30.10.2000 “10.5 milyon işçi kaçak”

8 One should clearly distinguish informal economy from illicit economy. In this text, we utilize the term ‘informal’ for economic activities that are not registered formally by public authorities. It does not include illicit or illegal economic activities.
The magnitude of the informal economy in Turkey has been a concern for politicians as well as international economic organizations, including IMF. Within the environment of severe economic crisis in 2000, the informal employment of foreign migrants had been presented as the scapegoat of economic problems by the media and politicians; foreign migrants, especially the ones from former Soviet countries, were accused of causing unemployment problems. Actually unemployment has been an acute problem in Turkey which made the competition in the labor market much tougher. According to the Turkey’s Statistical Yearbook 2004 published by TURKSTAT, unemployment rate increased from 6.5% in 2000 to 10.3% in 2001, 10.3% in 2002, 10.5% in 2003 and 10.3% in 2004. For the year 2005, it is estimated to be around 10%. The unemployment rate in urban areas is much worse than rural areas. In the same yearbook, the urban unemployment rate has been presented as 8.8% in 2000, 11.6% in 2001, 14.2% in 2002, 13.8% in 2003 and 13.6 in 2004. These statistics have also been confirmed by the records of Turkish Labor Institute (İş-Kur). Accordingly, the unemployed are mostly in metropolitan areas: the biggest portions of the unemployed population in Turkey are in Istanbul (13.7% of the Turkish average), Zonguldak (7.8%) and Ankara (7.01%) in 2000.

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9 Zaman, 10.12.2004, “Büyüme, işsizliğe çare olmayıor”. The number given for women working in the informal sector seems to be very low compared what we observe in the field and in the academic texts. As argued by many researchers, informalization goes hand in hand with feminization of the labor force in the globalization era (Standing 1989; Standing 1999).


11 Evrensel, 30.12.2000 “İşsizliğin nedeni yabancı işçimis”


13 Hürriyet, 27.12.2005, “Paranı istemiyoruz dersek IMF bozulur”. Unemployment rate was 11.5% in February 2005, whereas it decreased to 9.4% in August in the same year.

14 Radikal, 23.10.2000, “Kentler işsiz dolu”
The promotion of a new law against the foreign undocumented workers has occurred in this environment of high unemployment problem and large informal economic sector. In late 1990s and early 2000s, the Ministry of Labor had claimed that there were one million foreign ‘illegal’ migrants, whose majority is from countries such as Moldova, Russia, Iran and the Far East. His statements were backed by media coverage against undocumented foreigners. The result has been the creation of a new law to penalize companies that employ undocumented workers. The objective of the law was to diminish informal employment of foreigners by charging 2.500 YTL from the company owners who employs informal foreign workers. The law had been put on the agenda by the former minister of labor, Yaşar Okuyan in the year 2000. However, it took three years for its implementation. “The law about the work permits of foreigners” (Law no. 4817 published in March 6, 2003 on the official gazette) is designed to prevent the employment of foreign undocumented migrants and to harmonize Turkish labor laws with EU acquis.

Given the difficulty to calculate the size of the undocumented labor, there are only estimations about the numbers of foreigners who are informally employed. What complicates the picture more is the search for job of foreigners who enter the country with a tourist visa. For instance, Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (İTO) sets the number of undocumented labor as 450,000, while trade unions shoot it up to 2 million. This huge disparity in the estimations is clearly due to the conflicting interests of entrepreneurs and labor unions. In the same news for instance, Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TİSK) admits that the employment of foreign undocumented migrants creates an advantage for the company owners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States between 1964 and 2003</th>
<th>Balkan States</th>
<th>Middle Eastern Countries</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>328,536</strong></td>
<td><strong>36,883</strong></td>
<td><strong>219,958</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>69,796</td>
<td>18,243</td>
<td>36,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>3,319</td>
<td>6,181</td>
<td>15,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>9,996</td>
<td>13,184</td>
<td>26,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>3,849</td>
<td>10,131</td>
<td>13,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>452,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>4,961</td>
<td>7,383</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 *Dünya*, 2.9.2003, “Yabancı kaçak işçi çalıştırma cezaları 6 Eylül’de yürürlüğe giriyor”
17 *Türkiye*, 9.10.2000, “450 bin kaçak işçi ziyaret”
18 *Radikal*, 30.10.2000, “10,5 milyon işçi kaçak”
The strongest opposition against foreign undocumented migrants is stated by textile unions. Textile Workers’ Trade Union (Teksif) argued in 2000 that every three persons in twenty workers employed in textile factories in the Thrace are Rumanian undocumented migrants. Actually informal employment in textile sector is an acute problem: Social Security Institute (SSK) estimated that 85% of textile workers are unregistered and thus devoid of any social security. They also argue that most of the foreign undocumented migrants in Turkey are employed in textile. In a report published by Teksif in 1999, only a quarter of the two million persons who are employed in textile sector are registered. Among the 60,000 textile workers in Merter, only 4,000 are registered.

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19 Radikal, 30.10.2000, “10,5 milyon işçi kaçak”
20 Radikal, 23.10.2000, “İşçiler de işyerleri de kaçak”
21 Radikal, 30.10.2000, “10,5 milyon işçi kaçak”
Textile is the main sector that undocumented foreign migrants are employed. Let’s now focus at the heart of the sector, and turn our camera toward Laleli and Osmanbey.

### 1.5.3 Suitcase trade

Most of the employment opportunities for migrants in the informal sector are related to the extent of export centers in Istanbul. Most migrants work either directly or indirectly in the suitcase related fields: many migrants work in production level (i.e. in textile sweatshops) while others work as sale persons, porters or simple workers. Production and sale locations of textile, leather and other products in Laleli, Osmanbey, Merter and other places attract cyclical migrants or shuttle traders, especially from former Soviet Union, but also from Middle Eastern and North African countries.

Istanbul is an outstanding regional economic center: In 2003, it has realized over 60% of declared foreign trade of Turkey. More than 65% of import and export companies of the country are located in this city. Above all, Istanbul serves as the nodal point of a vast hinterland from Central Asia to Middle East. Part of temporary foreigners’ presence in Turkey is associated to commercial appeal of Istanbul. This is mainly valid for the citizens of ex-Soviets and Eastern European countries in addition to North Africans (mainly Libyans) as their access to European market becomes tougher (Péraldi 2001).
‘Suitcase tourism’ or ‘shuttle trade’ has started in the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The hunger for consumption in those countries that had been repressed so long under communist regimes has been fulfilled by suitcase traders who shuttle between their countries and Turkey. ‘Suitcase trade’ is exercised mainly by ‘çelnok’, which means ‘shuttle traders’ in Russian (Yükseker, 2003). Typical suitcase traders travel regularly, such as once in two months, and stay for a short period in Istanbul to buy relatively cheap and higher quality textile and leather products, automobile spare parts or other goods produced in Turkey. Due to the repetitiveness and frequency of their movement, they are often called ‘cyclical migrants’ (Erder 2000, Aslan & Pérouse 2003).

It is not easy to distinguish ‘classic tourists’ from ‘suitcase tourists’ on the statistics and this makes it more difficult to analyze the figures of tourists in Turkey (see table 1.6).
### Table 1.6 - Foreign tourist entry in Turkey, based on country of origin (1981-2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>181 773</td>
<td>3 480 844</td>
<td>3 327 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>67 273</td>
<td>1 040 228</td>
<td>1 091 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>12 134 (USSR)</td>
<td>945 678</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>19 759</td>
<td>871 560</td>
<td>938 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>15 901</td>
<td>833 848</td>
<td>1 006 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>134 945</td>
<td>524 170</td>
<td>470 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>11 286</td>
<td>432 224</td>
<td>494 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>36 664</td>
<td>376 995</td>
<td>379 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>313 436</td>
<td>308 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>18 335</td>
<td>280 307</td>
<td>393 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>271 024</td>
<td>321 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>101 966</td>
<td>247 837</td>
<td>222 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italia</td>
<td>74 971</td>
<td>211 069</td>
<td>236 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>11 451</td>
<td>203 830</td>
<td>188 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>191 202</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 023 985</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 158 125</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>13 246 875</strong></td>
<td><strong>13 958 000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Tourism 2004, cited by Perouse 2004

* Among them, 450 519 are single day transit passengers.

The above table presents a selection of nationalities. The total number includes all nationalities.

As a non-declared economic activity, it is hard to rely on official statistics to grasp the volume of this foreign trade. Nevertheless, it is certain that ‘the golden age’ of this ‘commercial tourism’ that took place between 1992 and 1996 finished after the big economic crises in Turkey and the governmental efforts to record these exchanges. Similarly, recently on January 1, 2004, the Russian government changed the law that allowed Russian passengers to bring goods weighting 200 kg without paying tax. Since then, passengers to Russia can take only 50 kg and maximum 1,000 USD with them. In 2004, the Chief Consul of Russia in Istanbul, Sergei Velichkin claimed firmly that they want to bring to a complete end to suitcase trade between Turkey and Russia whose volume had already decreased from 20 billion USD in 1990s, to 3.5 billion USD in 2004 (See table 1.7).

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22 Zaman, 17.10.2004 “Laleli esnafları, bavul ticaretinde Başbakan’dan yardım istedi”
23 Zaman, 6.10.2004 “Rusya, bavul ticaretini tamamen durduracak”
Table 1.7 - The volume of suitcase trade with Russia (billion USD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Trade (billion USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Approximate
Source: Zaman, 07.03.2005 “Bavul ticareti bitti firmalar Laleli’yi Rusya’ya taşıyor”.

The withdrawal of Russian clients has been a recurring theme during our fieldwork in Osmanbey and Laleli, too. Many shop owners told about the negative role of China and the overvaluation of Turkish lira for export-oriented trade of Istanbul. The changing parity of TL vs. USD has increased the costs of production for Turkish companies and made it more difficult for them to compete with the Chinese producers. It is been stated by many that the volume of trade in Laleli had decreased 60-70%, and may lead to bankruptcy of big companies since they have less flexibility to adjust to the shrinking size of trade. Actually, all these unfavorable conditions seem to result in a replacement of Russian clients by Arabs, namely Algerian, Iraqi and Libyan. Another consequence has been an increasing specialization between different locations such as Osmanbey, Laleli, Merter in terms of quality and price of the goods.

Laleli is like a Tower of Babel, where one can encounter all kind migrants in its streets and shops. Bosnian and Bulgarian muhacir, Arabs from Mardin, Turkmens from Iraq are the ones easily detected among shop owners. Among the clients there is a bigger variety: members of ex-Soviet countries, (the withdrawal of Russians and Ukrainians substituted by Azerbaijani, Georgian even Armenian), Arabs mainly from Northern Africa and Iraq as well as from Arab peninsula.

Most of the undocumented migrants that we are studying have a contact with this lively blend, either as shop owners, clients or workers in the sweatshops that produce goods for the shops of Laleli or Osmanbey. In one sense, there is kind of a circle interwoven around export-oriented economic activities. In the following chapters, we analyze different ways of migrants’ incorporation into this economic sector.

* * *

In the following sections, we investigate three main points for the cases of Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants. First of all, we portray migrant
profiles for each group by presenting their migration histories and modes. The questions that we try to answer in this section are when and how the pioneers have arrived into Turkey; what are the turning points that affect the size and the content of these migration flows; what are the migrants’ socio-economic background. Secondly, we focus on the migrants’ employment patterns. We investigate their ways of incorporation into Turkish labor market, the channels and networks they mobilize to find employment in highly competitive and fragile Turkish labor market. Thirdly, we investigate their incorporation into housing market. We analyze their ways of finding accommodation, as well as characteristics of the neighborhoods they settle in. We examine the relationship between the spatial concentration of certain groups and their migration history and the housing conditions where the migrants live. Finally, we concentrate on other fields of social incorporation such as education and health services. When it is valid, we investigate means of schooling for the children and ways of solving health problems.

The transformation of formerly emigration countries into immigration ones brings about new challenges: incorporation of migrant groups into the housing and employment markets are one of these domains. We hope that our research on Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian and Maghrebi migrants’ unofficial ways of integration in Turkey will contribute to the academic field by its special focus on migrant incorporation in a developing country. Sound knowledge on the non-European migrants, some among who have a propensity to become permanent residents may also contribute to the improvement of migration policies in Turkey.
2. IRAQIS in ISTANBUL: SEGMENTED INCORPORATION

2.1 IRAQIS: A LARGE BUT INVISIBLE MIGRANT GROUP

The Iraqis have been one of the largest foreign migrant groups in Turkey. Particularly in the late 1990s and early 2000s we frequently encountered their name in the daily newspapers, either as ‘clandestine migrants’ arrested around Eastern or Western borders or ‘refugees’ in shipwrecks on the Aegean costs. However, this news did never provide sufficient information to differentiate main ethnic or religious groups under the general characterization of Iraqis in Turkey. Thus, the news as well as the few pioneer academic works on transit or irregular migrants (İçduyu 1996 and 2003; Lordoğlu 2004) disregard inner differentiations of Iraqis. Actually during the fieldwork, it is observed that each Iraqi group, namely Kurds, Turkmens and Assyro-Chaldean Christians have different chronologies and patterns of migration to Turkey. These differences, which are presented below, are partly due to their distinct migratory capitals, as well as to the differing treatment of Turkish authorities. Nevertheless, their migration patterns have similarities too: in various periods during the last fifteen years, there are moments that each group’s migration models come closer, primarily throughout the late 1990s when many Iraqis regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds followed similar methods to cross Turkey toward Europe.

Even though many of the Iraqis are merely transiting they spend quite along time in Istanbul and develop various ways for their socio-economic incorporation. The variations in the patterns of Iraqi incorporation into Turkish society in general are contingent on two factors: at first, various social capitals, either based on economic, cultural or political ties provide main characteristics of distinct incorporations for each group. For instance, Christianity of Iraqi Assyro-Chaldeans which instigated their emigration from Iraq becomes the most significant resource to build social networks during their temporary stay in Istanbul. In the case of Iraqi Kurds, political ties between Kurds from Iraq and Turkey congregated around various oppositional political organizations beget construction of a Kurdish social space in certain localities of Istanbul. Lastly, in Turkmen case, their linguistic as well as their religious similarity with the mainstream Turkish society contribute substantially to their integration into Turkish society. Yet as seen below, in the section on Turkmens, this ‘privileged’ status of Turkishness brings about various ups and downs owing to the political meaning and importance of this ethnic identity for Turkish state.

The second fundamental factor for migrants’ incorporation is related to the political reception level. Government policies toward different migrant groups,

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such as granting refugee status, regularizing the status of undocumented migrants or creating social programs targeting migrants, do all affect the success of migrant incorporation (Portes 1995: 24). To argue that Iraqi migrants’ incorporation in Istanbul takes place in a social space devoid of state would be a mistake. The Turkish state, which looks inexistent in some periods of these migratory processes, has certainly a special role to play, even though under different appearances. First of all, legal instruments and their various utilizations by the state imply significant consequences for migrants. The political authorities sometimes become a criminalizing agent, as in its treatment concerning Kurds, or affect negatively migrants’ socio-economic conditions by changing its policies regarding residence permits, as in the case of recently immigrated Turkmen.

One should also highlight differences in the manifestations of the authorities: as in the latter example, suspension of granting residence permits on a more institutional level may go together with a growing understanding on the individual level, as seen in the tolerance of the police toward undocumented Turkmen in their daily face-to-face interactions. Even in the example of Assyro-Chaldeans, where Turkish state gives the impression of being totally invisible, we can argue that it is a ‘deliberate indifference’, since authorities seem to ignore the mostly undocumented existence of Iraqi Christians.

If we substitute the term assimilation with incorporation, the concept of ‘segmented assimilation’ of Portes & Zhou (1993) can be helpful to understand different patterns of the Iraqi insertion into Turkish society. As Portes & Zhou claim, migrant incorporation is not a ‘straight-line progression’ but it is a process that often leads to multiple end points. They observe three possible patterns of adaptation that may occur among migrants and their offspring. What we observe in the case of Iraqis in Istanbul is certainly a ‘segmented incorporation’. It can be discerned in the specific socio-cultural and occupational niches they are inserted, as well as their spatial distribution in the city. For instance, while Iraqi Christians are inserted into the non-Muslim, or to be more precise Catholic and Syriac milieus in Istanbul, the Iraqi Kurds in particular the politically active ones develop a social network around the Kurdish political institutions in Turkey. Lastly, the Turkmen are incorporated via the Turkmen Association and interconnect to job markets with the help of Turkmen businessmen in Laleli and Osmanbey. The main agents in these incorporation models are the Assyro-Chaldean church, the Kurdish party and the Turkmen association, as will be elaborated below, in each section.

The spatial scattering of Iraqis in Istanbul reveals the impact of these networks for each group. Despite the temporary character of the many Iraqis’ stay in Turkey, they certainly already have indications in certain quarters of the city. Assyro-Chaldeans dwell almost exclusively in the overpopulated valley connecting Tarlabası, Dolapdere, Kurtuluş and Elmadağ. These neighborhoods, in particular the streets that meet downhill were known in the late 19th century by the working class non-Muslim populace that inhabited there, which can still be noticed by the prevalence of churches (Yılmaz Bayraktar 2006; Danış & Kayaalp 2004). The same districts are also lodging a number of Iraqi Kurds together with the involuntary Kurdish migrants coming from south east Anatolia in the late 1980s and 1990s. Yet it is certain that Iraqi Kurds inhabit predominantly in derelict Kumkapı-Yeniköy axis, next to both internally displaced Kurds of Turkey and various undocumented foreign migrants such as Africans or Iranians.
Kumkapı which is located just a few hundred meters down the Laleli area had also a non-Muslim, mainly Armenian character in the past, and was highly degraded during the 1980s when first migrants began to arrive.

The traditional settlement areas for Turkmens are in Aksaray, Fatih, Çapa and Findikzade, which are always known with the predominance of Muslim population. These neighborhoods were also preferred by the pioneer Turkmen youth who came to Istanbul for study reasons. The medical schools of Istanbul University in Cerrahpaşa and Çapa, as well as a few other private dentistry and pharmacology schools in the vicinity have been important pull factors for their residential choices. Today, the young single men dwell mostly in Kurtuluş and Feriköy and thus decrease the time and money they spend to commute between home and work, since the latter is located in Osmanbey. Besides, the location of the Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association in Aksaray creates an attraction for residential preferences of the Turkmen families. Today, there is a wider spatial dispersal for the Turkmen community in the city, owing to their high level of integration. Even though some of the newly arrived families still prefer to live in Aksaray-Fatih axis, many of the established families are already scattered to distant places as far as Mecidiyeköy, Kadıköy and Maltepe.

2.1.1 In between legal categories

There are various patterns for the general Iraqi presence in Turkey. Large numbers of Iraqis are in irregular status, that is to say they either enter into the country without having the valid documents or they slip to irregularity after entering legally due to expiration of their visa (İçduyuğ 2003). However, this is not the only status for Iraqis in Turkey. There are also some who had once been migrants but eventually acquired Turkish citizenship. It is difficult to grasp the size of this group through statistics, due to the absence of publicly available official data on nationalization of foreigners. Yet it is certain that this group consists almost exclusively of Turkmens who could acquire Turkish nationality thanks to the 1934 Law of Settlement. Besides, although in smaller numbers compared to the other cyclical migrants, there are also Iraqis who commute back and forth between Iraq and Turkey, mainly for commerce.

Iraqis have been the largest group among the irregular migrants arrested by Turkish security forces in Turkey for the last ten years. Almost 100,000 persons from Iraq have been apprehended; it constituted half of all the apprehended cases from Middle East and Asia and one fifth of all the apprehended cases in Turkey between 1995 and 2004 (Apap, Carrera & Kirişiç 2005: 34).

25 We have unfortunately been unable to collect official statistical information in our visit at the headquarter of General Security Department of MOI in Ankara, in 8.12.2005.
Table 2.1 - Top ten countries of origin for irregular migrants arrested by Turkish authorities between 1995 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOLDAVIA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.098</td>
<td>7.980</td>
<td>7.728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAKISTAN</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>2.650</td>
<td>5.618</td>
<td>6.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRAQ</td>
<td>2.128</td>
<td>5.689</td>
<td>11.546</td>
<td>23.444</td>
<td>3.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROUMANIA</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.395</td>
<td>4.533</td>
<td>2.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUSSIA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.695</td>
<td>4.694</td>
<td>2.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFGHANISTAN</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3.046</td>
<td>9.542</td>
<td>2.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKRAINE</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.695</td>
<td>4.694</td>
<td>1.947</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from the data provided on the website of Foreigners Department of MOI

However, as seen in the table above, the volume of Iraqi irregular migration has been in a serious decline in the last years. 2001 has been the peak and since then there has been a continuing decrease. It is certain that the statistics provided by security forces should be treated cautiously, since it reveals only the figures of apprehended cases of foreigners, and not the number of all irregular foreigners in the country. As we observed during the fieldwork, there are many undocumented migrants who are not ‘touched’ by authorities. Nevertheless, we can agree to the decrease in the figures provided by authorities, due to the slowing down of overall emigration from Iraq after 2003, when American occupation persuaded many Iraqi Kurds about staying in the country. If we remember that a large section of Iraqi irregular migrants in Turkey was made of Kurds running away from serious attacks of the regime, then the decline in the Iraqi emigration after the overthrown of Saddam Hussein becomes understandable. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Iraqi irregular migration still continues even though in much smaller numbers. For instance, in October 2005 it has been reported that some 180 Iraqi irregular migrants have been arrested during the last few months. Siverek and Viranşehir are two towns in the South East Anatolia that most of these arrests took place. Likewise in Mardin too twelve Iraqi minors from Mosul, aging between 13 and 17 have been caught by gendarmerie. Despite their request not to be deported to Iraq where they believed to be killed, soon after they were driven out to their country of origin.

---

26 Zaman 2.10.2005, “Sahte pasaportla yakalandılar”.

We can remind the condition of extreme instability and insecurity in Iraq by a simple statistics from September 2005, when 702 Iraqis were murdered in a single month. Zaman, 02.10.2005, “Irak’ta geçen ay 702 Irakli öldürüldü”.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Iraqis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>8,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>8,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>7,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>8,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>8,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>12,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>15,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>12,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>12,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>15,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>14,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>13,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>17,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>18,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>17,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>20,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>16,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>15,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>24,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>111,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from data provided on the website of Ministry of Culture, www.kultur.gov.tr (accessed on January 2006)

The tables on legal entries of Iraqi nationals into the country demonstrate the ups and downs of the officially registered border crossings from Iraq to Turkey. The year 1991 is remarkable with the sudden decrease in the official entries of Iraqis. The insecurity during and after the Gulf War and massive flight of almost half a million Iraqis in the same year elucidate this abrupt fall. Even though legal entries of Iraqis increased almost twice from 1996 to 2003 and reached 24,727, it was still low in comparison with the total entries from Middle Eastern countries (see table 2.3). This inconsistency is probably related to very restricted passport delivery policies of the Saddam Hussein regime. In particular after the 1991 Gulf War, when escapes from Iraq soared up due to worsening economic conditions, the Baas leaders looked for new policies to impede out-migration from the country. One of the methods, for instance, was to oblige professionals, mainly doctors and engineers to deposit 1,000 USD for tourist visa as a guarantee to ensure their return (Hiro 2003: 15). Given the economic instability in the country and overvaluation of USD over Iraqi Dinar, it was not possible to cover this warranty without selling the valuable properties. In this sense, the immense increase in 2004, almost ten times of the 2002 figures represents the fall of Saddam Hussein and easy access to passports in Iraq. The liberalization of passport regime and its implications on economic transactions between Turkey.
and Iraq is discussed below in the section on Iraqi Turkmens’ ethnic niche in Laleli and Osmanbey.

Table 2.3 - Entries of persons from the Balkan and Middle Eastern Neighboring States between 1964 and 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRAQ</td>
<td>3,919</td>
<td>6,518</td>
<td>14,046</td>
<td>13,372</td>
<td>14,137</td>
<td>20,776</td>
<td>29,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal for Middle Eastern Countries</td>
<td>28,672</td>
<td>41,332</td>
<td>87,312</td>
<td>397,724</td>
<td>537,612</td>
<td>551,457</td>
<td>724,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL TOTAL</td>
<td>229,347</td>
<td>724,754</td>
<td>1,057,364</td>
<td>2,301,250</td>
<td>8,538,864</td>
<td>10,428,153</td>
<td>13,461,420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deduced from the table provided by Apap, Carrera & Kirişçi (2005: 58) who compiled it from data obtained from the Foreigners Department of MOI and State Statistical Institute Annual Reports.

Despite the intensity of assaults against ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and ongoing departures in the 1990s, the number of Iraqi asylum applicants was of a limited nature in Turkey. Even though Iraqis together with Iranians constitute the two largest asylum seeker groups in Turkey, the highest application for Iraqis consisted only of 4,672 cases per year (İçduyu 2003: 23). Given the size of total out-migration from Iraq, this is certainly a low figure. One of the factors that contribute to these limited statistics is the geographical limitation that Turkey maintains on 1951 Geneva Convention (Kirişçi 2000). Thus many non-European potential asylum seekers merely transit the country, without showing up before officials. A similar movement happened in Jordan too; between 1991 and 2003, over 1.5 million Iraqis are estimated to arrive in Jordan. Most of these Iraqis “have merely transited the country, which is not a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and which has offered them neither asylum nor economic integration” (Chatelard 2004). Chatelard claims that there are some 300,000 Iraqis with only 30,000 of these with legal status, in Jordan.

Table 2.4 - Asylum Applications in Turkey, 1997-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>IRAN</th>
<th>IRAQ</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,392</td>
<td>2,939</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>4,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,979</td>
<td>4,672</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>6,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3,843</td>
<td>2,472</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>6,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,926</td>
<td>1,671</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>5,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,475</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>5,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14,615</td>
<td>12,752</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>28,845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another factor that restrains the figure of Iraqi asylum seekers is the suspension of Iraqis’ cases in UNHCR offices. Since the 2003 American invasion, many western countries postponed the processing of Iraqi cases until a political resolution comes out in the country. According to the UNHCR website, in early 2006 some 2,200 Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers are present in Turkey. Their cases are at a halt: they are stuck between the continuing instability and insecurity in Iraq and their expectations of attending final resettlement countries that have stopped the processing of applications by Iraqi refugees. We do not have precise statistics concerning the asylum applications after 2003, yet it is certain that Iraqi pending cases which consisted one third of all Iraqi applications between 1995 and 2003 have shooted up (See table 2.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Accepted Cases</th>
<th>Rejected Cases</th>
<th>Pending Cases</th>
<th>Cases not assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>12196</td>
<td>4459</td>
<td>3491</td>
<td>3227</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>19982</td>
<td>11850</td>
<td>1291</td>
<td>5891</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kiriçi 2003 (Data obtained from the Foreigners Department of MOI).

Given the complexity of the picture concerning Iraqi migrants’ legal status, we propose to begin with elucidating major turning points in the history of Iraqi migration to Turkey. Subsequently we analyze the migration patterns and incorporation modalities of each group separately.

2.1.2 A Short Chronology of Iraqi Migration

We can distinguish four main periods in the Iraqi emigration to Turkey. The first arrivals from Iraq occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. As elaborated in the section on Turkmens these first arrivals were mainly for educational purposes and included exclusively the Turkmen. Since then Turkmen immigration has continued in small but constant flows. Especially in the 1980s there were increases in its volume particularly in periods of maltreatment by Iraqi regime. There were also marginal cases of Iraqi asylum seekers in Turkey or choosing Turkey for transit to Europe during the Iran-Iraq War between 1980 and 1988. At those years, it consisted of young men deserting the army and escaping from the long and exhaustive military service.

The second period consists of massive refugee arrivals between 1989 and 1992. The Anfal campaign and the death of five thousand people at Halabja in March 1988 initiated these abrupt population movements. Halabja and other similar attacks on the Kurds who were blamed by collaborating with the Iranian
authorities triggered the escape of tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurds to the South East Anatolia in 1988 (Cigêrli 1998). Later on, in 1992, one of the biggest refugee flows in the world history occurred. After the Iraqi army’s violent suppression of uprisings in the North, some half a million Iraqis, consisting of mostly Kurds but also other minorities fled to Turkey, while another one million escaped to Iran (Kaynak 1992; Mannaert 2003; Van Hear 1995).

The third period consists of irregular migration movements of the 1990s that was instigated after the massive refugee arrivals. The continuing oppression of the regime against dissidents and decreasing life standards as a result of political instability and economic embargoes in the aftermath of the Gulf War presented the main motivations of this out migration. Eventually, a combination of political and economic reasons chased many northern Iraqis to cross Turkey in order to reach Europe throughout 1990s. In these huddles of irregular migration there were Kurds as well as Turkmens, Assyro-Chaldean Christians, even though they all used their own means and networks to accomplish the perilous journey towards West.

The fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 opened the last era in the Iraqi migration. Iraqi Kurdish emigration came to a halt, with the hope of building a new life in newly acquired lands that are both economically and politically promising under the supervision of American occupation forces. In the case of Kurds, we can even talk of a reverse migration: some of the Iraqi Kurds who were stuck in Istanbul choose to return to their homelands with the emergence of a new political structure in the north of the country. After 2003, there have also been some Turkish nationals, mostly of Kurdish origin, who sail to Iraq with the hope of having a well-paid job in the blooming economy of the country. However, albeit the largest group nominated for emigration all through the 1990s decide to stay in their homeland at the present, other minorities, or “minorities of minorities” such as Turkmens and Assyro-Chaldeans keep on evacuating Iraq, due to their ongoing fear of maltreatment.

2.2 IRAQI KURDS: Changing Patterns in a Long-Standing Migration Wave

A great majority of the Iraqi migrants until early 2000s was from Northern Iraq, and consisted mostly of Kurds. The periodization for the Iraqi migration that is presented above provides the general outline of the Iraqi Kurdish movement. Let’s begin with massive Kurdish refugee flows in the 1988 and 1991.

2.2.1 Massive refugee arrivals between 1989 and 1991

First arrivals of Iraqi Kurds date back to 1980s when young Kurdish men escaping military service crossed into Turkey for transiting to Europe during the Iran-Iraq War years. Unfortunately we have no systematic information on these early marginal cases. The earth-shaking period in the Iraqi emigration to Turkey came about between 1988 and 1991. Mainly Kurds, but also other groups took refuge in the south east of Turkey when the oppressions of the Iraqi regime
reached an unbearable level. Iraqi asylum seekers have arrived in three waves into Turkey between 1988 and 1991 (Kaynak 1992). The first wave was related to the “Anfal” Campaign of 1988. Anfal was the name of a series of military operations conducted by the Iraqi rule against Kurds, who were accused of collaborating with Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. According to Middle East Watch, the Anfal campaign that took place between February and September 1988, led to the murder of about 50,000 to 100,000 persons whose majority are women and children (Ciğerli 1998: 35). The campaign was also known with the utilization of chemical gases and the most tragic of all happened when the Iraqi air forces bombed the town called Halabja in March 17, 1988. The result of the chemical gases utilized in Halabja was the immediate death of 5,000 persons.

The chemical bombs together with other military assaults during the Anfal compelled the Iraqi Kurds to take shelter in the North. Thus some 100,000 Kurds running away from the persecutions of Saddam Hussein regime crossed the mountains and then the Iraqi-Turkish border in late August 1988 (Ciğerli 1998: 59-60). Actually Turkish authorities were not very welcoming toward the Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers because of the ongoing armed struggle with the Kurds of Turkey in the South East of the country. The state was afraid of a potential involvement of Iraqi Kurdish refugees in the Kurdish guerilla movement. Nevertheless, owing to the humanitarian concerns in the country and pressure from international community they eventually decided to officially accept the asylum seekers. There were two main points that Turkish state insisted on in order to curb any potential ‘threat to national security’; First of all, Turkish authorities have never granted refugee status to Iraqi Kurds; instead they persistently called them as ‘temporary guests for humanitarian reasons’. Secondly, authorities gave them shelter in special camps that were deliberately constructed in zones far from the Kurdish settlement areas29. Both of these arrangements aimed to make Iraqi Kurds’ stay temporary and short as well as to limit their interactions with the local Kurdish villagers. Nevertheless, despite the departure of a number of refugees in a quite short span of time30, the camps continued to exist up until 1992. Even though there are different estimations about the size of refugee population, according to Turkish officials 117,000 Iraqis arrived in 1988, whose 51,000 were eventually settled in the camps (Ciğerli 1998; Kaynak 1992).

The second wave from Iraq to Turkey included a group consisting of foreign workers, mostly South East Asian, who took a short refuge in Turkey during the military intervention of coalition forces to Iraq, after the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The third and the longest wave came about February-April 1992 owing to the military actions in the North by the army loyal to Saddam Hussein, to suppress the uprising initiated by Kurdish rebels. Subsequent to the victory of the governmental authority on Shiites in the South and on Kurds in the North, fearful of massacres such like prior ones, some 460,000 Iraqis fled to Turkey and a

29 They were initially staying on five temporary camps in Yüksekova (Uzunsrt and Suüstü), Silopi, Dicle and Mardin (Kızıltepe). Three months later, they were transfered to three permanent camps in Mardin, Diyarbakır and Muş (Ciğerli 1998: 71).

30 Whether this was really a voluntary return or a refoulement depends on from which side you listen the story. There are two main books about the Iraqi refugee flows between 1988 and 1992. Sabri Ciğerli’s book (1998) is good to have an idea about Kurdish perspective, while Muhtesem Kaynak’s book (1992) provides the point of view of the Turkish state about these population movements.
million to Iran (Mannaert 2003; Van Hear 1995). This last influx of asylum-seekers to Turkey consisted of mostly Kurds, whereas there were also Turkmens, Assyro-Chaldeans and Arabs from Northern Iraq. Similar to 1988, Iraqis who took refuge to Turkey in 1992 were recognized as “temporary guests for humanitarian reasons” and could not obtain the refugee status due to Turkey’s geographical limitation on Geneva Convention. The last group emigrating from Iraq left Turkey in the nick of time. According to the survey conducted under the supervision of Muhteşem Kaynak, there remained 25,000 asylum-seekers in temporary settlements six months after their arrival (Kaynak 1992:147). UNHCR, who did not take an active part in the 1988, was in action in the massive influx of 1991 and intervened for the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in third countries. Some of these Iraqis, who attained camps in the South East Turkey in 1991, subsequently continued their journey forward and opt for crossing the European borders ‘by their own means’.

2.2.2 1990s and early 2000s: ‘Explosion’ of Iraqi Kurdish irregular migration

Since the last years, the biggest group among the irregular migrants apprehended by Turkish authorities was the Iraqi (İçduygu 2003). According to the Foreigners’ Bureau of the Istanbul Security Directorate, during the first ten months of the 2000, 3,174 of the 12,921 irregular migrants who were arrested in Istanbul were from Iran and Iraq31. These two were the largest among the apprehended irregular migrants in 2000 and it is estimated that Kurds are the largest group within the apprehended cases of irregular migrants of Iraqi and Iranian nationality.

The statistics provided in table 2.1 in this section, albeit they only show the apprehended cases, display the variations in the volume of the Iraqi irregular migration, whose majority are mostly Kurdish32. The number of Iraqis apprehended by the security forces raised from 2,128 in 1995 to 11,546 in 1999 (almost five times increase in four years)33. It is then followed by an ‘explosion’ in 2001 and reached 23,444. As a matter of fact, during 1999 and 2002 there has been plenty of news about Kurdish ‘boat people’34. The doubling up of the irregular population between 1999 and 2001 was then followed by a sudden decrease in 2003, when only 3,757 Iraqis were apprehended by Turkish security forces. Thus, in 2003, Iraqis lost for the first time their top ranking in the hierarchy of irregular migrants and felt to third position behind the Moldavians and the Pakistanis in Turkey.

31 Radikal, 28.12.2000
32 This presumption about the Kurdishness of Iraqi migrants is based on the personal interviews with various Iraqi migrants and the data gathered from newspapers.
33 It is clear there have been many more who crossed Turkey without being caught by security forces. According to the UN sources, 22,000 Iraqi Kurds asked asylum in European countries in 1996. Yeni Gündem, 19.9.2000, “Sessiz ama büyük göç”.
34 Özgür Bağı, 14.3.2000, “Kürt göçü durmuyor”; Yeni Gündem, 21.7.2000, “Kürt mülteciler İtalya sahilinde”; Yeni Gündem, 13.8.2000, “İtalya’da 250 mülteci daha”. In those years, hundreds of persons were apprehended every day, particularly in Italian coasts.
A very large majority of the Iraqi Kurdish migrants consists of young single men. They run away from poverty, deterioration of life standards as well as the ongoing civil war in the Northern Iraq. The increase in the volume of Iraqi Kurdish emigration throughout the 1990s is also associated to the clashes between PDK (Party Democratic of Kurdistan) and PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) that started in 1994 and continued sporadically until the signature of Washington Agreements in September 1998. It later on continued with the skirmishes between Barzani forces and PKK (Workers Party of Kurdistan) in 2001. In fact, Kurdish history in the 1990s until 2003 was characterized by a number of armed struggles between various Kurdish groups, which created a sense of political and economic despair as well as an environment of insecurity.

There are several factors that facilitated Iraqi Kurdish emigration. Familial ties of Kurds who are scattered to different sides of the Iraqi-Turkish border provide the first migratory asset to Iraqi Kurds who wants to cross to Turkey. The only study about smuggling networks in Turkey (İçduyg et al. 2002) points at the role of family and kin-based relationship in the functioning of smuggling networks in the East of Turkey. Actually, for the Iraqi Kurdish migrants, extended familial ties that include both ‘akrabalı’ and ‘aşiret’ relations, provide the first basis of networking to cross the border.

Another resource, which is probably much more important than the familial ties, was derived of the irregular migration expertise of the Kurds of Turkey. When Iraqi Kurds poured to Turkey in the 1990s, Kurds of Turkey have already gained experience in crossing European borders to seek asylum (Pérouse 1999c, Sirkeci 2003). During the late 1980s and early 1990s Turkey had been in the top three ranking in the list of origin country of refugees in Europe (Danış 2004). For instance, in 1985-1994 Turkey was in the third position in the list of asylum seekers into EU countries, with a population of 264,000 persons (Böcker & Havinga 1997: 34). Many of these Turkish asylum seekers in the EU were using clandestine ways to pass the national borders: for instance, between 1997 and 2000, 17,000 Turkish citizens were irregularly entered into England and thus situated in the third position behind Indians and Pakistanis in the ‘list of illegal entries’.

Among the accommodating factors of Kurdish emigration in 1990s, one should also add the positive attitude of European politicians and society towards the Kurdish asylum seekers. Actually until early 2000s, some human rights associations and media agencies emphasized the oppression of Kurds and tried to raise public sensitivity in Europe towards the ‘Kurdish tragedy’. Accordingly, many European governments behaved less reluctant to deport Kurdish irregular migrants. On one occasion in 2001, a boat full of 600 migrants of Sri Lankan,

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35 Yeni Gündem, 12.07.2002, “Güney Kürdistan’da iç kanama: Göç”. The reporter writes meticulously about the social problems, such as gender imbalances, increasing divorce cases, familial shattering caused by the emigration of young Kurdish male.

36 Cumhuriyet, 21.5.2002.

37 Yeni Gündem, 24.02.2001 “Kürt mültecilere ilgi devam ediyor”. In this news, the spokesperson of the French Human Rights Association highlight the concerns about the Kurdish migrants’ tragedy and indicate that only in 2000, 271 Iraqis were drown in Indonesia, Australia and Aegeen sea. She also invited France to call UN Security Council to discuss Kurdish emigration and to improve their life standards in their homelands.
Iranian and Kurdish origin was apprehended while boarding to Italy. Despite the fact that Italian authorities immediately expelled Sri Lankan and Iranian migrants, they stayed silent for the Kurds—whose nationality was not specified in this news, as many others broadcasted by European news agencies. However this sympathetic approach of Europeans has changed in the last years in line with their anti-immigration attitude. Consequently, Kurds make several hunger strikes against EU countries that are not anymore differentiating their cases in the deportation operations.

There is not wholly reliable information on the ethnic character of the smuggling networks. Turkish authorities, as well as Turkish newspapers talk about the role of Kurdish human smuggling groups and the enhancement of political networks interwoven around the PKK. A report published in 2002 by the Foreigners Bureau indicate that PKK has been smuggling Kurds to Europe and has thus earned a huge sum of money. On the other hand, Kurdish media emphasize the role of Turks, also of Turkish state and administration, in the human smuggling networks to Europe (Çiçek 2005). In fact, the pervasiveness of Turks in the ‘business’ has been confirmed by the statistics provided by Turkish police authorities, as well as some Turkish newspapers. According to the below table, a great majority of smugglers have Turkish nationality. However, Turkish authorities accentuate the prevalence of Kurds among the human smugglers having Turkish nationality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONALITY</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TURKEY</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFGHANISTAN</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>AZERBAIJAN</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEBANON</td>
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<td>MALEZIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EGYPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOLDOVA</td>
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</table>

38 Radikal, 24.04.2001, “Kürt göçmene ‘kalış bilet’”.
41 Radikal, 11.06.2002 (the report is called ‘Illegal Migration in the World and in Turkey’).
As presented in the above table, Iraqis are the second largest group in the list of human smugglers nationality; owing to the informal data collected during the interviews, it would not be wrong to assume that many of these Iraqi nationalities are of Kurdish origin and have contacts with other smugglers. The Kurdish dispersal to Europe has certainly contributed to the expansion of all kind of Kurdish networks in the Schengen territories (Wahlbeck 1998). Besides, some Iraqi Kurds, who once were passed to Europe to seek asylum, became later an actor in human smuggling business43. However, it is certainly difficult to asses the weight of Kurdish organizations in the smuggling networks, within the scope of this research. Still, we can make some deductions based on media news.

Operations conducted against human smuggling networks by the British police, in cooperation with Italian, French, Greek and Turkish authorities, in December 2005 pinpoint the connections among these organizations. While the head of the network, which smuggled over 5,000 people from Middle East to Europe, is supposed to be an Iraqi, there have been 22 members of the gang in France, 18 in Italy, 7 in England, 3 in Greece and 3 in Turkey.44 Iraqis are also involved in small smuggling networks installed in Istanbul. In 2004, a bunch of Somalian clandestine migrants complained of being cheated by an Iraqi smuggler who promised them to cross the Greek border. They realized that they have been deceived, after waiting two months in an apartment in Kurtuluş without any sign from the smugglers whom they paid 4500 USD.45

The general discourse toward irregular migrants in Turkey is shaped by a tone of criminalization. In newspapers, the Iraqis, as well as other Asian migrants are presented only under the heading of irregular migration. In January 2004, the head of the International Transportation Association (UND) Çetin Nuhoğlu


44 Cumhuriyet, 17.12.2005. According to British authorities, the Turkish band were charging 7.000 USD for each person, which made them earn around 1.4 billiard USD out of this lucrative job. Just two months before this operation, British police had arrested 18 Turkish smugglers in England and thus crushed a big Turkish smuggling network, which was supposed to be involved in the irregular crossing of 200,000 people into England. However, there is no data on their ethnic origins. (Vatan, 12.10.2005)

complain bitterly from human smuggling networks that utilize Turkey as a transit route. After monitoring the activities of smugglers, the association detected several points that served as a passageway to Europe and sent an elaborate report to various ministries in order to make them “intervene into these illegal networks which badly affect the activities of transportation companies”. \(^\text{46}\)

2.2.3 Iraqi Kurds in Istanbul: Fractional Incorporation

Iraqi Kurds, who poured to Turkey in the 1990s and early 2000s, could incorporate very weakly, partly because of the Turkish state’s resentful attitude towards Kurds in general. As we have discussed above in the section on Iraqi Kurdish massive asylum movements during 1988-1992 Turkish authorities were afraid of their potential participation into the Kurdish uprisings in Turkey. The hostile stance of the state and its attempts to curb potential contacts between Turkish and Iraqi Kurds weakened further Iraqi Kurds’ resources of incorporation.

Another factor that hinders the socio-economic incorporation of Iraqi Kurds is related to the social and economic incapability of their co-ethnics in Turkey and their precarious conditions in Istanbul. Kurds of Turkey have been migrating mostly involuntary, to metropolitan areas, particularly to Istanbul in the last decades (Yılmaz Bayraktar 2006). Many of them were forced to migrate due to the environment of insecurity in the regions they originally inhabit. Çağlar Keyder explains this involuntary population movement with a focus on the macro dynamics of the country: “It is the last two decades’ devastation of what had already been the poorest regions of the country which has pushed people toward the big cities. This devastation is primarily due to the ethnic/separatist war, itself in part related, in various ways, to globalization and the collapse of national developmentism.” (Keyder 2005: 131).

This sudden and unprepared displacement of Kurds of Turkey brought about a malfunctioning settlement in Istanbul, where they were unable to build new social networks. The absence of a prospect for return because of the devastation of the villages, cutting of ties with the homelands as well as the dearth of the social capital available to them give rise to “a danger that these new immigrants have now calcified into a permanent underclass, moving back and forth between unemployment, self-employment and casual, informal work, always in need of outside assistance for survival” (Keyder 2005: 132). Hence, Kurdish internal migrants who face a somber social, as well as political exclusion because of the lack of economic and social resources can not provide an opportunity of socio-economic integration to Iraqi Kurds.

Within this restricted setting, we can distinguish two patterns of Iraqi Kurdish incorporation: One the one hand, there are large numbers of undocumented Iraqi Kurdish migrants composed of largely young single men. In the second group, there are Kurds who are characterized by a high level of political activity. They are much more resourceful for their stay in Istanbul and further migration thanks to their ties with Kurdish political organizations in Turkey.

\(^{46}\) Sabah, 16.01.2004, According to Nuhoğlu, these key points include Çeşme harbor, Erenköy Custom Zone, Haydarpaşa harbor and Ambarlı harbor.
The first group is poorer in terms of their social ties with Turkish society in general. Their stay is undocumented in every sense47: they enter the country without proper documents and they look for smugglers to cross them to Greece. They try to make their transit stop in Istanbul as short as possible and reach Europe before long. Their work and housing conditions are awful. They are participating to the non-European undocumented migrant crowds in Aksaray waiting for to find an employment. They work in daily jobs, whenever they can find one, in particular in the construction sector. They are mostly dwelling in Kumkapı-Yenikapı axis and frequent coffeehouses in this area. They live in ‘inns’ or share a room with other undocumented migrants in the inner city slums. They rarely go to other districts of the city because of fear of being arrested by the police. In consequence, their life world is limited both in spatial and social sense.

The second group is more significant in terms of their social capital based on political ties with Kurdish political circles of Turkey. It includes Iraqi Kurds who had already political affiliation in Northern Iraq and thus benefits from the common ground of working for ‘Kurdish cause’ with Kurds of Turkey. Their migration process as well as their stay has been assisted by Kurdish organizations, in particular the political parties, in Turkey.

“There have been large numbers of people arriving into Turkey in the 1990s, especially in the 1998, after the attacks had started. I remember that the network for their arrival into Istanbul was carried on through Hadep. They first came to cities like Nusaybin, Cizre where they already had familial relations [akrabalik]. Then most of them were directly coming to Istanbul, after being organized via Hadep.” (Interview with Osman, 4.1.2006.) 48

Ethnic and political ties intermingle in the formation of social networks that are utilized by the politicized Iraqi Kurdish migrants. The Kurdish ‘structure’ in Turkey through its political parties (Dehap and previous ones under different names), cultural centers (Mesopotamian Cultural Center -MKM) and newspapers (Özgür Gündem and its substitutes) provide an important niche for the organization of Iraqi Kurdish migration, as well as the temporary incorporation of Kurds in Istanbul.

“They were using whatever skills they had in order to solve their accommodation and employment problems. For instance, I know one who was a graphic designer there [in Iraq], he started to work in the newspaper [Özgür Gündem] after he came here. There were also many musicians; they constructed the infrastructure of music and folk dance activities here in the cultural center [MKM].”

Spatial spots of Kurdish irregular migrants in Istanbul until early 2000s is in line with this political networking. Yenikapı and Tarlabası were certainly the two main locations for them.

47 We are unable to use first hand quotations since none of the Iraqi Kurdish interviewees accepted to use a tape recorder.

48 Osman is a 24 years-old university student in Istanbul once active in Kurdish organizations. In this section, he is the only one whose testimonies are used because the others did not accept a tape recorder. Interview on 4.1.2006.
“They were staying in Yenikapi and its surrounding neighborhoods. Eminönü district center of Dehap and old Hadep was in a hub position. There were also some hotels and coffeehouses that were in relation with this structure. They were transferred from there to Beyoğlu, since culture and art institutions are mostly there. Dehap district center in Beyoğlu is equally important. Apart from Yenikapi, there was also a meeting place for the clandestine migrants in Tarlabası. That group was frequently visiting the coffeehouse of MKM.”

The relationships between Turkish and Iraqi Kurds were not one-sided: In line with the Kurdish solidarity ethos, “they were contributing to each other with whatever they had to offer”. Iraqi Kurds’ most important contribution was certainly political participation to Kurdish organizations.

“Even though they were in a very dangerous position, they were politically participating. There were many who tutored language courses in the cultural center. Knowledge of the language was very low among the Kurds of Turkey; they knew Kurdish so they were teaching them. If the police arrested them they would be immediately deported, but they were not afraid of this.”

It is not only the Iraqi Kurds who benefit from this ethno-political solidarity. Kurds from Syria too may integrate into the political networks. Social and spatial concentration of Kurds in some inner city neighborhoods, help the newcomers to make contact with the local Kurdish inhabitants.

“Last year, after the events erupted in Kamışlı [in the north of Syria], lots of Kurds came here. They were not very open to interaction. For instance I remember the women. We went to visit them because we were collecting some money for them. They had to return, but they did not have money to pay the bus. They had come to stay temporarily, only to be away during the clashes. So they came to us too, to collect the necessary money. The women were all in black veils and were not talking at all. It was only the men who were talking. But still, they had found their way somehow, they had come to Tarlabası and meet Kurds there. In Tarlabası, all the shops belongs to Kurds, the language spoken in the streets is Kurdish. I think they somehow made the first contact with them and then told about their problems. So, the Kurds in Tarlabası collected money for them and sent them back.”

Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, as well as the ones in Syria or Iran, possess limited human capital, due to absence of educational and professional opportunities they have. Unlike the Iraqi Turkmens in Istanbul who first came in the 1960s and enhanced their qualifications through educational attainment, Kurds have not been able to improve their credentials. Their being stigmatized as ‘dangerous minorities’ is one of the factors that compel them to ‘illegal’ spheres, even crime world in some instances.

“Various kind of criminal underground organization in Tarlabası is at the hands of Kurds from Diyarbakır. They know who arrives, who leaves. They take care of them [Iraqi Kurds]; they even help them when necessary. They are also politically active. These people who do organize car robberies or the simplest pickpockets
(kapkaç) have a political affiliation because of their history or their ethnic background. And it still goes on. (...) The Kurdish migrants, Turkish citizen or foreigner, in Tarlabası have very few skills or qualifications. This is why they are unable to create solidarity networks."

Owing to the lack of social networks, except ‘illegal’ ones, it is very difficult for the Iraqi Kurds to build a new life in Istanbul. So, there are no shops owned or run by the Iraqis in the neighborhoods they are settled in. The sole option to earn a livelihood for many is to work in daily burdensome jobs until the day of departure comes.

**2.2.4 The fading out of Kurdish emigration from Iraq after 2003**

The Kurdish emigration which had continued mostly of an irregular nature during the last decade came to a halt in the last years. Currently most of the Iraqi Kurds are going back to their homeland, while still very few attempt to go forward, to Europe. However it is certainly clear that the volume of Kurdish emigration is not as high as it was once. Even in 2003, the number of Iraqi nationalities who were apprehended by Turkish security forces dropped to 3,757 from 23,444 in 2001. Even though we do not have the statistics for the last two years, it would not be wrong to estimate that it decreased further.

The American occupation in Iraq as well as the establishment of a new regime after the overthrown of Saddam Hussein changed the conditions in the North that once pushed many out of the country. The reconciliation between Barzani and Talabani, as well as rapid development of a new political and economic system in the Iraqi Kurdistan resulted in a slowing down, even an ending of the Kurds departure. Besides, since 2003, European countries have changed their policies towards Iraqi Kurds and insisted on ‘voluntary return’ of Kurdish asylum seekers whose claims are rejected. All these changes signified a weakening both in push and pull factors for the Kurdish emigration.

Apart from the newly emerged circumstances in the departure and destination countries, there have been also changes in Turkey. The year 2000 has been a critical turning point for the Kurdish political setting in Turkey. The apprehension of Abdullah Öcalan in February 16, 1999 resulted in a hot debate among Kurdish groups in Turkey and in the end led to the weakening of Kurdish organizations in the country. This remarkable event had also consequences in the incorporation of politically active Iraqi Kurdish irregular migrants in the country.

"The apprehension of Öcalan and the change of the paradigm in Kurdish movement, the discourse of ‘let’s leave the guns’, changed completely the situation. As a result, I met very few Kurds from Iraq or Iran in this structure after 2000. (...) Even if they [Iraqi Kurds] come, there are not anymore people to get in contact here. Many [of Kurds from Turkey] went to Europe. I can say that 80% of whom I know went; most of these people were very talented, very qualified persons. Because of the dismantling process of the structure here, the newcomers prefer to stay out and to develop their own means of emigration in Yenikapı or other places. Most of them left eventually. The people [Iraqi Kurds] whom I met this summer for instance were staying here and did not join any political or social activity. In the end, they left."
After 2003, a new pattern, a reverse movement, of Kurdish migration in the region has started. Many Iraqi Kurds who were stuck for a long time in Turkey opt for returning to their native soils. In addition to them, Kurds of Turkey are presently going to Northern Iraq either for study or work. One aspect of this reverse population movement the work-related circulations of Turkish nationals, mainly of truck drivers. Unfortunately the price of this destitute search for work is very high for many: Since March 2003, 110 Turkish truck drivers died and 87 injured in Iraq.\textsuperscript{49} 74 of the 110 were killed as a consequence of armed assaults. Most of the truck drivers are originating from the Southeastern Anatolia, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Urfa, Mardin and Adana. Even though what is more visible in the media are the truck drivers, they are not alone in their journey; artisans, technicians, cooks, construction workers, are searching for new prospects in Iraq. Poverty and unemployment are the two main reasons that force them to undertake such a perilous and risky job\textsuperscript{50}. Besides, among the migrants to Iraq there are also university candidates who could not receive the necessary score in the national examination for university entrance. These young persons from the South East of Turkey, especially Hakkari, Şemdinli and Şırnak go to Erbil or Suleymaniye in the northern Iraq, where they can study in Kurdish.

In short, the Iraqi Kurds in Istanbul are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Istanbul in terms of their capacity to build social networks. Most of them join the ranks of cheap, unqualified labor reserve of undocumented foreigners and dwell in shabby neighborhoods inhabited by Kurds of Turkey who themselves arrived in Istanbul involuntarily in the 1980s and 1990s, due to the insecure environment in their homeland. Social exclusion that Kurds of Turkey experience limits the resources to be shared with Iraqi Kurds. The only resource that seems to be helpful is the dense network interwoven around various Kurdish organizations. Thus Iraqi Kurds who had already political contacts in their homeland affiliate with the politically active Kurdish environment in Istanbul. Undoubtedly, this presents a restricted social space for the steady incorporation of Iraqi Kurds due to continuing control and pressure of Turkish authorities on Kurdish institutions, seen as a potential threat for the security and integrity of the state.

2.3 IRAQI TURKMENS: Ethnic brotherhood, easier incorporation?

2.3.1 A mystery: The size of Iraqi Turkmen population

There is not official data about the size of the Turkmen population in Turkey, similar to the weakness of statistical information on any migrant group.

\textsuperscript{49} Zaman, 26.9.2005, “2003 yılından bu yana İrak’ta 110 Türk şöför hayatını kaybetti”

The only hints we could gather are mostly of an informal nature, since they are collected from the newspapers and our own interviews with Turkmen representatives. The population of Iraqi Turkmen in Turkey has been a controversial subject, in particular since the January 2005, when the Iraqi parliamentary election held place. At that point, more than 280,000 expatriates were registered for out-of-country voting in 14 countries\(^{51}\), as seen in the below table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.7 - IRAQI EXPATRIATE VOTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia: 11,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada: 10,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark: 12,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France: 1,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany: 26,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran: 60,908</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordan: 20,166</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands: 14,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden: 31,045</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syria: 16,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey: 4,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE: 12,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK: 30,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US: 25,946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BBC, 28.01.2005
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4215393.stm

The tiny size of the Iraqis registered in Turkey had been a hot topic in Turkish newspapers, who argued that the size of the Turkmen community in Turkey is around 40,000\(^{52}\). However, there were only 4,178 persons who had registered for out-of-country voting in the January elections, and the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITC) had gained 3,500 of those. Turkmens in Turkey were severely criticized and blamed of not being organized as well as the Bulgarian Turks, who made an impressive achievement in the parliamentary elections\(^{53}\). Turkmen informants defended this low registration by the protests against the American-led election: many did not want to participate in elections thinking that such participation would mean justifying the American occupation in the country.

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\(^{51}\) “Iraqis worldwide celebrate landmark vote”

\(^{52}\) www.ntvmsnbc.com, 26.01.2005 “Yurtdışındaki Iraklardan seçime destek yetersiz”

Besides, all over the world only a quarter of expatriate Iraqis were registered to vote. The head of the Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (Irak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği, shortly The Turkmen Association hereafter) repudiates the 40,000 estimation about the Turkmen population in Turkey and claims that none of them have pronounced such a figure. According to him, probably the expert on the Turkmen migrants, the 40,000 guesstimate is just an invention of the media and the correct number is around 7,000 to 10,000 in Turkey and 5,000 to 7,000 in Istanbul. Yet, the Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Abdullah Gül, does not seem to have the same opinion with him. The minister stated that there are almost 40,000 Iraqi citizens in the country and 30,000 of these are Turkmen, who should certainly go to the ballot, if they want to contribute to the restructuring of their homeland.

Despite the low participation rate in the January out-of-country voting in Turkey, December 2005 elections draw more people into voting cabins. 23,000 persons participated to the elections and 21,000 voted for the Turkmen parties. Conversely, this unexpected and sudden explosion of votes in Turkey annoyed Iraqi Kurdish groups. The Turkish representative of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) had declared that they will dispute the results. In return, Turkish representatives of elections explained the increase in the votes with the facilities provided by the authorities, such as permission of clandestine Iraqis to participate into voting without the intervention of police officers.

Whatever its size, two groups can be distinguished within the Turkmen community in Istanbul: the old and the new ones. Kemal Beyatlı, the head of the Turkmen Association indicates that the migration from Iraq to Turkey has to be distinguished as pre-1991 and post-1991. He claims that 60%-70% of the actual Turkmen population in Turkey has arrived after 1991. Nevertheless, it is certain that there is a continuing emigration since the 1950s, mostly motivated by educational purposes.

2.3.2 From 1950s to 1991: Educational migration of the Turkmen

Turkey has long been paying attention to the Turkmen of Iraq, even though with changes in the degree and content of its interest. The loss of Mosul in 1926, after long diplomatic negotiations with Britain and League of Nations created a large Turkish speaking community within Iraqi territories. To protect, and if possible to improve, the rights of the Iraqi Turkmen has been a continuing concern for Turkish authorities (Şimşir 2004: 47-68). We will not go into the details of the

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54 “Expatriate Iraqis head to polls” http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4215393.stm (accessed on 28.01.2005)
55 Turkmen are also settled in Ankara, Antalya, İzmir and Konya in addition to Istanbul, which is the favorite destination for the Iraqi Turkmen, like for other foreign nationalities.
57 Milliyet, 17.12.2005, “Kürtler İstanbul'a itiraz edecek”
relations between Turkey and Iraqi Turkmen, since it is out of the scope of this research. Still we should state that arguments about the figures of the Turkmen have been a significant political instrument for Turkish authorities to raise their anxiety about the oppression over the Turkmen minority in the Northern Iraq. As a matter of fact, this instrument has sometimes turned to the disadvantage of the Turkmen who were forced to leave Iraq as a result of worsening social and political circumstances in the 1990s. The Turkish state, who then realized the importance of having a sizeable Turkmen community in Iraq in order to have a saying in the future restructuring of the country, slowed down delivering permanent resident permits, let alone citizenship, to the Turkmen who seek refuge in Turkey.

The attitudes of Turkish State towards Turkmen minorities in Iraq were much affirmative in the first half of the 20th century. The first shock that was experienced after the loss of Mosul had been substituted by the policies aiming to improve the historical and social ties between Iraqi Turkmens and Turkey. There are two important agreements between Turkey and Iraq that have considerable implications for the Turkmen migration to Turkey. The first one is The Turkish-Iraqi Residence Contract signed in January 09, 1932 (Türkiye-Irak İkamet Mukavelenamesi) and the other is The Educational and Cultural Cooperation Protocol (Eğitim, Öğretim ve Kültür İşbirliği Protokolü) signed under the article No.3 of The Friendship and Good Neighborhood Agreement (Dostluk ve İyi Komşuluk Antlaşması) in March 29, 1946.

The Residence Contract of 1932 granted the citizens of Iraq and Turkey the right to live in, to work and to have properties in the other country. Evidently, it has been the Turkmen who benefited the most from this agreement. Consequently, back-and-forth movements increased and the Iraqi Turkmen obtained the right to settle, to work, to study in Turkey without losing their Iraqi nationality. This law made also possible to restore social ties of the Turkmen kindred who are spread to the two sides of the Iraqi-Turkish border (Şimşir 2004: 89-90).

The Educational and Cultural Cooperation Protocol had a considerable implication on the Iraqi Turkmen migration in Turkey (Şimşir 2004: 115-121). In consequence of this protocol, Iraq and Turkey agreed reciprocally to recognize the equivalence of all diplomas obtained in the other country. Besides, Turkey accepted to receive Iraqi students into public boarding schools and to cover all their expenses in the country. Consequently, in the 1950s and 1960s many Turkmen students benefited from the right of studying in Turkey. The 1946 Protocol together with the 1932 Residence Contract facilitated the settlement of the Turkmen who came to Turkey to study.

These two agreements have been official doors opened for the entry of Turkmen into the country. In particular after the Kirkuk Massacre in 1959 (Al-

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59 Population statistics in Iraq have always been a boiling battlefield since the 1920s, however its intensity has particularly increased in the last years. Turkmens have been trying to demonstrate that their population in Iraq is around 2,000,000 despite the ‘Arabization’ and ‘Kurdization’ policies in the country. (See Al-Hirmizi 2003: 91-104 for a detailed account of various documents and researchers on the subject.)

60 The law (Law No.2003) has been ratified in 4.6.1932 by the Turkish National Assembly and been implemented in 6.7.1933 (Şimşir 2004: 89).
Hirmizi 2005), throughout the 1960s there have been many Turkmen youth who benefited from this education protocol. The importance of having academic credentials has always been acknowledged and education is highly encouraged by Turkmen61. Nevertheless, unlike what is expected, the emigration of the Turkmen owing to educational purposes in the 1950s and 60s is not related to the supposedly better quality of education in Turkey. As far as the interviews conducted, most of the Turkmen students decided to study in Turkey because of their not-so-good-grades in the Iraqi national baccalauréat exams, i.e. secondary school examination giving university entrance qualification. The alternative for the Turkmen who could not achieve the score required to get into a ‘decent’ faculty was certainly Turkey.

“In our university entrance system, there is an examination at the end of high school, like here. However, we do suppose a young person as ‘educated’, if he is a graduate of medical school, dentistry, engineering or pharmacology. If he cannot enter into these faculties, he thinks about going abroad. For us, the closest country is Turkey.” (Interview with Hasan62)

One of the important features of study-in-Turkey was certainly related to the ethnic/linguistic ‘closeness’ between Turkey and Iraqi Turkmen, as elaborated above. The strength of the Iraqi economy in the 1960s was another factor that facilitated the realization of studying abroad for many Turkmen.

“Iraqi families could easily support the children they sent to study to Turkey because of the strength of Iraqi economy at that period. One Iraqi Dinar was equal to 3.3 USD. Even middle income families could easily sent their kids. Avoiding military service was also the reason to come to Turkey for some young people who finished high school but could not get into university. And of course, parents who are doctors want their children to study certainly in medical school; if he cannot enter into medicine in Iraq, they send him to Turkey or to other countries. In those years, every country was known with the high quality of education in some specialties; for example Eastern Bloc, especially Romania and Czechoslovakia were favorite destinations to study orthopedics.” (Interview with Kemal Beyathlı63)

The importance paid to education is certainly a significant element of Iraqi Turkmens. Most of the interviewees expressed the high level of education among Turkmen community in Iraq. This emphasis on the education was valid for people of urban background as well as rural. Besides, networks based on extended family ties encouraged the dissemination of information about possibilities in Turkey, as

61 A recent research conducted in Iraq about the migration patterns of the Iraqi Turkmen points at their high-level of education: accordingly a quarter of the women and one third of the men have attended university and only one in ten had no education (Sirkeci 2005: 14).

62 Hasan is a dentist born in 1951, in Mosul. He is in Turkey since 1969, the year when he came to study. The interview has been realized in his private clinic in Taksim, in 24.11.2005.

63 Kemal Beyathlı is the head of the Turkmen Association (Irak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği). He himself immigrated to Turkey in 1991, after the Gulf War, together with his wife and two children. The interview has been realized in the headquarter of the association in Aksaray, in 22.4.2005
well as provided initial contacts for young students, who were mostly male. The below quotation is not an exception for the Turkmen who came to Turkey in the 1960s:

“My father was a farmer. One of my brothers came to Turkey to study after me. The other one got a degree of political sciences in Baghdad and then had a master degree in Cairo and completed his doctorate in Turkey. He is now an associate professor in a Turkish university. (…) The son of my aunt studied here, in the department of mechanical engineering at the Technical University, also the son of my uncle studied medicine in Istanbul.” (Interview with Hasan)

While many of the Iraqi Turkmen students went back home after they finished their education, there were a considerable number of people who could not return because of the political turbulences in the country. The relations of these early comers with the homeland are shaped by the political and military turbulences. The ‘never-ending wars’ in Iraq give rise for many to the impossibility of returning homeland, and to limited interactions with family members and friends in the borderlands or in Istanbul. Once again, the distinction between volunteer and forced migrants is hard to delineate, as is seen in the words of İhsan:

“All my relatives went back after they graduated. At those times, the situation in Iraq was very good. Me too, I would return. I got my degree but I wanted to stay for doctorate. Then, the year I got my doctoral degree, the war began [Iran-Iraq War]. In that case what should I do? I decided to stay and open a private clinic not to hang around jobless. At those years, the economic conditions in Iraq were good, and ours was better. The short term opening of the clinic became eternal, I could not go back again and I stated here. When the war with Iran ended, the Gulf War started, the situation in Iraq became terrible, and I could not go home, again. I did not have a tiny idea of opening a clinic here. Before my arrival here, I had a plan in mind that I would return to Iraq in 1973. It is now 2005, how many years have passed away from homeland (in gurbet)? My parents and my siblings are there, homesickness is hard. But the conditions in Iraq are so bad that nothing can be done.” (Interview with İhsan)

We can categorize these educational migrants under three categories:

1. Persons who stay in Turkey, even though most of them did not have such an intention in their arrival. Due to problems related to military service under Baas regime, most prefer to stay in Turkey and build a new life. Their educational credentials and their well-to-do families’ financial support have been two important means of their adjustment. Above all, the easy access to Turkish citizenship has been another feature facilitating their incorporation. In addition to all these, never ending political problems in Iraq led them to stay permanently in Turkey.

Today, the general profile of the old Iraqi Turkmen community in Istanbul is characterized by high level of education, professional middle class positions and reasonable incorporation into Turkish society. Their level of integration is so high that most of them refuse to be regarded as migrant. During the interviews, many of those early comers put an emphasis on the fact that they are not migrants.
2. Persons who return to Iraq at the end of their educations in Turkey. In this group, most went back before the beginning of Iran-Iraq War. Besides, some people, who do have a sizeable wealth back home, could not give it up for the sake of escaping military service. Among these students some have become circular migrants and continued back-and-forth movements between Iraq and Turkey, mostly for business activities.

3. Persons who go to a third country for work reasons. Their two main competences are their diplomas and linguistic skills (speaking Arabic and Turkish). Most of these have been working in Turkish companies based in Arab countries, such as United Arab Emirates or Libya. The ethnic and linguistic capitals seem to play a pivotal role in these networks. There are also others who are settled in northern European countries, after they finished their education in Turkey.

2.3.3 Post-1991: Mass departure

Even though Turkmen emigration continued throughout the 1970s and 80s, its most critical year, like for other Iraqi minority groups, has been 1991. On the words of İbrahim Sirkeci (2005: 40) 80% of Iraqi Turkmen migrants have emigrated after the 1990. In the same way, Kemal Beyatlı claimed that the majority of the current Turkmen population in Turkey (its 60%-70%) has arrived after 1991. According to Beyatlı, the head of the Turkmen Association, “17,000 Turkmen have entered into Turkey in 1991, 12,000 of those have returned home”. The ‘Altunköprü Massacre’ in March 1991 was one of the remarkable moments worsening the conditions of the Iraqi Turkmen (Saatçi 2004). As expressed by many the conditions during and after the Gulf War were worsened in an intolerable degree and many had to seek refuge in Turkey, together with large number of Kurds and Assyro-Chaldeans.

"Because of our social structure we do not easily migrate, but then the conditions became unbearable. (...) I write literature, poetry. But at those years, it was not possible to publish what we wrote. Obviously, if you write rose-flower-love things there was no problem but the regime did not allow the publication of what we wanted to write. Besides there were coercions of the regime towards the Turkmen; there were executions, obstacles to employment, rejections from universities, forbiddances to buy and sell properties. Finally, together with the crowd in 1991, we crossed to Turkey by walking on the mountains. We stayed in the Silopi camp. Then the government got a decision and said that persons [Turkmens], who have money in the bank or have relatives here, can pass through.” (Interview with Mustafa, 23.4.2005)

The Turkmens who arrived in 1991 were advantageous in terms of the reception policies of the Turkish authorities. Many Turkmen, who arrived at that year, experienced a hospitable atmosphere. Many could easily acquire residence permits just after their arrival. Besides, as asserted by some of the interviewees who came in 1991, the state supported the Turkmen to find an employment in public or private sector.

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64 In the mid 1990s the value of one Iraqi Dinar decreased from 3.2 USD to 1/3000 to 1/10000 of its prewar value (Hiro 2002: 14).
Some of the asylum seekers in 1991 were well educated professionals, even though there were also several who had lesser credentials. While a great majority of them went back home soon after a brief stay in the South East of Turkey, there were significant number of people (5,000 according to Kemal Beyati) who did not. Actually, for the latter, the alternatives were not limited to staying in Turkey. There were some who continued their migration and tried to reach their relatives abroad, particularly in Europe. Among these, there were very few who obtained refugee status by the UNHCR. According to the representatives of the association, the last five years in particular has been a total frustration for Iraqi Turkmen who applied to UNHCR for asylum. Among the post-1991 Turkmen, although in small numbers, there were also some who crossed to Europe through clandestine ways.

After the massive and sudden flight in 1991, the emigration has not come to an end. It has continued till today, even though in a decreased quantity. According to Sirkeci’s research (2005: 24), Turkmen households have a high level of migration with at least one member migrating abroad (35% of the overall Turkmen households). Ahmet Sirkeci argues that this migration appears to be forced due to their good socio-economic conditions (Ibid: 32). During our own fieldwork in Istanbul, we observed that in the post-1991 era, political and economic motivations for migrating go hand in hand. War, political turbulences and poverty are the most mentioned topics, as well as political and physical oppressions towards the Turkmen minority. Saime, who is a 30-years-old Turkmen woman from Kirkuk, arrived with her husband in Istanbul via Jordan in 1994.

“We came from Iraq in 1994 and we settled here. We could not bear the cruelty of Saddam, we run away and we came here. There were constant assaults into our houses. For instance, we are sitting here, and then we see that soldiers are jumping over the garden walls and enter into the house. (...) They were searching guns, but they were messing everything up, cupboards, wardrobes.. We were spending two days to rearrange the house after they left.” (Interview with Saime)

Besides, for the Turkmen migrants of 1991, an important motivation of departure was to escape the military service that became intolerable after all those years spent in the army.

“Living conditions in Iraq are very hard. There are poverty, famine and war. After the Gulf War, the situation became insecure and restless. Moreover, we had difficulty of livelihood there. In fact, we were starving. And I was afraid of being called again for the military service. I decided to go to Europe to have a better life with my family. Before going to Europe, we decided to go to Istanbul, because our relatives too had migrated similarly.” (Interview with Ahmet)

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65 It seems that the UNHCR in Turkey single out the Turkmen files by considering their cases ‘less urgent’ owing to the relatively warm reception by the Turkish authorities.


67 Ahmet is a 35-years-old man, with a university degree from Kirkuk. He had arrived to Istanbul with his wife and children, 9 months before the interview. At that time he had recently stopped
The principal sources of networking that facilitate the integration of Iraqi Turkmen in Turkey are the familial solidarity, knowledge of Turkish language and finally the network provided by the association. Familial ties are the first source of solidarity and help to overcome the difficulties faced during the irregular stay in Istanbul.

“We did not face great difficulty when we came here. The fact that our relatives had arrived here earlier helped us a lot for our adaptation. We did not have a place to stay when we first came here; we stayed at their houses. And above all, we benefited a lot from the support of our relatives to find a job. Probably if we did not have relatives here, we would suffer a lot.” (Interview with İhsan)

“My brother-in-law had arrived here earlier. Three of my brothers-in-law went to Canada with United Nations permission, and one of them stayed here and became Turkish citizen. In fact, we first came to his house. He helped us; we stayed at his place for a while. (...) Our family is very attached to each other, in every subject. It was the same there, as also here. If anybody needs something, everybody make a contribution. For instance, when we bought this house, my brother-in-law paid more than half of its cost, without expecting any return. We bought most of our furniture with the money sent by my brothers-in-law in Canada.” (Interview with Saime)

Turkmen are certainly advantaged thanks to their familiarity with Turkish, even though many who studied in Iraq did not know to write in Turkish. Unlike the old ones, the post-1991 arrivers are characterized by a relatively lower level of education. The general specialty of Turkmens had been their being educated; however the atrocities against them and war-related destructions in the country seem to diminish the educational credentials of the newcomers.

2.3.4 The Association and its identity cards: certificate of Turkishness

The Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (Irak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği) is the hub of Turkmen presence in the city. Even though there are a few more Turkmen associations in Istanbul, the Turkmen Association working in the construction sites and started to work in a small textile factory. Interview conducted in 16.12.2005.

68 Turkmens account for this decrease in the education level with Saddam Hussein’s ultra-nationalist policies and his attempts ‘to wipe out Turkmens’. They claim that ex-Iraqi president did not appreciate education by saying that “I do not need educated men but I need soldiers to die for me.”

69 There are also other Turkmen organizations in Istanbul: Kerkük Vakfı (Kirkuk Foundation) headed by İzzettin Kerkük in Beyoğlu, Türkmeneli İnsan Hakları Derneği (Turkmen Human Rights Association) headed by Nefi Demirci in Fatih and Irak Türkmenleri Kardeşlik ve Kültür Derneği (Iraqi Turkmen Brotherhood and Culture Association) headed by Yaşar Kevser in Osmanbey. However, none of them have a constituency as large as the Turkmen Association in Aksaray. The first two are specialized in publishing activities to raise awareness about oppressions towards Turkmens in Iraq, whereas the last one serves more as a professional association for the Turkmen businessmen in Osmanbey.
in Aksaray, is a social and cultural as well as geographical attraction center for the Iraqi Turkmen migrants, since its foundation in 1959. The association has two types of members: In the first group there are the persons who already acquired Turkish citizenship or residence and work permits for more than two years. This group consists of around 350 persons. In the second group, there are the Turkmen who do have a short-term, if any, residence permit. The association makes their registration and gives them an identity card of the association. This group is much larger and comprises 2,000 people.

The disinterest of the old migrants towards the association is mostly due to the fact all of them have a citizenship and established lives in Istanbul for long years. Until the 1990s it was very easy to get a Turkish citizenship for the Iraqi Turkmen, as asserted by many of the informants who arrived in the pre-1991 era: They acquired Turkish nationality within six months after their simple application. They thus feel less dependent to an official mediator for their daily problems.

The membership figures provided by the head of the association correspond to what is observed during the interviews with the old comers. Affiliation with the association creates a differentiation among the old Turkmen migrants. The group who stay in touch with the newcomers through the channel constructed by the association is more concerned about the political developments in Iraq and are much more nationalist, whereas others who stay away from the association are less involved in homeland issues. The latter seems to be much more assimilated into Turkish society, in socio-economic as well as political terms, in such a degree that their ties to their country of origin are gradually becoming a mere folkloric issue. The comment of an interviewee who came to Turkey in the 1960s, clarifies the distance that many old Turkmen migrants feel towards the association:

“The association has a political aspect. I never been involved into politics, this is why I am not interested in [the association]. I know those people, but I do not have a relation. In fact, the association is useful for the newcomers.” (Interview with Hasan)

Despite this aloofness of the old migrants, the association means a lot for the newcomers and serves as an important hub for them. It assists mainly legal and economic problems of its members. One of its important roles is to help them to find an employment:

“We act as a go-between for the well-behaved and polite newcomers from Iraq or for the ones who recently quit their work; we try to find them a job in Osmanbey and Laleli. Thankfully, persons who have business there notify us when they need new personnel. We mediate to get them together, and then we leave them alone.” (Interview with an employee of the Association, 22.04.2005)

The undocumented Turkmens in Istanbul are also benefiting the legal assistance of the Turkmen Association. The formalities for applying to residence permits are often administered by the staff of the association. However, what is most significant among its activities is the delivery of a special identity card, which facilitates the interaction of the undocumented Turkmen with the police. In one face of this card, there is basic information about the cardholder (name, surname, birth date, etc.). Below on the same side, it says “this cardholder is of
Turkish origin”. On the other side, there is a map of Kirkuk and its surroundings in a bright red color, and above it is written “Kirkuk is Turk and will always be so” (Kerkük Türktür, Türk kalacak). This identity card which is reassured by the nationalist feelings of Turkish policemen serves as the unofficial residence permit for many Iraqi turkmen who arrived recently.

The association does not have an official service to find accommodation; nonetheless they help newcomers to find a residence thanks to the information disseminated from mouth to ear. They have a better organization for health services: the representatives of the association made an agreement with a hospital in Beyazıt for a 50-60% discount to Turkmen patients. Similarly, they benefit the solidarity networks of Turkmen doctors, often from the previous generation of Turkmen migration, for the medical treatment of undocumented Turkmen migrants who are unable to use public health services. Last but not the least they organize social events like picnics or special nights at restaurants. All these events together with the activities carried in the house of the association help to build a social space that the Turkmen link up.

2.3.5 Ethnic business in Osmanbey and Laleli

Commerce is an important economic activity for the Turkmens’ socio-economic incorporation. Thanks to their linguistic capital, knowledge of Turkish as well as Arabic, they are one of the biggest groups who sell textile and other products to Gulf and North African countries in shops located in Laleli and Osmanbey. Turkmens seem to date back to the 1980s in Laleli when the first migrants, after the students of the 1960s began to arrive to Istanbul. While few benefited from the economic capital they could bring from Iraq, most of them started ‘from the bottom’ by working in the shops as sale persons or interpreter for the Arab clientele.

“In the past there were plenty of Arabs; this was our chance. We worked as interpreter for them; we acted as brokers (komisyoncu) and we got hold of a position in the market. We started our own business. Similar to the Russians who made rich the Bosniacs, Arabs made us rich.” (Interview with Nefi70)

There are basically two groups who work with the Arab clientele: the Mardinli and Iraqi Turkmen. According to the accounts of the Turkmen shop owners, the Mardinli have recently appeared in this business in the last ten years. As a matter of fact, there is a competition between these two and the Iraqi whom we interviewed expressed their feelings of dislike quite openly:

“The people from the East steal from the merchandise; if they write size forty on a cloth, they produce it two sizes smaller, just to profit from the material. In particular, the Mardinli do this a lot: they are very swindler, freeloader. They think they are smart but they harm both the customer and Turkey. Certainly, sooner or later customers run away. (...) The only thing they know is money, money, money. Don’t misunderstand, maybe it is not only the Mardinli, but these

70 Nefi was at this time director of an export company in Laleli. He immigrated in 1986, at age 21 and since then “worked in all kind of jobs in Laleli”, such as sale person, interpreter-guide. Interview on 7.7.2005, in Laleli.
men do not have a work ethic. They say they will deliver the good in that day, but then you wait weeks and weeks to receive it. For us, work ethic is the most important thing. If we give our word, we accomplish it whatever happens.” (Interview with Nefi)

The unfriendliness between the Mardinli and Turkmen is also related to different careers they pursue. While Mardinli are often shop owners in Laleli (Deli 2002), most of the Turkmen are specialized in the export companies. These are cargo firms that mediate between wholesalers and Arab customers for the transportation as well as arrangement of the merchandise bought. Their earnings are based on a TVA (Katma Değer Vergisi) they collect from the state out of the amount processed; thus they need to receive official invoices in order to get their share.

“People from the East and Southeast want to become rich through the shortcut. They do not like official business; actually they don’t even know it. In the past, they were smugling in the borders, they still think the same way here. Asking invoice appears them strange. That discipline of smuggling doesn’t work out here. When you ask invoice, they say ‘don’t bother the invoice’, they suppose they can do business this way.” (Interview with Ömer71)

Iraq is the new dazzling target-customer for export-oriented shops and cargo companies in Laleli and Osmanbey. Many Turkmen companies who were once targeting Arabs from the Gulf countries and Maghreb are now having a closer relationship with Iraqi customers. One of the Turkmen firms that we visited during the fieldwork has been the biggest foreign trade company that transports goods for Arab countries, including Iraq. According to their accounts, commerce with Iraq has started in 1996-1997, however in a very limited capacity because of the embargo: at that time it was only possible to send food, and to a lesser extent some textile “if the companies could arrange custom guards who would close the eyes”. Since 2003, there is a significant boom in the commerce with Iraq, in particular with the easy access to passport and freedom of export and import in the country. Even though it is not possible to verify, Turkmen businessmen in Laleli argue that the volume of commerce with Iraq is 4-5 million USD yearly.

“There were Iraqi customers in the past too, however, after the fall of Saddam when it became possible to get a passport and to carry out American dollar, there happened an explosion. Before the fall of Saddam, Kurds were collecting very high duties on the custom. They were charging half a dollar for each trousers or shirt; if you calculate it for each large truck it made three to four thousand dollars. After his fall, they did not intervene for a while, now they establish a

71 Ömer came from Kirkuk in 1994 and worked in various companies as a % 50 shareholder until 1998 when he started his own export company in Laleli. They convey textile and construction merchandise mostly to Iraq, but also to other Middle Eastern countries, including Syria and Lebanon. Interview on 7.7.2005, in Laleli.
custom system with lower duties than before: they charge 100-200 dollars for each truck.” (Interview with Tarık)

Even though commerce in Laleli seems to be part of informal economy, states have a significant role in shaping the volume and direction of these flows. The embargoes, custom duties, granting visa permits, TVA payments are all instruments used by the authorities to control how and who benefit from this business. Correspondingly, Turkish state subtly privileges Turkmen in the growing commerce with Iraq. The Iraqi customers unsurprisingly are relatives of the Turkmen merchants in Istanbul who do buy mostly textile products and construction equipments.

“Commerce with Iraq started before the fall of Saddam, yet it now goes on in a growing speed. We send goods to our relatives in Iraq and they sell them little by little. Life isn’t stopped there, it continues; and they want to dress up nicely too. (…) Turkey impedes visa procedures of non-Turkmens from Iraq, so that they want to punish the Kurds for what they do to us.” (Interview with Ömer)

Ethnic business targeting Arab customers provided an important employment niche for the Iraqi Turkmen who migrated in the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike the ones who came for educational reasons in the 1960s, Turkmen who arrived in the later decades, took advantage of the flourishing informal sector, in particular of the commercial centers in Laleli and Osmanbey. Nevertheless, prosperous years of suitcase trade did not last long and the golden years of 1996-97 ended with a stagnation period that still somehow reigns in Laleli and Osmanbey markets (Pérouse 2002).

Competition with China, overvaluation of the Turkish currency and regularization attempts of the Turkish authorities by putting high taxes on the unregistered export activities play a part in the shrinking of the market. The recently arrived Turkmen, who thus lose one of the important grounds of employment, face difficulties resembling what other undocumented migrants in the country experience. Ahmet, who arrived nine months ago from Kirkuk, articulates these problems very clearly:

“At the beginning I worked in the construction, and then painted houses. Now I am working in a textile workshop. Our work hours are very long and exhausting. I was working in difficult conditions in Iraq too, but I don’t remember that I had ever been so tired. I work very hard but I earn very little. I can’t receive what I deserve. Changing job is not a solution. When you are a migrant they always treat you the same way. At the end, I am working without security and for a little salary. We can’t say a word because we are migrants.” (Interview with Ahmet)

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72 Tarık is a Turkmen in his mid-30s and he is working in Company T since 1991 when he arrived. All the Turkmen shop owners directed me towards this company which they designated as the biggest Turkmen firm in Laleli. I was quite surprised when I entered the firm, which was, in sharp contrast to other Turkmen shops in Laleli, in a complete Islamic decoration: no men without beard, “selamünaleyküm” as the only greeting word and pictures of Hajj and other sacred places on the walls. Interview on 8.7.2005, in Laleli.
The very recently arrived within the Iraqi Turkmen community in Istanbul, is in a precarious position. A 15 years-old-boy working as a sale person in a shoe shop in Gedikpaşa owned by a Turkmen and Bulgarian Turk told that he had been working in various jobs since age 13. He emigrated with his family from Kirkuk five years ago and he had to work together with his older sister to secure their living. He could not attend school due to economic hardship as well the absence of residence permits which is required for the enrollment into primary schools in Turkey.

Nevertheless, despite the legal obstacles that hinder newcomers to acquire official documents, face-to-face interactions with the state, i.e. encounters with the police, is relatively softer for the Turkmen:

“I don’t have a residence [permit], I am clandestine, but the police close their eyes. They rather catch the Arabs or the Kurds. It is now very difficult to obtain residence, but the police do not touch the Turkmen, they sympathize with us and they tolerate.” (Interview with Muhammed73)

An important obstacle for the newcomers’ incorporation has been the difficulty of obtaining Turkish nationality. Many Turkmens, who easily acquired citizenship until the last five years, highlight the difficulty of getting citizenship, even a residence permit, for the recently arrived. Actually, very few of the Turkmens who arrived after 2000 could obtain citizenship. This is probably related to the population politics of the Turkish state that prefers the Turkmen to stay in Iraq rather than immigrate. To sum up, even though it can be argued that the incorporation of the Iraqi Turkmen has been facilitated by their ethnic origin, i.e. their ‘Turkishness’, as seen above there have been periods that this ethnic affiliation has turned to be a disadvantage due to the changes in the foreign policy of the Turkish state towards Iraq.

2.4. IRAQI ASSYRO-CHALDEANS: Religious Networks and ‘Deliberate Indifference’

2.4.1 A community en route: Iraqi Assyro-Chaldeans74

The recent Iraqi Christian emigration has begun as a consequence of worsening conditions during the 1991 Gulf War and has been going on since then

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73 Muhammed came from Iraq in 1998, in age 18, to escape the military service after seeing his older brother’s destiny who spent many years in the Iraqi army and five more in the Iranian prisons. Since his arrival he has been working in various shops in Osmanbey thanks to his relatives’ assistance. As a single man, he lives in Kurtuluş, like many of his colleagues working in Osmanbey. (Interview on 12.8.2005, in Osmanbey)

74 The information on this section is substantiated by my previous research on Iraqi Christian transit migration (Danış, 2005).
in small but constant way. Aiming to get out of Iraq as soon as possible, Assyro-Chaldeans first head off to Turkey, Jordan or Syria in order to initiate their applications for affluent third countries and thus perform a step migration since they cannot reach their preferred destinations directly. The religious identities that restrict their political participation and access to economic resources in Iraq and eventually engender their exile, turns into a crucial instrument for easing the difficulties they face in the migration process.

The Iraqi Christians, who have been en route to developed countries via Istanbul, is an intriguing example among the other migrant groups reckoning Turkey as a ‘waiting room’. With an educated guess, we can suggest that currently there is a population of three to four thousand persons, with constant ins and outs. In total, some hundred-thousand of Iraqi Christians have used this route to reach their final destinations such as Australia or Canada in the course of twenty years of incessant migration. The Christians in Iraq, a minority who is supposed to be around half a million currently, constituted 3% of the Iraqi society and had a two times more population three decades ago (Heyberger 2003). This means that in the last two decades some half a million Iraqi Christians have run away to the West via transit countries surrounding Iraq.

The Assyro-Chaldeans are considered among the ancient Christian communities living in the Middle East (Joseph 1961; Valognes 1994). Christian minorities of Iraq have been in a vulnerable position, similar to other communities in the country, due to the environment of instability that has been going on for the last 25 years in Iraq. First, the Iran-Iraq War, then the incidents of the Gulf War in 1991 worsened conditions of life. The increasing level of oppression against dissidents in the aftermath of the Gulf War and decreasing life standards as a result of political instability and economic embargoes induced a massive emigration of Iraqis (Mannaert 2003; Van Hear 1995). And finally, after the fall of Saddam Hussein, sharing the difficulties of the prevalent chaos with other Iraqi citizens, Christians are further threatened due to accusations of being collaborators of the United States. They thus face incidents of persecution, such as assaults to churches, intimidation of Christian youngsters, kidnappings, religious discrimination in the schools and other public spaces.

“We came in July 2003 from Mosul. I was working as taxi driver before the war [in 2003] but my taxi put on fire during the war, I could not ask who did it. After the war the situation became harder for Christians. Shiites discriminates Christians and Muslims. My son was the only Assyrian in his school, all the other kids were blamed him saying that ‘you are Christian, you called the Americans’. Every afternoon, we were waiting anxiously for his return from the school. After a while we could not bear anymore and we left.” (Interview with Varda, 35 years-old man, married with two children).

75 Catholic Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syrian Orthodoxes and Armenians are the main Christian minority groups in Iraq, of which the Chaldeans constitute the largest (Yakan, 2002: 18). In this paper, I interchangeably use Christians and Chaldeans since almost all of the Iraqi Christian migrants in Istanbul are belonging to this sect. Statements made on Chaldeans apply for other Christians as well.

76 Chaldeans split from Assyrians in 1553 and united to the Catholic Church. Despite this separation, Assyrians and Chaldeans have very similar rituals and traditions.
The migratory movement of Iraqi Chaldean community in the last twenty years operates as both a chain migration and a refugee movement owing to the collapse of the political and social order in Iraq. The blurring of the dichotomy between political and economic migrants complicates to differentiate labor migration and refugee movements (Hein 1993; Chatelard 2002). The same is valid for Iraqi Christians too; the increasing discrimination against their Christian identities in their daily lives on the one hand, and day-by-day worsening life standards due to embargoes and economic constraints on the other, reinforce their determination to emigrate. Whatever the primary reason is, their religious identity is one of the pertinent factors in their departure from Iraq. In his study on emigration of Kurds of Turkey, Ibrahim Sirkeci (2005) remarks that the environment of ethnic conflict in Turkey for the last twenty years acts out as a push factor as well as an opportunity framework for those potential migrants who do not have the necessary means to realize this aspiration. Parallel conditions exist for the case of Christian Iraqis; while discrimination against their religious identity enforces them to leave the country, the misconduct they have endured as members of a minority group qualifies them for a refugee status or for humanitarian protection. In short, being deprived of the most basic means of sustenance, including protection for their life, renders the classical distinction of forced/voluntary or economic/political migration insignificant.

2.4.2 Social Networks of the Assyro-Chaldeans

Two factors seem to be crucial for the organization of Iraqi Christian migration: these are kin- and religion-based social networks. Facilitating and encouraging role of the migrant networks have been observed in various migratory contexts (Boyd 1989; Gurak & Caces 1992; Pessar 1999). Social networks of migrants are often conceived as an independent factor sustaining the continuation of migration after it starts out (Massey et.al. 1998; Brettel 2000). They have an influential role in designating migration routes and in getting over the difficulties that have been encountered during transit migration period as well. The pioneers of the Iraqi Christian emigration, those who had departed in the early 1990s and now residing mostly in Australia and Canada, establish an important basis of support for today’s migrants; they provide invaluable assistance at several steps such as departure from Iraq, arrival to Istanbul, and further on. Transit migrants in Istanbul benefit from their ‘successful’ relatives’ help in order to overcome the economic straits they have gone through during the stern waiting period which amount two to five years (at exceptional cases lasting more than seven years). Fadiya a 65 years-old widowed woman illustrates the role of family network in the migration process:

“Life was very difficult in Iraq. My son in Australia told us to come first to Istanbul and then to Australia. We could not yet receive an answer to our

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77 Nevertheless, for the ease of expression I use the term migrant in this section.

78 By the estimates of the Australian department of immigration, Iraq-born immigrants constitute one of the fastest growing groups, and Assyro-Chaldeans come first within Iraqi population in Australia. According to the figures of 2001 census, the largest group among the people of Iraqi origin, a population of 24,760, is the community of Assyro-Chaldean descent with 40% (9,710 people). It has been reported that over 40,000 Iraqi of Assyro-Chaldean descent resides in Australia by the end of 2003 (http://www.immi.gov.au).
application. My son left Iraq six years ago; he stayed for a while in Greece and two years ago he went to Australia. He thinks of us all the time, he calls once or twice every month. He sends us money too, otherwise we would not be able to pay the rent.” (Fadiya arrived in Istanbul in early 2003 together with his two sons and a daughter aging between 24 and 35)

On their arrival at Istanbul, newcomers stay for a while near the relatives who came before; ‘veterans’ open up their houses to the newly arrived and show the delicacies of living and being a migrant in Istanbul. The people without relatives relate that they have gone through miseries upon their arrival having to stay at hotels for a while, especially unnerved by being unable to speak Turkish and lack of relatives to guide them through.

“When we came to Istanbul, my sister was here, they received us. She came in 1999 and spent almost four years here before they went to Australia. They helped us in every sense. After a while we rented a place of our own. All my relatives are in Australia, there is nobody left back in Iraq, I was the last one. Me too, I want to go to Australia. We came here after we sold all our belongings. There is not even a cigarette behind.” (Bes, 39 years old man, arrived in 2002 with his wife, five children and his 69-years-old mother).

Religious ties constitute a more pertinent means for survival than familial networks during Iraqi Christians’ temporary stay in Istanbul. Religion, which is the most fundamental element in the Iraqi Christian social organization and self-identification, enables them to get hold of a wider social network and helps them sustain their lives in the period of dire straits during the transit migration period.

The role of religion in the process of international migration has been evaluated from different angles. The classical perspective conceives religion as a source of social, economic and psychological assistance for migrants’ adaptation and integration into host society. Hirschman (2003), for instance, points at the church organizations’ role as information sharing communities, enhancing survival strategies and socioeconomic opportunities of migrants, in his account on migrants in the United States. In the same way, Orlando Mella emphasizes psycho-social benefits of religion for exile communities. She emphasizes the role of religion in enhancing mental integrity in the life of Chilean refugees in Sweden (Mella 1994). Reaffirmation of traditional beliefs through religion provides cognitive means to begin a new life in an unfamiliar setting where migrants feel themselves alien. Religion also provides a sense of belonging in cases of forced migration; refugee communities embrace religion to reclaim and rebuild their history and culture. References to religious identities and symbols foster the reconstitution of the community (Stelaku 2003).

Agreeing to Vasquez (2003), I believe that one should consider micro, meso and macro contexts simultaneously in order to better understand the embeddedness of religious practices and institutions. Below, three remarkable aspects that religion plays in the process of Iraqi Christian transit migration are analyzed. Firstly, from a religious organizational context, I scrutinize the role of religion in creating a social network that Catholic Chaldeans benefit from. Then, I portray distinguished position of priests in these religious networks. Finally, I
focus on the impact of Turkish state in shaping the boundaries and the content of this network.

2.4.3 Religious Networks: Church as the center of community

The secularization paradigm, which assumed a gradual secularization of migrants and public decline of religion as a result of social change related to migration process, has been challenged by many scholars recently. More and more researchers recognize the significance of religion and indicate the role of religious participation in adaptation and integration of migrants (Levitt 2001, Ebaugh & Chafetz 2002). Religiosity is a frequently observed phenomenon among new immigrants (Hirschman 2003). Particularly, soon after arrival, migrants seek to participate in religious ceremonies which provide a spiritual calm to endure the difficulties of adjusting to a new life. As Handlin puts it, religion becomes a bridge that connects the old world with the new (Handlin 1973, cited by Hirschmann, 2003, 7). Father George a famous person in the community summarizes the significance of religion for the Chaldeans in Istanbul:

“We are foreigner here, we have to be together all the time. This is why we all live in the same neighborhoods. This is why the Sunday mass is so important for us”. (see box no.1)

High religiosity of new migrants is also observed in churches in Istanbul. Local churches that have gradually lost their original members are now filled up by foreigners. On Sundays, a heterogeneous crowd -including Filipinos, Africans, Iraqis, Iranians, Poles and others- get together in the churchyard and form a formidable tower of Babel while waiting for the turn of their service.

Religion has certainly a more important meaning for a community who is in a religious minority status both in the departure and arrival countries. Accordingly, a major source of support for Iraqi Christians during their migration is the social networks interwoven around church and affiliated institutions. They create a religious milieu that both replenish feelings of belonging and identity, and provide socioeconomic opportunities during the transit period they stay in Turkey. In addition to moral support, churches provide material services such as occasion of social interaction, information sharing on housing or job opportunities, education facilities for children, provision of food, clothing or medical assistance and so on. Churches and other religious institutions thus serve as a fundamental source of support for the practical problems.

The central spatial element for Iraqi Christian community in Istanbul is the church of Catholic Italians in Beyoglu which is used at the service of Chaldeans since their abrupt arrival. Chaldeans are dwelling in run-down city center districts like Tarlabasi, Dolapdere, Elmadag and Kurtulus, in the vicinity of the church and Caritas79. This residential concentration is also remarkable since they were once populated by native Christian population who gradually left the country by the mid-20th century. Sunday rituals held at the church provide a unique occasion to gather the community together. A minimum of 200-300 Iraqi Chaldeans

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79 Caritas is a Catholic charity organization offering basic social services such as legal consultation, education, provision of food and clothing to Iraqi Christians.
participate in the Mass, which play a notable social role in reinforcing the relations among members of community, hence serving as a channel of solidarity. The chats after the prayer in the yard of the Catholic church constitutes a lively social field where job opportunities for youngsters are discussed, anxieties are exchanged or possibilities of further migration are consulted. Having lunch together after the church and performing house visits within the community, Sundays becomes a remarkable socialization day for Chaldean transit migrants in Istanbul.

Apart from offering religious service to Chaldean Catholic Iraqi migrants, Church officials of the Chaldean Church in Istanbul arrange semi-official meetings with institutions like governorship and foreigners’ bureau in the General Security Department. They look up to the cases of Chaldean Iraqis, who got into trouble with police or cannot get a permission to leave country for being unable to complete the papers in spite of gaining admission from a third country. In brief, they ‘keep an eye on them’, a situation resembling the millet system of the Ottoman period, that is the model of governance where non–Muslim communities were both overseen and been represented officially by their religious leaders (Mardin 1990, 39). Given that most of the Chaldeans are undocumented during their stay in Turkey due to entering Turkey without passport or overstaying their visa in due course, such an intervention before the police officials is of utmost importance.

The eminence of religion for Chaldean Iraqi migrants does not come to an end there. Most of the Chaldeans in Istanbul either works near a non-Muslim, Istanbululite family or rents a house owned by a local non-Muslim. In this sense, the limits of the network that Chaldeans in Istanbul inhabit are marked by Christianity. ‘Intermediaries’ or ‘brokers’ between Chaldean Iraqi migrants and natives of Istanbul, who make connections on the housing and employment concerns, are the church watchmen, who are recognized by almost all recently-arrived Chaldean families in Istanbul. Connecting the Chaldean migrants to non-Muslim Istanbululite employers and landlords, these church employees act as a bridge connecting two social networks, in the sense employed by Granovetter (1973), hence conducing to the incorporation of Chaldean Iraqis with strong internal ties to a wider social milieu through the link of Oriental Christianity. As such, Christian Iraqi families rent the houses owned by non-Muslim Istanbululites; Chaldean girls are employed at their households as babysitters and cleaning-ladies. Sara’s story of how she found her first job is typical in this sense:

“\textit{When we first came here, we went to the Assyrian Catholic church on our first Sunday in Istanbul. We said that we had just arrived; we explained our situation to the priest. He advised my mom that there is such a job for girls; he enthusiastically told that it is a good job and he convinced my mom. The next day, me and my sister got prepared and went [to the church] to meet the people; they told us to start one week later. So on the fifteenth day of our arrival, we began to work.”}

Sara and her older sister began to work at age 13 and 14 due to the meagre amount of monetary resources they could bring from their homeland. In other families whose economic conditions are better, daughters work at a later age. All Iraqi Christian girls looking for ‘a job at a house’ receive their information from the churches. Churches and church personnel are the glue in Iraqi Christians’
social networks that serve as ‘sources for the acquisition of scarce means, such as capital and information’ (Portes 1995: 8). The ‘intermediaries’ between Chaldean Iraqi migrants and natives of Istanbul, who make connections on the housing and employment fronts, are priests or church staff. The networking mechanism works like this: Newly arrived Iraqi Christians inform the church staff of their need for a job during the Sunday service. Then the staff distribute the news to local non-Muslim women who are looking for a household worker. The two steps of the recruitment happen by word of mouth and take place in the church, through the mediation of the church personnel, known by all the recently-arrived Iraqi families. Connecting the Iraqi migrants to non-Muslim Istanbulite employers, church personnel act as a bridge linking two social networks, in the sense employed by Granovetter (1973). They thus help the incorporation of Iraqi Chaldeans marked by strong internal ties into a wider social milieu through the link of Christianity and assist them in building an Iraqi Christian ethnic niche in the domestic work sector.

In accordance with the employment pattern of Iraqi Christian domestic service workers, unmarried girls work in live-in arrangements, whereas married women take daily house cleaning jobs. In both cases, the employers are members of the local Assyrian community. 19-year-old Jaklin answers explicitly the question why they do not work at Turkish (i.e. Muslim) households:

“Because we do not have a circle of relations. Because we do not know any other circle. If you know people, they will tell you when there will be a job, but because you do not have acquaintances, you can’t do it. Here, Assyrians are better known, besides they know each other, they inform each other and then tell us. We then go.”

Membership in a social network is generally based on ascriptive criteria, such as ethnicity, gender and religion and social capital refers to ‘individual’s ability to mobilize them on demand’ (Portes, 1995: 12-13). For Iraqi Christians, religious affiliations serve as the main social capital and offer them a potential resource, which is apparently embedded in the overall network of social interactions (Schmitter-Heisler 2000: 83).

Despite all its positive aspects, the Iraqi Christian religious social network has oppressive and exclusionary characteristics as well. One should not imagine this social milieu as a setting organized merely on principles of solidarity and consensus (Pessar 1999). It also includes hierarchies of power and community control mechanisms and creates an order of discipline and punishment in the transit period. It is mostly younger members of the community who suffer most, since they are better incorporated into mainstream society owing to their work experiences. In brief, religion which serves as an important means of survival, easily develops into an apparatus of social control to enhance safeguarding of communal norms and attitudes and create generational conflicts as well.
2.4.4 Caritas: social services for the Assyro-Chaldeans

Another branch of Iraqi Christians’ religious social network is the Catholic charity organization, Caritas, which offers basic social services. Being a Catholic organization of humanitarian aid, development and social services, Caritas gives support to Chaldean Catholic Iraqis, especially on legal matters; it looks over the paperwork for those who have applied for United Nations High Commissary for Refugees to attain refugee status and makes connections with the representatives of countries admitting immigrants based on sponsorship system, like Australia and Canada. In the year 2000 only, Caritas-Turkey has followed up the forms of 745 Iraqis, as stated in the leaflet of the organization. In 2004, they opened 328 new files (which makes approximately 1312 people in 2004). According to Caritas, the decrease in the number of Iraqis arriving in Turkey compared to the period before war is because of the closure of the borders between Iraq and Turkey just after the war.

They also provide counseling services whose “main targets are to provide information, give advice and guide the migrants, asylum seekers or refugees regarding their needs. This service also provides a reliable source of information and opportunity to discuss the various legal options that may exist for the client”.

In addition to these services, they deliver food, clothing and urgent medical aid to the needy migrants. Another important service is the provision of education to the children of Christian Iraqi families who cannot attend to public schools for not having official residence permit to stay in Turkey. Basically, they teach English before leaving for Australia and Canada in language courses, in addition to rudimentary subjects at a modest level. Caritas and church also step in favor of Chaldean men and women to find employment in the wide informal sector of the country.

2.4.5 Priests at the center of the religious network

In the Iraqi Christian case, similar to other migrant communities, the nodal point of religious life is religious leaders, who have a special eminence to maintain communal bonds and to transmit the long-established values and attitudes. In Chaldean tradition, priests were eminent figures in the past, as much as they have been today, having a say on affairs of the community life. Coming of the priests to the forefront occurred mainly in the 19th century, dating a turning point for Chaldeans and Assyrians. The 19th century, setting the stage for great political and social turmoil in the Ottoman territory witnessed the destabilization of the existing order that had prevailed for centuries. The two main stimulating factors behind this breakdown were the Western-inspired Ottoman centralization reforms that extended to the eastern provinces and the proliferation of American and British missionary activities in the region (Bruinessen 2003: 268-301). Abrogation of the Kurdish emirates neighboring Chaldeans and Assyrians by the Ottoman authorities and the missionary activities oriented to Christian minority

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80 Caritas-Turkey is a member of the Caritas Internationalis confederation, based in Rome and represented in 198 countries. Caritas office in Turkey has been founded in 1950 by Domenico Caloveras, director of the Greek Catholic community back then, and moved to its current location at Harbiye in 1985 (Danis & Kayaalp, 2004).

dwelling in the region bred sentiments of fear and suspicion among Kurds, which later on led to massacres targeting these Christian groups in the second half of the 19th century (Yonan 1999). This period, occupying a noteworthy place in the collective memory of Assyrians and Chaldeans, occasioned the emerging of religious leaders who assumed political roles in Christians, as well as in Kurds (Bruinessen 2003: 277). The head of Hakkari-based patriarchate of Assyrians, patriarch Mar Shimun, acted as both religious authority and political representative negotiating with neighboring Kurdish tribes and Ottoman tax-collectors (Foggo 2002: 21). The patriarch was also the leading person in the emigration of Assyrians from Hakkari to Urmiyah and eventually to Iraq which was under British rule in 1918 (Joseph 1961: 163).

In these years of turbulence, religion-based social organization and religious leaders became even more crucial for Assyrians and Chaldeans. In the course of the shift from the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire to various nation-states, religion became the major agent of the definition of group identity and the making of social structure for stateless minorities like Assyrians and Chaldeans. Religious leaders undertook a unifying role during times of exile and resettlement thus bolstered their social and political power over the community. Correspondingly the Chaldean migration from Northern Iraqi countryside to urban areas such as Baghdad and Mosul in the 1960’s and 1970s was influenced by the relocation of the Chaldean patriarchate to Baghdad in 1950.

Religious leaders also played significant roles in the mass migration of Assyrian and Chaldean community from Iraq in 1988-1992. The 1992 influx of asylum-seekers, making up one of the major refugee movements of the 20th century, consisted mostly of Kurds, as well as Assyro-Chaldeans, Turkmens and Arabs of Northern Iraq. The pioneers of Christian emigration have been mentioned in the reports of those days; for instance, it has been recorded that three thousand people comprising more than the half of Silopi temporary refugee camp were Christians, that is to say, Chaldean, Assyrian and Syrian Orthodox (Kaynak 1992: 147). Even at such a sudden displacement, religion was a significant aspect of the Christian asylum seekers; in Silopi one of the three main sections of the camp was allocated to Christians who had immediately established a tent-church. An article published in Le Monde in those days, reports that 500 Chaldeans lodged in the temporary settlement in Silopi communicated their request to be accepted as refugees by European countries through their priests (cited in Kaynak 1992).

Priests stand out as the main actors of the current migration too; they are the most notable personalities of the Chaldean community in Istanbul. Priests of the local Chaldean church in Istanbul and the ones affiliated to Caritas perform the role of a go-between between Turkish authorities and the migrant community, whereas Iraqi or European priests who wander in different cities of the Middle East contribute to build a transnational social space organized around religion. These persons can appropriately be called ‘transnational professional’ possessing a high prestige and social recognition in the eyes of the migrant community (Cook 2002). Iraqi Chaldean priests have attended the application procedures of the community members in addition to their religious duties. In short, these priests have a prominent role in constructing an extensive religious space.

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82 Interview with UNHCR field assistant, 23.12.2004.
Father George⁸³ is an intriguing example for the eminence of religious figures in Iraqi Chaldean migration. He is one of the most known figures of the Iraqi Christian community in Istanbul. He stayed in Turkey for around two years and left for Canada in the end of 2003, with the aim of working as religious personnel for the recently migrated Chaldean community; he thus departed for Canada with his work permit, a fact that increased his reputation among his compatriots. The responsibility of Father George in Canada is not only religious leadership; he also acts as ‘the boss’ of the community in the small Canadian town. He is in charge of the communitarian sponsorship system and selects families ‘to be invited’ under the community quota, some 20-25 families every year. While he was still in Istanbul, he had made a detailed research on the families of a lower possibility of admission. He had then earned considerable social capital and admiration in the eyes of Chaldean migrants for his diligence on the details of application and admission procedures, like file numbers and form sheets. As a transnational professional, Father George had contacts with migrant- and refugee-related institutions as well, such as ICMC (International Catholic Migration Committee), IOM (International Organization for Migration) and of course Caritas. He was also in touch with Australian and Canadian Consulates when he was in Istanbul.

2.4.6 The limits of socio-economic incorporation through religious ties

State policies and institutional arrangements have serious implications on the Assyro-Chaldean migrants’ socio-economic integration in Turkey. The ‘institutional capacity’ of Chaldean or Catholic religious structures in Turkey is not very strong, compared to American and European cases. In the United States, the absence of state religion, religiously pluralist setting and highly religious society provide a favorable environment for religious congregations working in favor of migrant communities in addition to encouraging migrants’ religious participation (Hirschman 2003). The highly secular European system on the contrary does not encourage migrants’ religious activities (the last headscarf debate in France, for instance). However, it still recognizes religious groups’ rights of institutionalization. In Turkey, that is a nation-state based on predominantly Sunni-Turkish population, two factors seem to be most significant in setting the context: The adoption of laicism as a founding ideology of the new Republic and the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, which have resulted in the official recognition of only three religious communities (Greeks, Armenians and Jews) as minorities. These two principles hinder the development of community services to be offered to Iraqi Assyro-Chaldean Christians. The weakness of institutional representation of local religious minorities in Turkey (unlike the ‘millet’ system of Ottoman Empire which allowed a legitimate representation of religious communities) has thus a negative impact for the construction of a transnational religious field.

Notwithstanding the engaging work of Catholic networks worldwide and their attention to refugees and migrants, it needs to be stated that Chaldean Church in Istanbul is a member of neither the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) nor the Catholic Near Eastern Welfare Association (CNEWA). The reasons of this

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detachment are distrustful and precautionary state policies towards non-Muslim minorities and ‘the fear from missionary activities’ that may occur due to the potential development of such inter- and trans-national connections. The absence of reliable reception and admission policies towards asylum-seekers and migrants, as well as skeptical attitude towards Christian minorities influence the range of social space that Iraqi Christian migrants may benefit from. While social networks established at religiously plural contexts contribute substantially to the sustenance of migrants (Hagan, 2002), such networks seem to be relatively sluggish in Turkish transit country context. In short, the extent of the transnational religious space of Christian migrants in Turkey seems to be delimited through state regulations.
3. AFGHANIS IN ZEYTINBURNU:
A CROSS BETWEEN ‘PERMANENCY’ AND ‘TRANSITION’\textsuperscript{84}

Turkey lacks a common border with Afghanistan however specifically the last quarter century has been witness to considerable movement of Afghans to Turkey. The recent history of movement of Afghans to Turkey dates back to 1982-83 when the then Turkish President Kenan Evren officially invited some 4000 Afgans of Turkish origin in 1982 and then again 1200 in 1983 to move to Turkey as residents of the country.

These individuals were invited to Turkey based upon the 2641 Numbered Special Law and were provided with permanent residency, which included the right to employment, education and the attainment of Turkish citizenship. These individuals were initially kept in quarantine in the city of Adana for some months and then dispersed to various regions within the country. These regions were mainly in the center, south and south east of Turkey, as the table 3.1 indicates.

This was the only official regularized act of migration between the two countries. An offspring of the migration of 6200 Afghan Turks into Turkey has been a steady stream of ‘family reunification’ or ‘migration through marriage’. Asides from this ‘official’ migration, Afghans of all ethnic backgrounds, not just Turkic, have entered Turkey legally with documents or have been smuggled into the country in order to seek asylum or a safer, calmer life. Also every year the Turkish government offers a number of scholarships to Afghan students so they may enter and study at Turkish universities.

\textsuperscript{84} Cherie Taraghi. Cultural orientation trainer, ICMC-Turkey. Poyraçık sok. No.35, Nişantaş, Şişli, Istanbul. taraghi@icmc.net
### Table 3.1 - 1982 Migrant Afghan Families: Settled Location and Family Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Type of residence</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Family</td>
<td>Urban Family</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Population No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOKAT</td>
<td>Artova-Yeşil Yurt</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HATAY</td>
<td>Reyhanlı-Horlak</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.ANTEP</td>
<td>Merkez</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ş.URFA</td>
<td>C.Pınar</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAN</td>
<td>Erci-Altindere</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1130</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAYSERİ</td>
<td>Merkez</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>792</td>
<td>3191</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1006 Families 4163 Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Köy Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü Information for 1983 is not available.

Interview participants were asked to provide a date for their arrival into Turkey. The dates, the related narratives and statistics maintained by organizations such as ICMC and UNHCR indicate the following chronological pattern. Throughout the 1980s, there was a small but regular flow of Afghans, particularly single young men into Turkey, most of who were subsequently resettled to other countries through the UNHCR and refugee programs. This was followed by a lag in the flow of Afghans into Turkey in the 1990s, which is confirmed by statistics maintained by the Resettlement Program at ICMC. These indicate that no Afghan cases were presented by UNHCR for resettlement between 1992 and 1998. The rate of the movement of Afghans into Turkey picked up once more in 2001. This can be seen in the substantial number of individuals interviewed who have come to Turkey since that date.

An interesting contradiction can be noted between the comments made by Afghan Turkmen participants who arrived in the 1980s and individuals who have arrived since 2001. Most of the Afghan Turkmen insisted that the rate of Afghan migration to Turkey has dwindled to zero and there are almost no ‘asylum seekers’ any more.

‘Almost everyone living here is Afghan Turkmen. Of course there are a lot of other Afghans here too. We are all Afghans and there is no difference between us. But still most of us are Turkmen. In the past, before 2001 there used to be more
Afghans of other backgrounds- Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns. Most of them would arrive illegally and they would apply for asylum, then they would leave Turkey for Europe. We don’t have asylum seekers anymore. Now almost everyone here is legal.’ (Abdul Majid, Male, Mid-30s, Arrived in 1987)

Interviews conducted with numerous asylum seekers who have arrived since 2001, mainly since 2003 indicate a different reality from the perception offered by the more established Afghan Turkmen. More recently arrived Afghans indicate that a large number of Asylum seekers fled to Iran and Pakistan following the American led attack in 2001 and many came to Turkey due to growing difficulties for asylum seekers or refugees, including the establishment of a UNHCR run repatriation program in Iran. Although they are vague on numbers and rather uncomfortable when probed about possibilities for further migration other than applying for refugee status and possible 3rd Country Resettlement by UNHCR, all recently arrived Afghans indicate that there are many more individuals like themselves.

Due to the fluid state of legal and irregular migration of Afghans into Turkey it is difficult to offer any statistics about the population of Afghans living in Turkey. No known records have been kept of the progress of the 6200 Afghan Turkmen who were invited in 1982-83, although there is a trace of occasional newspaper articles referring to the ‘surprising’ fact that there are 1000s of Afghans living amidst the Turks or the fact that Afghans have been very successful in establishing themselves as leaders in the ‘leather market’ in their regions of residence, in particular in Antakya. (For example an article in Hurriyet Newspaper dated 10/09/2002) Similarly it is possible to find reference to their ‘successes’ as carpet dealers and silversmiths or silver trinket and ornamental artifact salesmen, with 25 stores specifically in the Istanbul Grand Bazaar (For example, Zaman Newspaper article dated 13/12/ 2001, Milliyet Newspaper Article dated 26/ 10/ 2001, Radikal Newspaper dated 01/10/2001).

These articles generally avoid statistics about the population of Afghans in Turkey. Only the article in Hurriyet newspaper admits that it is difficult to provide statistics due to the ‘irregular’ status of many of the Afghans, particularly those living in Istanbul. It is of course no coincidence that the largest spate of articles published about Afghans in Turkey were produced at a time when the worlds eyes were focused upon Afghanistan as the US prepared a military attack there following the establishment of links between the terrorist group Al Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden’s presence in Afghanistan and the tragic events of 11th of September 2001 orchestrated by Al Qaeda.

3.1 AFGHANS IN ZEYTINBURNU: A BRIEF HISTORY

As the table above shows, Istanbul was not a government designated region for the Afghan Turkmen who settled in Turkey in 1982-83. The decision to reside in Zeytinburnu appears to have been spontaneous. Two reasons can be offered. The preponderance of Afghans who arrived in 1982-83 were skilled leather workers and the district of Zeytinburnu, among several others in Istanbul is famous for its many leather workshops and ateliers. Also, research conducted in Turkey to date indicates that much of the settlement in rural areas of the country
did not meet with success. Due to difficult environmental condition or the negative reaction of the local population, many could not withstand the pressure to move to larger cities, where they densely inhabited peripheral districts. In Istanbul, they inhabited Zeytinburnu and in Ankara, they inhabited Telsizler, Altındağ, Ayaş and Kayas. Some also chose to move to Bursa, Eskişehir and several districts of Izmir. (Özbay - Balpınar)

‘Initially we spent several months in quarantine in Adana. Those were strange days. Then we moved to a rural area in Hatay. It was difficult there because we were isolated from the people living in Hatay. There was kilometers and kilometers of empty land between us and the closest settlement… One day my father told us that he had heard some of the other Afghans we had traveled to Turkey with had settled in Zeytinburnu. He had heard there was a lot of work in Zeytinburnu and it was not hard to get employed. He had decided we would move to Zeytinburnu.’ (Zahra, Female, Mid-30s, Arrived in 1982)

‘Zeytinburnu was not a nice place in the 1980s. It was a kind of shantytown. It was uncomfortable, very low quality with damp housing and no heating. Now that I think about it, these problems continue for many today. Many of the old houses are occupied by poor Afghans now, especially newcomers. But we appreciated the fact that we could work on our own trade. We were attracted to Zeytinburnu because of the leather ateliers. We were able to start working in the ateliers without a lot of trouble. At least I had little trouble. I just settled into one of the ateliers and the rest of my family settled in with me. We were happy enough, when you think Afghanistan was under occupation…’ (Ahmed, Male, Aged mid 60s, Arrived in 1983)

Zeytinburnu is a large and sprawling district of Istanbul. According to the Zeytinburnu municipality website it is the cities 8th densest district with a population of 284,814, 13 quarters, 58 avenues and 970 streets. (www.zeytinburnu.bel.tr) The Afghans settled in two of the thirteen quarters: Yeşiltepe or Nuripaşa. Interviewees repeatedly point out that they choose to live in these quarters because other Afghans live there and it reinforces their sense of identity.

‘I like living in Yeşiltepe because there are so many other Afghans here. I like hearing my language mixed with Turkish and people in local dress as well as modern clothes. I’ve lived in Turkey almost all my life. I don’t remember anything about Afghanistan. Only some pictures and film footage on news or films. So it is nice to have the feeling that although I live in Turkey, I can have my own culture with me too. I can imagine what ‘my’ culture actually is. It is comforting to be able to do that.’ (Kadir, Male, 21, Arrived in Turkey 1985)

Almost all of the Afghans live here (in Zeytinburnu). Of course there are some who have moved to other neighborhoods – some live in Adapazari or Sultanbeyli on the Asian side- but movement is rare. Afghans like to be close to one another. We are like mercury. We can split apart but in the end we roll into one ball all together again. We can’t do with being apart. Personally, I could not imagine living far from my community. My mother is here. My husband’s family is
here. It can be difficult because everyone knows everything about you. Everyone can maintain control over what you do and everyone tells everyone everything. You understand, everyone is too close. But I would not move to another area in Istanbul. Not even for comfort or if I won the lottery. I like the feeling of being an Afghan. (Soraya, Female, 32, Arrived 1998)

Interviewees repeatedly pointed out their lack of desire for moving on or out of Zeytinburnu. Regardless of legal status, the time period spent in Turkey or the conditions of their lives, including conditions of considerable social and economic upward mobility by some of the Afghan Turkmen, interviewees claimed that firmly rooted in the neighborhood which they and those who are interested in Afghans, identify with their Afghan identity.

Zeytinburnu is not only an embodiment of Afghan identity. It also represents the network of local advice, support and economic or material help the presence of other individuals from the same national background offer.

‘There were some complications during my wife’s pregnancy. I had to place her in hospital. In the end the hospital bill was more than 600 YTL. I had no idea how to pay this. Some friends suggested I try ICMC but they couldn’t help me. So I knocked on the door of all the people I could think of in Zeytinburnu – all the people who might have that much money and in the end I raised the amount. No one else could have helped me.’ (Kaawa, Male, Early 40s, Arrived 2003)

3.1.1 Legal Status

The legal status of the Afghans plays a major role in their flexibility and ability to maneuver, change or improve their conditions of life in the country. Legal status places marked distinctions between the Afghan population living in Istanbul. The Afghan Turkmen who arrived in 1982-83 were invited to the country and were therefore received with residence permits and the right to work. These individuals have obtained Turkish passports and been naturalized as Turkish citizens. This is the only group which has been living in Turkey fully documented and legally since arrival.

Most of the Afghans who have traveled to Turkey during the last quarter century have been asylum seekers. Although Turkey is a party to the 1951 UN Convention on the Rights of Refugees, it retains a geographic limitation to its ratification of the Convention, which means that only those fleeing as a consequence of "events occurring in Europe" can settle in Turkey on a permanent basis. Afghan migrants have faced a limited range of possibility for settlement. One option has been to remain in the country regardless of legal status. A second option has been to apply for refugee status through the UNHCR and since the mid-1990s, the local authorities, hope for recognition and a short term residence permit until the eventual resettlement to a third country, based upon the ‘geographical limitation’ clause. This option of course runs the risk of not

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85 The receipt of a residence permit in Turkey does not imply the right to work. Work permits need to be applied for and are provided on the digression of Turkish authorities. Until 2003 the Foreigner’s Police branch was responsible for provision of work permits. Since September 2003, work permits are provided by the Ministry of Labor.
obtaining refugee status and therefore facing the choice of deportation or remaining in the country with no legal status.

Afghans who apply for refugee status generally wait for one, two and in some occasions more years before a decision is made on their case. The number of years of waiting lengths if an initial rejection by UNHCR is appealed. An asylum seeker, much like a ‘statusless’ individual, does not have the right to work in Turkey until refugee status is granted. Asylum seekers and irregular migrants debate the merit and risk of placing their children in school due to the need to provide status information and an address as part of school registration. Government health benefits and free or subsidized hospital usage is not provided to individuals without a legal status and so on.

As stated above throughout the 1980s there was a steady stream of Afghan ‘refugees’ who were resettled from Turkey. This flow stopped in the 1990s and recommenced in 1998. It has been relatively constant since. However, it is difficult to judge the balance between the numbers of individuals who applied and were granted refugee status and those who have remained obscure and unregistered. Understandably, information is not forthcoming when this issue is raised. Most of the Afghans interviewed were reluctant to discuss the issue of legal status. More succinctly, individuals who had obtained Turkish citizenship or had refugee status did not express any qualm about mentioning this fact. This singled out individuals who were reluctant or unwilling to discuss the subject, leaving one with a tacit understanding that the subject was off bounds and too sensitive or perhaps self-incriminatory to be pursued. Only 3 of the individuals interviewed openly admitted that they had been denied refugee status by UNHCR and were now weighing options for the future.

Overall, regardless of legal status, the individuals interviewed were extremely careful to not discuss ‘irregular’ or ‘statusless’ Afghans living among them in Zeytinburnu, indicating a strong sense of allegiance and protection between the Afghan community. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that many of the interviewees made general reference to the difficulties faced by the ‘statusless’ or referred to life conditions when ‘statusless’ with reference to their initial days of living in Turkey prior to the receipt of status.

The state of Afghans in Istanbul can be simplified to three categories.

1) Afghan Turkmen who were invited in 1982-83 and were received with residence permits and the right to work and become openly incorporated into Turkish society. They came to Turkey with the intention of remaining in Turkey.

2) Afghans who apply for and receive refugee status by UNHCR and Turkish authorities. Permanent leave to remain in Turkey is impossible for these individuals, if they should so desire due to Turkey’s adherence to the ‘geographical limitation’ clause in the 1951 Refugee Convention.

86 Individuals interviewed were not openly aware of one another, unless recruitment had occurred in a group situation where several were asked if they were willing to speak to me at the same time. Therefore, to my knowledge the individuals were not aware of one another or the fact that some willingly indicated their ‘legal’ status while others tacitly refrained.
3) Afghans who enter Turkey with documents and a visa and overstay their visa or who are smuggled into the country. Neither register with authorities and lead undocumented lives in Turkey. Another group can be added to this category: Individuals who fail to receive refugee status and therefore slip into an irregular status.

3.2 INTEGRATING IN ISTANBUL

The various conditions of ‘reception’ or lack of reception upon arrival in Turkey results in different lives for the Afghans interviewed.

3.2.1 The Afghan Turkmen

Istanbul was not a designated city or region of settlement for the Afghan Turkmen. Those who arrived in 1982-83 and chose to live in Zeytinburnu at some stage in their sejour in Turkey, did so of their own accord. It is important to note that other Afghan Turkmen have come to Turkey subsequent to the initial group. However, for the sake of clarity and simplicity discussion of Afghan Turkmen will imply individuals from those 2 groups unless clearly stated otherwise.

Zeytinburnu became associated with Afghans due to the internal migration of individuals from these initial groups to that district.

‘My family must have been one of the first Afghans to come to Zeytinburnu. I really don’t recall meeting Afghans when we first arrived. We came to Zeytinburnu is 1984. But I remember how exciting it was to notice more and more people coming. It was like reuniting with old friends. We already knew many people and many came in groups together. They seem to have made the decision to come together and they came. If you are wondering, I don’t believe it mattered that we left the space the Turkish government allocated us when we came here. We had migrated legally and no one ever got angry with us. So long as we had money to pay rent no one cared. And any way, Zeytinburnu was not a popular place in the early 1980s. It was the slums. Poor. Unwanted. I don’t think the locals cared that we came here. They probably thought we were stupid actually.’ (Malikzay, Male, 43, Arrived 1983)

From all indications the process of finding work in Zeytinburnu in the 1980s was not that difficult for the Afghans. Almost every individual interviewed recalls a rather simple process. Interestingly, few of the interviewees offered concrete personal experiences. Many of the individuals interviewed arrived in Turkey or Zeytinburnu in the early to mid-1980s. Only one of the individuals explained experiences in Zeytinburnu outside the frame of the collective. Others all referred to the ‘royal we’.

‘Yes it was easy for us to find work here. We were experienced leather workers. All we needed to do was ask around and the doors were opened to us.'
We were lucky that we were experienced. We could prove our skill rather quickly.’
(Nasrat, Male, Early 50s, Arrived 1983)

These individuals repeatedly refer to the same themes and ideas: the fact that they were skilled leather workers and therefore deserved to receive jobs without any difficulty soon after arrival is one theme. A second theme is the fact that Zeytinburnu was very much a poor peripheral neighborhood in Istanbul, lacking in many senses including decent housing, roads or public amenities. Therefore there was no reason for the local population to be concerned or disturbed with their presence in the 2 quarters they chose to inhabit. A couple of the interviewees believe their growing presence was hardly noticed by the local population considering the extent of internal migration going on in Zeytinburnu at the time.

‘Really, I don’t think people specifically noticed us settle in Zeytinburnu. Zeytinburnu was hardly developed enough for people to notice and it was the start of internal migration then, wasn’t it? Yes, people started moving from central and southern Turkey at the same time as us. When we arrived, Zeytinburnu was still a slum neighborhood. There were hardly any proper streets and roads. People were constructing building without licenses (gecekondu) over night. No one noticed anything then’. (Karim, Male, Early 50s, 1982)

Yet another theme which comes through clearly about reminiscences from the early days in Zeytinburnu is the language factor. As Turkmen this first group of Afghans spoke a Turkish dialect. They understood and could make themselves understood by the local population. Looking back, all of the Afghan Turkmen acknowledge the advantage they had with their language skills. Being able to communicate reduced the barrier between the Afghans and the local population. It must have been a relief for tanneries and leather workshop owners to have a group of skilled and grateful workers who could speak the language and understand when directions were given or they were told how things needed to be done in the work environment. The Afghan Turkmen certainly speak of the advantage their language ability provided compared to other ethnic Afghan groups who could not speak Turkish and therefore lacked the independence and communication skills needed to establish oneself in Istanbul.

‘We all speak Turkish (the Turkmen). We could speak with the people as soon as we arrived. Our children had few problems in school because they understood the teachers. We had few problems at work because we could explain what we needed and the boss could tell us what he wanted. Our wives could go shopping and ask for what they needed. This was very fortunate. I only realized what an advantage this was when the Uzbek and Tajik or Pashtun Afghans started to arrive. They don’t speak Turkish. They speak the main Afghan languages, Dari and Pashtu. They couldn’t do anything by themselves. We all became translators for them. We had to help them with every situation...’ (Ahmed, Male, Mid 60s, Arrived in 1983)
Not all of the Afghan Turkmen who settled in Zeytinburnu were leather workers and tanners. Several were university graduates, including an English teacher and an economist who as active in the Afghan government prior to the Russian invasion. Some had been carpet weavers, shopkeepers and tradesmen in Afghanistan, who proceeded to find employment as salesmen or traders in the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul. Several of these have proceeded to open their own stores. Although such individuals are in the minority, their stories are proudly mentioned and repeated by others in the community as examples to emulate.

The Afghan Turkmen point out that the chance to educate their children or to attain an education in Turkey was a major positive factor during their initial days in the country. Almost all of the interviewees enthusiastically acknowledge the fact that education was a stabilizing factor in their settlement in Zeytinburnu.

*Once the children started going to school we really felt we belonged here. It is interesting because it created a sense of routine- it gave my wife a reason to want to rise in the morning, prepare breakfast, prepare the children, arrange for them to go to school. The children had responsibilities, homework. They had to work on their Turkish accent and the difference in words we used in Afghanistan and the Istanbul Turkish. For some reason these things made us feel at more at home here.* (Ahmed, Male, Mid-60s, Arrived 1983)

A young interviewee who went to school in Zeytinburnu refers to a similar occurrence in her household.

*There was nothing like going to school to help me feel at home here in Zeytinburnu. Like I said we first arrived in Adana and then we were in rural Hatay. My parents were reluctant to send me to school in Hatay. I was small then and the school was several kilometers away. It was a long and tiring walk and my mother was convinced I would come to some harm. When we moved to Zeytinburnu one of the first things my father did was get me and my brother enrolled in school. The school was just a few minutes walk away. I got a lovely uniform and books and in class, I sat next to a girl who quickly became my best friend. We spent hours out of school together. So like I said, there was nothing like school to help me feel at home. I felt like I belonged.* (Zahra, Female, Mid-30s, 1982)

Zahra also points out that her grade teacher played an important role in feeling welcomed and comfortable, thus highlighting the vital role teachers or mentors can play in the process of integration.

*My teacher was young and I thought she was really beautiful. She had a big smile and she was very enthusiastic about my being in the class. She really played an important role in my feeling welcome and comfortable in the school and I guess that also helped me feel like I belonged in Zeytinburnu. My teacher would get angry when the other children made fun of my accent or when they laughed at
my mistakes. She asked my father to come to school and offered a lot ideas on how my parents could help me adapt in the school. It’s strange actually now that I think about it. I wonder why she cared? But it is great that she did. She really helped me feel good and fit in’. (Zahra, Female, Mid-30s, 1982)

Other Afghan Turkmen joined the first group on individual basis throughout the 1980s due to the relative ease with which they could obtain Turkish residency and Turkish citizenship at that time. Most of these individuals did not come directly from Afghanistan. Quite the contrary, they had already fled their own country due to the Russian occupation and ensuing war in Afghanistan and were living and working in Iran. Family and social networks, along with word of mouth were very influential in the decision making process for many of these individuals. As one of the interviewees point out,

*I got word from my uncle and cousins in Istanbul that I should try and come here. I was in Iran at the time. My uncle assured me that there was shelter for me in Istanbul and the possibility to get work. He also let me know that I should not worry. I would be able to get Turkish residency and if I had a difficult time with that it would be arranged for me to get married in Istanbul and then I would get residency for sure. You know arranged marriage is quite common among us Afghans and that’s how I ended up getting residency in Turkey.* (Nasseer, Male, Mid 30s, Arrived in 1987)

Along a similar tone, one of the interviewees related the story of a cousin who arranged for his wife to be brought from Iran using family and social networks.

*When my cousin decided to get married he thought it would be nice to help a girl come to Turkey from Iran or Afghanistan. Our conditions were already quite good here so he was considered a good catch! He let some of the family in Iran know that he was looking for a wife and you know how news travels quickly. Within days he was alerted of several choices. One included a picture. Can you imagine that? My cousin was struck by the romance of falling in love through a picture and then meeting the girl on his wedding day. It was arranged and she arrived soon after.* (Zahra, Female, Mid 30s, 1982)

It is interesting to note that while the Afghan population in Zeytinburnu is open to friendship with the local Turkish population living in Zeytinburnu or beyond, close to none of the interviewees acknowledged the possibility of establishing romantic links with Turks or getting married to a Turk. The insularity of an Afghan identity and the desire to maintain Afghan blood is considered imperative.

*When I get married, of course it will be with an Afghan. Don’t misunderstand- I have nothing against the Turks. At university, there were a lot of*
pretty Turkish girls and some liked me. But I could not consider a serious relationship with a Turkish woman. I would choose an arranged marriage to marriage with a Turkish girl. I can’t explain why. I just like to stay with the Afghans. Perhaps it’s because there are few of us here and we are far from home. It would feel like a betrayal. Does this make sense? (Abdul Majid, Male, Mid-30s, Arrived in 1987)

Today a number of the Afghan Turkmen are by all means economically established and have experienced economic upward mobility. Many own leather workshops and tanneries. It is estimated that Afghans own more than 500 confection and leather workshops in Zeytinburnu today, along with up to 40 leather goods, carpet and silversmith/silver trinket shops in the Istanbul Grand Bazaar and another 25 carpet and silver trinket stores on Terlikçiler Street, an extension of the Grand Bazaar. Conversation with shop owners in the Bazaar revealed an intricate extended network of trade and business between Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Several of the shop owners indicated that they or family members-partners travel to Pakistan and on occasion to Afghanistan in order to locate and buy new and interesting material to sell on the market in Istanbul. Some pointed out that they have established contact and links with Afghan refugees in Pakistan who produce the various amulets and trinkets on sale in Istanbul or act as local agents, helping to locate and buy goods at reasonable prices.

One of the interviewees also mentioned his excitement about the growing possibilities for official trade and business relations between Turkey and Afghanistan. He mentioned looking into the possibility of setting up agency representation for various Turkish food and household items in Afghanistan.

I have been looking into the possibility of gaining the agency representation for Turkish companies in Afghanistan. A lot of food items such as Ülker and Eti chocolates and biscuits are sold in Kabul and North Afghanistan. I wonder how it is done legally. I have started to research how it is done and talking to people about possibilities. I would like to be involved in this. (Ahmed, Male, Mid 60s, Arrived in 1983)

This interest is not confined to the Afghans living in Zeytinburnu. The Turkish government has been actively involved in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan since 2002. An August 2005 Report by the Foreign Economic Relations Board (Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu or DEİK) in Turkey is devoted to Turkish-Afghan economic relations and refers to $115 million investment in the Afghan economy and distinctly refers to the fact that ‘increasingly higher numbers of Turkish firms opening representative or liason

87 Reference to numbers of shops is made in Milliyet Newspaper, 26/10/2001 and Hurriyet, 10/09/2002
offices in Afghanistan’. (DEIK Report, p.2) 88 According to the report the trade volume between Turkey and Afghanistan rose from $38.7m in 2003 to $76.1m in 2004. (DEIK Report, p.4) The governments of Turkey and Afghanistan signed an Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation in Kabul in June 2004. The Turkish-Afghan Joint Economic Commission met April 2005 to set higher target for annual trade volume between the two countries over the next five years and 4-7 January 2006 the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai paid an official visit to Turkey, accompanied by several Ministers including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Health, Education and Women’s Affairs. This was the first visit of an Afghan head of state to Turkey since the visit by King Muhammed Zahir Shah, between 26 August-8 September 1957. President Karzai’s visit culminated in the signing of a Cooperation Accord to facilitate further construction and development aid between the two countries and in a Press Conference President Karzai urged for ‘greater investments from Turkish firms’. 89

Another example of growing interest and relations between the two countries can be seen the fact that Aryana Afghan Airlines conducts two direct flights a week between Istanbul and Kabul and one flight a week between Kabul and Ankara. Also the Turkish Aviation News portal, Gökyüzü Haberci announced the commencement of Turkish Airlines direct flights to Dushanbe, Tajikistan in January 2006 as part of a plan to establish 24 new flight destinations in Central Asia and the Middle East due to an increase in trade relations. 90

Back in Zeytinburnu, besides the confection and leather workshops, Afghan Turkmen also own an odds and ends shop where anything from plastic piping and iron nails to Basmati rice and Green tea is sold, news about home (Afghanistan) is exchanged and droppers by are invited to drink tea and chat. During fieldwork in Zeytinburnu, individuals interviewed mentioned the existence of an Afghan bakery but I was not been able to locate it. However, I did locate the music and film store which, although it is not owned by an Afghan, certainly caters to their interests and presence in the neighborhood. The store was filled with Indian, Pakistani, Iranian and Afghan music tapes and films, along with an occasional Turkish artist or film. There also used to be an Afghan restaurant but it reportedly closed down in 2002.

Their established and integrated existence in Zeytinburnu or Turkey more generally is easily evidenced by the words and means the interviewees choose to explain their feelings and aspirations about work and employment. The younger interviewees offered a familiar range of comments and complaints concerning employment, salaries, making ends meet and the need for skills one frequently hears from local Turkish youth. Many of the statements indicated distance and an oblivious lack of awareness of the sensitive issue of the poverty of possibilities commented upon by Afghans with an irregular status.

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90 Gökyüzü Haberci, www.gokyuzuhaberci.com, 27/01/06
‘I came to Turkey 7 years ago. I came here to join my husband. I started working as a hairdresser soon after I arrived. First I started as an apprentice but after a few months I became a proper hairdresser. My husband works in one of the little corner shops (bakal) a few streets away. We don’t get paid very much and he has to work very long hours but we manage. Fortunately my mother-in-law lives very close to us and she takes care of our child during the day...’. (Soraya, Female, 32, Arrived in 1998)

‘I am working in my father’s carpet shop at the moment. It is not bad but it is not what I really want to be doing. I have 3 older brothers and they also work in the shop. They can run the shop for my dad when he wants to retire. I would like to work in a bank or finance. A few years ago you didn’t need a degree to work in a bank but now they ask for a degree and there is a lot of competition and you have to know somebody who can get you an interview. I don’t know of an Afghan working in a bank or the finance sector who could help so I will have to be a trendsetter by myself. (Kadir, Male, 21, Arrived in Turkey 1985)

Some older Afghan Turkmen express a more astute awareness of their advantageous situation, particularly with reference to their legal status in Turkey today.

‘I have been employed in different places in Zeytinburnu, all in the leather industry for many years. I have no problem. But during the past couple of years – maybe three- new employment laws were passed for foreigner workers. The employers have become a lot stricter with checking legal papers since these laws were passed. A number of friends lost jobs.’ (Ali Osman, Male, early 40s, Arrived in Turkey 1985)

3.2.2 The Afghan Turkmen Social and Solidarity Foundation

The establishment of the Afghan Turkmen Social and Solidarity Foundation in 1999 can be seen as a symbol of Afghan Turkmen social and economic integration in Zeytinburnu. The Foundation has a double mission. On the one hand it aims to help Afghans in Turkey by organizing economic and material help where possible, arranging dinners and gatherings during religious festivals and the Afghan new year (March 21), arranging weddings, funerals and other social activities, organizing Farsi and Dari classes and Afghan Cultural events specifically for Afghan children.

The Foundation has also been known to advocate in the local municipality or Education Ministry on behalf of Afghans with irregular legal status. Several members and participants refer to the efforts of the Foundation General Secretary Hekim Erturk in 2001-2 to convince the Education Ministry to allow local schools in Zeytinburnu to enroll Afghan children regardless of legal status in the country.
However, over all members of the Foundation, including the President Ali Çağrı are reluctant to refer to the ‘irregular’ Afghans living in Zeytinburnu. Instead, all focus and interest is on the Campaigns run by the Foundation to raise money for development and construction in Afghanistan. So far the Foundation has raised enough money to open 2 schools in North Afghanistan and has turned its attention to a campaign to raise money for a hospital. It is with reference to these efforts that Foundation President suggests

*The Foundation and our campaigns represent our success in Turkey. We have succeeded in moving beyond our own needs and existence here. We are now able and in a position to turn our attention to our country men, to our motherland. I think this is a very exciting development for the Afghans living in Turkey.*’ (Ali Çağrı, Mid 30s, Arrived in 1982)

### 3.2.3 Afghan Refugees and Afghans with an ‘Irregular’ Status

As pointed out earlier it is often difficult to distinguish between Afghan ‘asylum seekers’ or ‘refugees’ and those with an ‘irregular’ legal status. Most individuals are not willing to admit that they are living in Turkey with no official documentation; an act of self-preservation which is more than understandable. The boundary between the two statuses can be easily blurred.

Until 2004 all asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey had to register with UNHCR and the local Turkish police at the border where they entered the country within 10 days. For many this 10 day limitation literally meant the difference between being documented and residing in Turkey ‘legally’ or not. Many enter Turkey irregularly from a border in the South East of the country and make their way up to Istanbul- a journey which may take several days depending on conditions of travel. If the individual does not register with the local police authorities at the point of entry before traveling on to Istanbul, then the person has to re-trace steps, return to the point of entry and approach local border police. In many cases 10 days was just not enough sufficient time and the possibility of slipping into a state of ‘statuslessness’ was very simple.

Some of the individuals enter Turkey with the hope of earning enough money to continue their journey to a ‘more lucrative’ destination but discover conditions for saving money more difficult that they had imagined. Some enter with no plan to apply for refugee status and are convinced by fellow country people that this is the best or the only course of action available. Others enter with a conscious plan to apply, but it cannot be assumed that they are aware of the rules and regulations involved. The situation is further complicated by the fact that regardless of their good intentions, organizations working with refugees in Istanbul are few and generally lack the resources and time to be able to be as open and transparent in relating information to the refugees as they would like. The environment in which the migrants live is another factor which must be taken into consideration because it is conducive to rumors and misinformation.

Once the individual has applied for refugee status it can take many months and at times years to be recognized or denied. UNHCR has been working upon improving the bureaucracy and paperwork which impedes the speed with which they can offer refugee status determinations (RSD). Thus far Legal Officers and
researchers on the field have pointed out that a system of response to ‘vulnerable’ cases has been established but a faster, more efficient system for all applicants is still being worked upon.  

Until a person is granted refugee status that individual is not eligible for financial or medical support and even after attaining refugee status, due to limited resources few among the refugees qualifies for help. In almost all cases refugees and asylum seekers are responsible for their own housing, cost of attendance to school and other forms of education, including learning the Turkish language. Since September 2003 officially refugees have the right to apply for a work permit with the Department of Labor however, very few do and most possible employers are reluctant or unwilling to undertake the effort of applying and following through the procedure to get a refugee a work permit. As an Afghan refugee points out,

‘You know how it is. I found a job and told the employer I want to work legally. When I travel to another country I want to be able to say I worked in such and such a shop working as a salesman and prove it with documents. But the employer was not willing to apply for my work permit. He was suspicious at first, said I have no right to work so why was I making a mockery of him. When I explained to him that I was eligible for a work permit, that he and his company had to endorse and file for me, he made a call and try to find out what the procedure was. I was very excited but then he told me he was unwilling. He said it wasn’t worth all the effort, that it sounded complicated and I wasn’t going to stay in Turkey long enough to merit the effort. I could work for him anyway if I wanted to but now he said I could work in the back loading and carrying boxes so I wouldn’t be seen. It is funny, no? I got demoted for trying to be legal and I get paid less than others doing the same work because I cannot complain but I need the money to live here and pay rent. So I work.’ (Noorahmed, Male, 22, Arrived 2003)

One could argue that there is very little difference in terms of official support and aid provided to individuals with refugee status and those without. The greatest difference appears to be psychological for those with refugee status are aware of their ‘legal’ presence in the country. They do not fear the presence of police or authorities as avidly as undocumented individuals.

‘Sure, I feel safer now that I have a card from the UN saying I am refugee. I feel a big difference, like a mountain has been removed from my shoulders. You

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91 It is difficult to define ‘vulnerable’ in this context. There is no single clear cut definition.
Vulnerable maybe a minor refugee living in the country alone or single women with children for whom daily survival under precarious conditions would be more difficult in Turkey than families. Vulnerable maybe defined as a family with a member who is seriously ill and in need of medical help or cases where the individual or family continues to be under threat from forces persecuting them in Turkey, etc. In such cases RSD provision is expedited.

92 Kagan, Michael (Refugee Rights Clinic, Tel Aviv University, Faculty of Law) defined the changes in UNHCR’s RSD procedure at the Helsinki Citizen’s Assembly ‘Refugee Support Program Workshop, 1/10/2005
have to understand, there are a lot of Afghans who never applied or who apply and don’t get accepted by the UN. What to do then? Questions start all over again- the risk of being caught by the police, detention, being deported. You need money. Every time you leave the house it is a risk. These are such difficult questions I don’t have to face’. (Mahboobullah, Male, 32, Arrived 2004)

Due to the adherence to the geographic limitation clause (discussed above) most Afghan refugees living in Turkey remain for a limited period of time. Generally once they are recognized as refugees by UNHCR, their files are passed on for possible resettlement to a third country, such as the United States, Canada, Sweden, Norway, etc.93 Time wise, the whole process from RSD application to leaving the country cannot be pre-determined. In some cases it may take a year and in some it may take up to 5 or more years. Details and reasons are clearly outside the scope of this paper and shall not be discussed here. However, relevant here is the effect this period of waiting has upon the process of ‘integration’ in Turkey. This can be considered the biggest difference between individuals with documentation and those who are undocumented.

Persons who lack documentation have to face either the option of remaining in the country with the permanent risk of being caught by the police and local authorities or trying to be smuggled to European countries. There is also a third option: returning to Afghanistan.

‘Undocumented’ Afghans and refugees interviewed underline a similar terrain of difficulties and sense impermanence in their lives in Istanbul. The highlight of their position in Istanbul is the network established by their fellow citizens in Zeytinburnu. This network denotes the possibility for shelter, employment, financial help, translation services, etc. But finite material and personal possibilities in Istanbul outshine the positive specter the network provides.

The well established Afghan community in Zeytinburnu offers shelter to the documented and undocumented Afghanis who arrive in Istanbul. The realization that a whole community – a network- of fellow country people with local language skills, understanding of how local life functions and the possibility of a roof over ones head and some food to start off with exists plays a factor in the decision to come to Turkey.

There are so many Afghans living everywhere. It is not that hard to inquire where to go and how things work in different places. We get fairly accurate information from friends, family and people who have lived in one place or another. Many Afghans in Iran know there is a neighborhood in Istanbul with Afghans. They might not know the name exactly but they know it exists. That’s how I came. It was arranged that I be brought to Zeytinburnu. It was explained that I would be able to live among Afghans and they would help me. (Mansoor, Male, 20, Arrived 2003)

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93 Some countries such as Canada and Australia accept a limited number of refugees based upon sponsorship programs, in which case the refugee does not require recognition by UNHCR. However, these are few and most of the refugees in Turkey traverse the UNHCR based path.
‘It was a long journey- from Zahedan to Mashhad and then Tehran and on to the border with Turkey and then across the border... the travel in Iran was ok. It was normal. I traveled alone but still, it’s a strange experience. The imagination wanders and one feels nervous even though you are doing nothing wrong ... we traveled as a group. Sometimes by truck and sometimes by foot... the mountain passes were steep and difficult. We crossed at night and there were maybe 20 people in the group. We kept stopping and doing a head count but then we were told not to make noise. Some were slower, some were faster. I get nervous when I remember the experience. In the end we cross without incident and once we were in Turkey the group divided. Some went to the city of Van, I don’t know where else. There were 4 of us Afghans and the smuggler brought us all the way to Zeytinburnu. That’s how it works. We paid to be brought to Zeytinburnu...’ (Asim, Male, 19, Arrived 2004)

Several of the Afghans who have been living in Zeytinburnu for many years pointed out that there used to be an Afghan restaurant in Zeytinburnu where Afghans of all ethnic backgrounds, status and positions could meet and talk. This restaurant was identified as a network ‘center’ where needs such as housing, translation services, etc could be organized and arranged. This restaurant closed down in 2002.

‘Oh yes, there was a restaurant in Zeytinburnu. It was a meeting point where all the Afghans could ask or offer help. I helped as a translator several times. I wrote letters in Turkish and took people to the health clinic (sağlık ocak). People could mention if they needed a job or if their work place had an opening. The restaurant was important when there were a lot of refugees. A lot of things could be arranged for them from there but it was no longer necessary after 2002. The refugees don’t come any more.’ (Nasseer, Male, Mid 30s, Arrived in 1987)

Nasseer’s belief that there are few or no Afghan refugees living in Zeytinburnu today is typical of the view put forth by many of the Afghan Turkmen who came to Turkey in the 1980s. This is not a surprise. Statistics of ‘undocumented’ Afghans arrested by Turkish police offered by the Directorate of National Security for Afghans indicate a distinct drop after an all time high in 2001.
Table 3.2 - Afghans Arrested by the Turkish Police

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
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<td>1997</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>2,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: General Security Directorate

The distinct drop in the number of arrests verifies the view that there are fewer refugees in Zeytinburnu. It is likely that the Afghan Turkmen simply do not notice the refugees due to the reduction in numbers. It is likely that with settlement and personal engagements and activities, they have lost touch with daily goings on in the district. Perhaps many of the Afghan Turkmen no longer have the time or the inclination to keep up with the arrival and departure or refugees.

Another reason may simply and understandably be that the Afghan Turkmen do not wish to draw attention to the continuing movement of ‘documented’ and ‘undocumented’ Afghans living in their midst. With their own social and economic climb they can well be unwilling to taint the whole community with questions of ‘legality’.

During fieldwork it was difficult to establish exactly how the Afghan network is contacted the first time by a newly arrived Afghan or activated to help. With the closing of the restaurant clearly the visible and contactable ‘center’ has been removed. What we have to rely upon is the words of the interviewees. The interviewees intersperse their conversation with mentions of friend of who were brought by smugglers to Zeytinburnu, the fact that they asked for financial help when they were in need, that they could have an injection at the local health clinic for free because they were Afghan or they could find a job or a place to sleep because of the community living in Zeytinburnu. The existence of the community and network appears to be such an established fact that with the exception of one ‘clueless’ Afghan lady living in the neighborhood of Aksaray, all the other Afghans met or interviewed simply referred to its existence. Direct questions such

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as how they heard of it, how they found the community in the first place, how they could find a house and so on were received with looks surprise and comments such as ‘we just know.’ Or ‘everyone knows’. One of the interviewees reversed the question by asking how I knew to come to Zeytinburnu to look for the Afghans!

Many of the recently arrived Afghans refer to difficult housing conditions in Zeytinburnu. There is a constant reference to high cost in rent, low quality of available housing and crowdedness. Housing conditions appear to change from individual to individual but some clear trends are visible. One of the principle factors taken into consideration is ‘cost’. Single young men tend to rent one room in an apartment or house and live together. On some occasions 3-4 or more young men choose to live in one room together. Families are often the same. A whole family may choose to live in one room together, although more often families prefer to rent an apartment of their own, thus maintaining privacy. Single mothers with children on the other hand often live in a room and prefer to find/are offered a room in the apartment or house of another Afghan family. Typically, this provides the lady and her children a form of male protection and security. Single women, if any, are taken in by families, regardless of kin or family relations. The housing is low quality.

Some of the interviewees draw links between the housing conditions and their feeling of isolation or sense of not being welcome in Turkey. The comments are rarely made in a comparative sense. The interviewees do not choose to compare their past lives in Afghanistan or Iran or Pakistan with their present life in Turkey. On the contrary, many refer to conditions in Turkey with reference to their hopes for a ‘better’ life in Europe, Canada or America.

My house is awful here. It is cold- no heating other than an electric heater and it is winter now. My children and my wife are cold all the time. They complain but my wife keeps reading to us letters written by her mother in Canada and her brothers in England. There they have warm comfortable houses. This momentarily helps us forget the cold, the damp. The cold water. The cramped lack of space. The thin walls. Things will be better when we go to my wife’s family in England. (Suleyman, Male, Early-40s, Arrived 2002)

Language skills is one of the areas Afghans have difficulty with in Istanbul. While the Turkmen speak a dialect of Turkish and can make themselves understood, the Dari speakers experience alienating distance by their inability to communicate or easily do things for themselves without help. This problem is accentuated for women.

It is difficult to not be able to speak Turkish. Everyone here just expects you to be able to. I have learnt some but it very difficult for my sister. I am able to leave the house and do things for myself. She is a girl, so it is more difficult for her. She has to be in the house. So she has learnt almost no Turkish. If something happened to me, I don’t know how she would manage. I can do a lot things by
myself here now but for her it is like she never left Afghanistan. My biggest difficulty is I can’t do any of the official work by myself. Every time I have to call the UN I need to make sure someone who speaks Turkish is close by. Every time I have an interview, the same. (Munir, Male, 18, Arrived 2004)

‘I am in the house the whole time taking care of the children. I couldn’t wander around even if I didn’t have the children. It is not that easy for an Afghan woman with no man. I go shopping of course but I prefer it when my downstairs neighbor offers to go shopping or I spend my son. So I haven’t been able to learn the language. I do not feel a part of life here and any way, why should I? I won’t be here for long. My children have learnt. They go downstairs and watch TV with our neighbors and they go to classes with their children.’ (Samira, Female, Mid-30s, Arrived 2004)

Some children are better integrated and have established a life for themselves in Zeytinburnu. Children of many of the interviewees play football or hang around in small groups talking in the street or offer to go to a friend’s house to do homework or watch TV while I talk to their parents or brothers/ sisters. Many of the female interviewees who have children admit that they rely upon their children for many chores or activities. Children typically shop for their mothers, pay bills, make phone calls, write letters, etc.

Employment is a critical difficulty for the Afghans. While most mention some form of employment or other, many complain about how difficult it is to gain and maintain employment. Typical employment remains work in the leather workshops. It is important to note that the interviewees work for both Turks and Afghans, although finding initial employment with an Afghan is considered much easier.

A lot of us work in the workshops. I work for a Turk now, but in the beginning – that is when I first arrived, I worked for an Afghan. I asked for work directly, explaining that I had experience. My boss then just smiled and asked me to come the next morning. He gave me work clothes and that was that. (Abbas, Male, Mid-20s, Arrived 2001)

A number of the interviewees mention working as casual salesmen or day laborers along the pedestrian walkway at the harbor in Eminönü. These salesmen generally sell leather vests, coats, pouches, wallets and other little and inexpensive items. Some of the interviewees also mention the possibility of joining other Turkish and Iranian casual work seekers early in the morning in Aksaray.

You have to go early in the morning. There is always a crowd of men waiting to see if there is any work for the day. A lot of the work is for construction workers. It is hard long hours and not a lot of pay. You are not lucky everyday but when available it is work. (Munir, Male, 18, Arrived 2004)
Overall a theme which seeps through by the comments made by interviewees is a sense of growing desperation and exasperation at the inability to find steady work. Comments by several of the interviewees indicate an increase in the enforcement of employment restrictions through police control or fear of police control instilled upon the employer. As one of the interviewees states,

‘You start working in a place- horrible place, small and tight, with chemical fumes everywhere – probably unlawful health conditions but the boss comes after a couple of weeks and asks if you have papers or not and all of us who have no legal employment papers are excused’. (Yusef, Male, Mid-30s, Arrived 2002)

Others make many similar comments.

It is so hard to find work these days. I have to feed my wife and children but work is not available. This year has been hardest since came here. I no longer know what to do. (Suleyman, Male, Early-40s, Arrived 2002)

These comments are not isolated. They are backed up by statements made by several of the Afghan Turkmen who now have their own work places but feel conditions for provision of employment has tightened during the last two to three years- in fact it seems since the enactment of the Law on Work Permit for Foreigners by the Turkish government on the 27th of February 2003.

‘I used to employ Afghans readily in the past because I know how hard it is when one is new in the country and in need of help. But I have to admit, I have started to think twice about it these days. I still want to employ Afghans and most of my employees are Afghans but I had a visit from the police about a year and a half ago. They demanded to see the record of our accounts and the health insurance records for my employees. I was very worried but they left with only a warning. They asked me not hire anybody without proper documentation.’ (Malikzay, Male, 43, Arrived 1983)

There is no doubt that the unofficial employment of workers in the informal economy dominant artisan work and trade in Istanbul has been a source of possibility and in an odd sense protection to international migrants. It has offered the Afghans the chance to establish a comfortable niche in the leather workshops and leather trade in general. However, if the trends mentioned by the interviewees persist and the local police manages to curb employment in the leather workshops, then economic survival for the ‘undocumented’ Afghan migrants in Zeytinburnu will become extremely constricted.

Another area of concern is education. Several of the refugees point out that they consider their time spent in Turkey a waste for their children. While they insist that they are grateful for the protection offered and the general safety of their environment, they cannot help when prodded three types of responses emerge. One group points out that their children are going to school in Turkey and
have learnt some Turkish, which is seen as a positive effect of their stay in Zeytinburnu.

‘My children are happy here. All three of them go to school. They like their friends, I think it is very good that they are learning Turkish. At least they will be able to take this experience and learning with them wherever we go next. I am told it will give them confidence and strength. I am illiterate and my biggest fear is that my children will not get an education but so far we have managed. I am lucky because my uncle and 2 of my brothers are in Canada. They help me so my son does not have to work.’ (Samira, Mid-30s, Arrived 2004)

A second group have decided not to enroll their children in school here in Turkey due to the expectation that they will be resettled in a third country soon. So why force their children to learn the language, get used to a school system, make friends and establish life just to tear them away from it all in short while? This is in fact one of the greatest weakness of the present situation for refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey. The lack of perspective on the period of time the individual or family will spend in Turkey results in a resolve to avoid integration or habituation to life in the country.

‘I don’t see why my children should go to school here? We won’t be here long so I see no reason why they should learn Turkish. If we knew the country we will really settle in then my children could learn the language of that country. For now I have decided they should just learn some English. That will be useful everywhere. But for Turkish I see no use’. (Fariba, Female, Mid-30s, Arrived 2003)

This sentiment of course can back fire when the period of stay in Turkey turns out to be longer than initially anticipated, as another interviewee is discovering.

‘I saw no point to my children going to school here in Turkey. Why should they? It was a hassle and it is not cheap to buy uniforms and books and pens. I could not afford such costs. But now we have been here three years and still we do not know what is going to happen. My children are tired of the house. They are tired of having nothing to do. They fight a lot and they fight with my wife and even with me…’ (Ghasem, Male, Mid-40s, Arrived 2002)

The third view is formed by the lack of ‘status’ in Turkey.

‘I am afraid of sending my children to school. I made inquiries and was told we have to give our address when we register the children and we cannot risk doing that. That’s like inviting the police to your house. Anyway, even if we register the children, I have no regular employment at the moment. I cannot afford to send my children to school.’ (Suleyman, Male, Early 40s, Arrived 2002)
The lack of security and certainty places a great strain upon the option of ‘integration’ for the ‘undocumented’ migrants and refugees in Istanbul. The interviewees repeatedly mention their desire for a calm and settled life. When probed further it is often difficult for the individuals to further qualify ‘calm and settled’. It appears self-evident and obvious for them.

‘A calm and settled life- you know- peaceful. Without worry.’ (Fariba, Female, Mid-30s, Arrived 2003)

But some are able to define their feelings very distinctly.

I would like to live a quiet comfortable life. You know exactly what I mean by that. I would like a stable job and to be able to afford education for my children. I would like for my wife to stop dreaming up schemes about how we shall go to Europe and live a life of luxury. I do not want luxury. I just want to feel like my life and my skills are being used to produce the chance for a future for my children and if Turkey cannot offer this, then we just may have to consider going back to Afghanistan’. (Suleyman, Male, Early-40s, Arrived 2002)

Sadly, the ‘undocumented’ migrants and refugees leave one with the impression that the process of ‘integration’ leaves a lot to be desired for. The interviewees repeatedly emphasize the ‘insecurity’ and lack of permanence inherent in their conditions. The conditions described and referred to indicate a bare struggle for survival and a vision of desire for life in the EU or North America. Many of the interviewees point out that they would in fact be willing to live in Istanbul and settle on a permanent basis. Those who have been granted ‘refugee status’ are aware that there is no such option and consider a move to the EU, America or Canada a definite move up the ladders. Almost all of the ‘undocumented’ feel conditions are not suitable. Life in Istanbul is looked upon as ‘transient’ due to lack of possibilities. This leaves 2 options: saving money and being smuggled to Europe (typically Greece and on from there) or returning to Afghanistan. As can be imagined the first option is by far the more popular but interviewees indicate that if Europe becomes an impossibility, then they will consider the option of return.

‘We have nothing in Afghanistan. My family is scattered everywhere. My father was killed. I have property to return to. No security. But if I cannot find security here and I cannot find a safe way to get my children to my brother in England, I will consider going back to Afghanistan. My brother advises it. I still cannot consider it. But if there is no choice then there is no choice. Things will work out God willing.’ (Samira, Female, Mid-30s, Arrived 2004)

At this stage, there is no possibility for ‘integration’ for refugees or asylum seekers in Turkey at this time. The lack of governmental or formal support and the lack of possibility to permanently remain in Turkey have produced social networks which help with the basic survival of the recently arrived Afghans in Istanbul, namely conditions such as housing, short term employment, translation, advice on going to UNHCR, etc. Long term possibilities are not available at this time.
In April 2005 the Turkish government introduced what is known as the ‘National Action Plan’, which defines the country’s short and long term policy towards refugees and asylum seekers. The National Action Plan foresees the removal of the geographical restriction denying the chance for Asian, African or Middle Eastern, etc refugees settling in Turkey on a permanent basis in 2012. Genuine planning and preparation is needed to ensure a successful integration program by that time. By all means a deeper, more detailed examination of the division between ‘permanently’ settled, socially and economically rising Afghans living in Zeytinburnu and the ‘transitory’ refugees and asylum seekers could be a helpful way for the Turkish government to establish what the areas needed to be focused upon.
4. TRANSIT MAGHREBIS IN ISTANBUL: TRAJECTORIES, PROFILES AND STRATEGIES

An early morning at the “Foreigners’ Bureau” of Istanbul (November 2005)

I am in a queue hard to imagine its size and its mixture, waiting to be able to obtain the right to wait, i.e. to make me give a queue number, in order to still be able to wait the successive counters. Certain people arrived at five o’clock in the morning in front of the Security Directorate (where “Foreigners’ Bureau” is located), close to Aksaray, famous pole of all the migrants. The Bulgarians and the citizens of the Russian Federation, who are the most populous, appear with the Iraqis; their knowledge of the Turkish language makes easy to identify them, because it consists of Iraqi Turkmens in general. Scuffles, disputes, signs of aggravation, but also gestures of mutual aid, accomplice smiles, patience, resignation... Two young people with shaved heads introduce themselves at the “information office” for which the person in charge, who is generally absent, seems to be pleased to send them to the end of the queue. They are two Algerians; one of them speaks Turkish well; he looks like an intermediary, even an organizer (I would come across him one month later at the Atatürk airport, engaged with the “Algerian suitcase tourists” in the departure hall). The other one has recently arrived. They show to the civil servant the passport of the man who does not speak Turkish and ask how to regularize his situation. Apparently, he exceeded the expiration date of his visa which was granted to him at the border. The police officer starts to be irritated. He resentfully repeats his favorite refrain: “to stay here, it is necessary to speak Turkish and to have a real work”. The Turkish-speaking Algerian insists however so that a solution is found... An Iraqi intervenes and proposes in Arabic to mediate. After several minutes of sharp discussions, with the volume increased, the Algerians realize that no compromise is possible and give up. And the civil servant pushes them to leave as fast as possible.

The terrible history of five young Moroccans, arrested by the Turkish coastguards in December 2001, caused to draw the attention on the fact that the Maghrebis also took part in the “great transit” towards Europe, via Turkey. Arrived in 2000 to Turkey, as tourists, these five young people, quickly slipped...
into clandestinity, after having tried to find work in Istanbul (as waiters or maintenance workers). Disappointed by their experience in Istanbul, they finally made the decision to reach Europe, i.e. Greece. In relation with their compatriots already installed in Greece, they tried to depart in boats by themselves from Çeşme (close to Izmir) towards the Sakız Island. The adventure turned into a tragedy. Likewise, five years later, the same image occurred again always at the vicinity of Izmir, where this time two Tunisians drowned.

Istanbul, located at the Western periphery of Turkey - which has become an interface country on a regional and international scale, a corridor or a platform between rich and poor countries -, seems to have taken from several years a central position in the international irregular migrations system. The function of this huge metropolitan area as an active pole of transit passages and various opportunities for the migration candidates has already been demonstrated (İçduygu 2003). The almost daily arrests whose Turkish press is very frequently made the echo are one of the most convincing signs of this vitality. We had tried to describe in another article modes of foreigners’ presence in Istanbul and to outline the modalities of the transit territory (the counter, the hub, the hopper and the dead end (Aslan and Pérouse 2003; Pérouse 2002 and 2004).

Within the framework of this chapter, our aim is to examine these general patterns through the case of the Maghrebis whose analysis was already undertaken a few years ago from the perspective of the movements of “suitcase traders” (Péraldi 1998 and 2001; Délos 2004). The geographical extension selected here - that we will not discuss – represents the “Larger Maghreb” spreading from Libya to Morocco, together with Mauritania. Nevertheless, the criterion of nationality is not a restrictive criterion in the definition of our population of study. In other words, the fieldwork and the interviews led us to integrate the European citizens of Maghrebi origin in Istanbul too into our sample.

Consequently, whatever the quantitatively modest character of their presence, one can wonder whether the Maghrebis in transit in Istanbul, beyond the different projects and trajectories which animate them, constitute or not a “society” (Tarrius, 2001) or a “community”, even transitory? What are their modes of socialization in situation of passage and their strategies of incorporation to the metropolis of Istanbul, given that the duration of their transit sojourn in the city is always uncertain?

4.1 A DISTINCT PRESENCE WITH VARYING CHRONOLOGIES FOR EACH ‘NATIONAL GROUPS’

96 Because one of the five youngsters drowned.
97 At the end of June 2005; see Cumhuriyet, 27/06/2005, p.4.
98 Which represents only 10 000 of the 478 000 irregulars apprehended in Turkey between early 1995 et June 2004, which is around 2% ; see Apap, Carrera & Kirişçi, 2004 (cited par Gresh 2005: 14).
99 It could appear strange to include Mauritania, but we can not forget the fact that this country, emerged as an independent country very late (in November 1960), is historically strongly linked with Morocco; see Aksiyon , Sayı 516, 25/10/2004.
Even if the attacks of Madrid (March 2004) and then of London (July 2005) which caused to draw the attention of certain media on the Maghrebi presence in Istanbul\textsuperscript{100}, succeeded to present them as suspect and to criminalize them, there presence still remains isolated. Within the scope of the Turkish Republic history (we will not go up till the Ottoman period here), informal trade relations between Istanbul and the Maghreb, in the form of suitcase trade, have existed since the end of 1970s. During the 1980s the Maghrebis were already identified as customers around Kapalı Çarşı, Mahmutpaşa, or Yenikapi (for the automobile spare parts). Many tradesmen that we interviewed at Laleli have admitted to have relations with the Maghreb for more than twenty years. This lapse of time thus made it possible to weave now old relations, which replays in different forms and with various objectives. However, the transit movements seem to be more recent. They are related to the relative closure of the access to Europe by the “natural” ways, namely Spain, Italy or France; this closing has to do with the emergence of the Schengen space (Délos: 2004). The interviews confirmed the idea of a Maghrebi presence which intensifies at the beginning of the 1990s. Thus, an Algerian of Laleli, a tradesman described by his compatriots as “the oldest Algerian of Laleli”, is in Turkey since 1991. The Libyans fit ultimately well in this chronology, whose presence in Istanbul is mainly of a commercial nature which goes up till the end of 1970s, with the relative normalization of the relations of Libya with the external world and Turkey in particular (the first commercial protocol signed between the two countries goes back to 1975). For the Mauritanians, with which we did not carry interviews and we do not have any specific data, their presence is attested (by the police apprehension reports) as late as the beginning of the 2000s.

Even if they offer us only a relative or indicative interest, the official figures of the entries of Maghrebi tourists are not spectacular, unlike those of Bulgarian, Russian, Iranian or Ukrainians. Nevertheless, they are not negligible and record an appreciable increase since the early 2000s. This increase does not mean necessarily an increase in the flow of transit migrants, of which some enters ‘illegally’ into Turkey and is thus not taken into account by these tourist statistics. According to Tunisian consular authorities, in 2004, more than 60 000 Tunisian nationals came to Turkey, which constitutes a strong increase compared to the early years in 2000 (see table 4.1).

\textsuperscript{100} Two Canadians of Tunisian origin, were suspected to have bonds with El-Kaida, and were intensely investigated. In October 2000, already, the police had arrested in Fatih three Moroccan nationals and an English national suspected to have bonds with terrorist organizations. After the attack of Madrid (2004), it appeared that these Moroccans, expelled in 2000, had played a part in the preparation of the assault.
Table 4.1 - Official entries of Maghrebis in Turkey (2002-2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>The first six months of 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>22 500</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 970</td>
<td>28 185</td>
<td>27 846</td>
<td>12 440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>51 271</td>
<td>46 718</td>
<td>52 470</td>
<td>30 389</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>41 473</td>
<td>42 140</td>
<td>44 124</td>
<td>20 941</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>12 643</td>
<td>13 794</td>
<td>15 987</td>
<td>11 008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Website of Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism (www.kültür.gov.org )

4.1.1 Itineraries and methods of entry into Turkey

According to the data provided by the Turkish Ministry for the Culture and Tourism, in 2004, a large majority of the Maghrebis entered legally to Turkey used airways. However, it is noted that about a quarter of the Tunisians entered by a territorial border post. There is thus a Tunisian singularity which remains to be explained. Are they Tunisians of Europe who come by bus or car? Are they Tunisians on the way for Mecca transiting by Turkey? On the basis of 2004 statistics of the entries at the various border posts, one realizes in fact that it consists of the Syrian land route. Indeed, in 2004 the main portion (more than 9/10) of the Tunisian territorial entries was realized at the Turco-Syrian border at Hatay, Cilvegözü. Even if the share of the territorial entries is less important for the others - it is almost negligible for the Libyans - more than the three quarters of the Moroccan and Algerian territorial entries are also done by Syria, the rest done by Greece (table 4.2). Besides, the Algerians seem to be characterized by an exceptionality, which is due to the share of the arrivals by sea, relatively more important than the rest of the other national groups. Moreover, always in 2004, the near total of these arrivals by sea is carried out in Thrace, in the department ofTekirdağ (table 4.2). With regard to the territorial way, one puts aside obviously other ‘illegal’ territorial ways, of Iraq or Bulgaria, to which was incidentally referred to us but on which we do not have a precise data.

Table 4.2 - Modes and points of entry of Maghrebis into Turkey in 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>By airplane to Istanbul</th>
<th>By land via the Syrian border in Hatay</th>
<th>By land (road, train) in Edirne</th>
<th>By sea from Tekirdağ</th>
<th>Antalya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>27 185</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>39 481</td>
<td>1 005</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>1 617</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>39 278</td>
<td>10 691</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>9 484</td>
<td>2 031</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.kültür.gov.org
Two principal entry roads thus seem to emerge: the air route, mainly, with arrival in Istanbul, on the one hand, and the land route, with entry by Syria, on the other hand. With regard to the air route, more easily observable, the multiplication of the flights is one of the most obvious indications of the intensification of flows between Turkey and the Maghreb. In 2005, for example, there are ten scheduled flights per week between Tunisia and Turkey, five ensured by the Turkish national company and the other five by the Tunisian national company. There are seven regular weekly flights between Libya and Turkey, ensured by the two respective national companies and a private company. And between Algeria and Turkey, there are three weekly flights assured by the two national companies. Lastly, following the inauguration of a new line by Turkish Airlines between Istanbul and Casablanca as from March 27, 2005, the airway relations between Turkey and Morocco also intensified.

For the moment, under the principle of reciprocity in the treatment of the nationals, the Maghrebis do not need visa to enter to Turkey, except for the Libyans who however obtain very easily a one month visa. The Maghrebis having a passport thus can enter without difficulty into the Turkish territory for three months duration. But the methods of entering and the intensity of the visits are likely to be modified with the setting-up of visas for the Tunisians and the Moroccans announced for the beginning of 2006. This new visa measure is imposed within the framework of the harmonization of Turkey into the European Union acquis. After this date, only the Algerians will be able to enter without visa to Turkey. One sees in this case how the legal frameworks and opportunities established on the states level condition the dynamics and the morphology of flows.

4.2 PROFILES OF ‘TRANSITORS’ AND FORMS OF TRANSIT

It should be immediately underlined that these profiles are rather facets or roles (more than of the statuses), which can coexist, transfer or follow one another in the same person.

4.2.1 The tourist

It is the initial facet, for all those who enter legally in Turkey. Whether it consists of “banal” tourism, of shopping tourism or religious tourism (Istanbul is an important international place for all the Sunnites in this sense), a number of the Maghrebis interviewed specifically or incidentally presented themselves as “tourists”. If commercial tourism has been often mixed with tourism of visit, the articulation of both is to be taken into account. Still, we can not deny a priori with the Maghrebis the possibility of endorsing the role of a “normal” tourist, under the terms of a tourist hierarchy, based on the purchasing power, as often described by our Turkish interlocutors. Thus it is not necessary to doubt the sincerity of this fifty-years-old Tunisian man who was very concerned to distinguish himself from his compatriots described as “profiteers”. He insistently ensured us that his first

101 According to a declaration of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 2005, Radikal, 11/02/2005, p.5.
motive was tourism and not commerce (“out of question to leave Istanbul without visiting Topkapı Palace”).

4.2.2 The shuttle trader and the merchant

The shuttle trader is a person who operates with regular return tickets between his country of origin and Istanbul during a one year period; he sometimes stays only a few days, on average a week, in order to buy there a reduced quantity of products (which he carries back with him) with the intention of selling them in the black market or in a shop in his country. The frequency of these back and forth movements is changing; it goes from one to three in a year for "amateur" shuttlers, for whom the suitcase trade is a complementary activity easy to assimilate into a form of commercial tourism (and it is the case of a number of Tunisian women met during the fieldwork). These trips go up to ten for certain Tunisians, Algerians and Libyans, increasingly inclined to establish more formalized import/export trade relations. It was even told us in Osmanbey that there are Libyans who come “two to three times every month”. The typical shuttle trade however has a seasonal character, subjected to the national, religious and commercial calendars. The shuttle trade activity is apparently gainful, with a large profit margin, since a product bought in Turkey can be resold four times more expensive in Tunisia for example.

The presence of the shuttle traders is generally articulated around a local contact, a Turkish merchant, with whom ties of relative confidence were woven as a result of a series of back and forth movements. This Arabic-speaking merchant is often originating from the south-east of the country and primarily from the city of Mardin (Deli 2002). He becomes the principal contact for the shuttle traders, providing services that go well beyond the simple commercial exchanges. Based on two series of observations and interviews, one in a shop at Osmanbey and the other in a shop at Laleli, we can specify the part played by the Turkish tradesman. He is involved with the facilities of travel, accommodation and all kind of advices. Actually he provides all kind of services, exceeding very largely trade relations. One of these tradesmen showed us the integrality of his address book, including addresses of cargo companies, restaurants, hotels, translators, change offices, wholesalers and workshops at the same time (Photo 4.1).

\textit{V is owner of a small shop in Laleli in one of the multiple commercial complexes of this emblematic place of the suitcase trade (besides, the owner of his next-door shop is married a Tunisian). He was born in 1971, married with two}

\footnotesize{102} For instance, a Tunisian civil servant comes during his holidays and thus performs suitcase trade only once per year to improve his income.

\footnotesize{103} Such as this 33 year old man met in a hotel at Laleli, which told us that he comes every month at the rate of twice per month since 1991.

\footnotesize{104} However, the prohibition of the cargo airplanes enacted by the Libyan government in July 2005 caused a brake in the exchanges between Istanbul and Libya. Since then, the trade has to be made by the normal lines of “travelers” and this causes some prejudicial obstructions. See, \textit{Radikal}, 23/08/2005, p.3.

\footnotesize{105} Interview, 25/04/2005.
children. He was born in Mardin ("in the city itself", he insists) in an Arabic-speaking family; he has nine brothers and sisters. He also speaks Kurdish and understands some French. His father was a porter in Mardin, then in Istanbul. V came to Istanbul when he was 12, and he worked in particular as a guide for the Tunisians or the Libyans “on the right on the left” until 1988. In 1988, he starts doing trade with the Maghreb, and particularly Tunisia. He goes to Tunisia to sell textile in small quantity and to build a network of customers. He thus acquires a personal experience in the Maghreb. According to his words, he is devoted to this gainful employment between 1988 and 1994. He goes bankrupt in 1999 because, he says, of his Tunisian partner, who has betrayed his confidence (he did not make any claim at the court, since their relations were not officially formalized). Since then, he has a feeling of resentment towards Tunisians in general. Between the end of 1999 and 2004, he was obliged to work as salesman in somebody else’s store in Osmanbey; this was the time necessary to accumulate again the money needed for the reset of his independence. At the end of 2004, he manages to restart his own business as a consequence of big sacrifices. He has his shop again. He goes to Tunisia at least once every three months, to maintain his contacts, to widen his address book as well as to make tourism. His customers are especially Tunisians, “80 or 85% of women”. He pays a rent of 500 dollars per month for his shop and makes manufacture his products in Merter and Kagithane. V has quite stereotypical ideas about Maghrebis; he distinguishes national types which he considers as very different from each other. According to him, the Tunisians, contrary to the Libyans, are not reliable in businesses...

Photo 4.1 A page from the address book of a merchant in Osmanbey (JFP)
It is in this sphere that one notes the national comparisons most visible, as for the gender dominating in this type of activity. Indeed, all the observations and all the interviews lead us to differentiate, for the Libyans and the Algerians a suitcase trade assumed in great majority by young men; and for the Tunisians and the Moroccans a suitcase trade practiced dominantly by women. We were unable to find a satisfactory explanation to qualify redoubling by gender of the national differences. This characteristic, in any case causes to make even more visible the national differences and to facilitate the procedures of identification at sight and from distance, inevitable in any initiation of a commercial relation. Socially speaking, it appears that those who are performing this trade belong rather to the middle class, relatively educated and having an essential capital for the frequent mobility that this activity requires. Moreover, it is in this “category” that one finds most of the European citizens of Maghrebi origin, whether they are of Swiss nationality, Italian or French (to quote those which were evoked to us and those which we could meet). In this case, the suitcase trade can take a convivial, family and tourist form, the back and forth travels being fewer, even only episodically (during the holidays in Europe). Lastly, some districts appear to polarize the presence of these Maghrebian shuttle traders: they have a mental image of Istanbul with the invariably convened poles of Osmanbey, Merter, Zeytinburnu and Laleli. Sometimes indeed, the suitcase merchants know only these places in Istanbul, kind of very circumscribed small islands at the centre of the metropolis, to which their practice of the city can in fact be limited.

However the category of the Maghrebi suitcase trader seems declining since the beginning of the years 1990, parallel to the general movement of reduction in the estimated incomes of this trade (Table 4.3). In any case, all the Turkish tradesmen with whom we spoke made it clear that the Maghrebi countries do not represent very interesting markets for them, that they constitute kinds of markets par défaut, except perhaps for the Libyan market, described as the “entry door to the entire African market”. Libya indeed is regarded as a kind of “soft belly” of the African customs by which enter more and more products intended not only for the Libyan market, but for all Africa. In the same way, like it was told us on several occasions, certain Tunisians pass by Libya to make enter their goods, considerably less taxed by the Libyan customs, then they pass irregularly to Tunisia (in the south of Tunisia, there are multiple ways for trans-border smuggling).

In addition to distinctions made by the Turkish tradesmen between the "good Maghrebis" (Libyan and Algerian) and the others, the emergence of Arabic speaking customers with stronger purchasing power (Iraqis, Egyptians, nationals of Gulf countries, Saudi...) caused a certain marginalization of the Maghrebi customers, in the hierarchy making imaginary of the tradesmen. In the same way, the passage to more organized forms of trade (import/export by cargo) takes part in the degeneration of the image of the Maghrebi suitcase trader, described from now on not without some contempt like "torbacı" (carrier of bag), term with clearly pejorative connotations. More and more thus, Turkish tradesmen make a distinction between these torbacı, considered with some derision, and the

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106 Anthropological investigations, that we were not able to carry out, in the countries of origin would be necessary for a better grasp of this aspect.

107 Like the young Italo-Tunisian met in Laleli one evening.
wholesalers (*toptancı*) who are the favorites. There are still *torbaci*, but in the margins of the more noble activity which is represented by the trade carried out by the cargo companies (*kargocu*). Or then the suitcase trade is regarded only as a precondition, in the case of a first contact or like a complementary activity at the periphery of the wholesale activity. Thus opposition between *torbaci* and *kargocu* is ultimately not as clear as one could think; many *kargocu* declares at the customs only some of their goods and thus carries out the rest of their trade on an informal model.
Table 4.3 - The decline of suitcase commerce revenues in Laleli

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estimated Revenue (in billions of dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo 4.2: Libyans checking in at the Atatürk airport (JFP, 2003) and packages for destination to Algeria in the same airport (JFP, 2005)

4.2.3 The candidate for exile toward Europe

At the beginning, let us highlight the fact that the Maghrebis constitute only a limited part of the overall irregular transit migration flows, if we stick to the statistics of apprehension provided by the security forces. During the first seven months of the year 2002, for example, of the 536 irregular migrants apprehended,
they were only 6 Maghrebis (4 Moroccans and 2 Algerians) along with 265 Iraqis, 127 citizens Turkish, 59 Afghans, 47 Palestinians and 21 Iranians)\(^{108}\). The table 4.4 offers another example of the proportions of each “national group” generally met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number of nationals arrested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraqis</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghans</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistanis</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshis</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinians</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra-Leonese</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccans</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisians</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalis</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerians</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Source: Radikal, 21/06/2002, p.5 |

From a chronological perspective, this pattern of Maghrebi presence in Istanbul is not old. It emerges after the early 1990s, with the opening of the land routes in the Balkans subsequent to the lifting of the Iron Curtain. In 2003, one observes a decrease in the statistics of apprehension collected at the territorial borders (which concerns especially Moroccans and Algerian), if one trusts the data of the Security Directorate circulated by the press. This drop, which involves not only the Maghrebis but all the national groups, can be interpreted in different ways. It can be regarded as a sign of the fact that surveillance and supervision systems begin to give their fruits, or then like an indication of a change in the transit strategies of migrants, their adaptation to the policies developed by the States, and of a rearrangement of migration routes.

It is a question neither of a pure type that excludes others, nor of a type characterized by final objectives; it can be combined with the following types, "statuses" being extremely unstable. Arrived by multiple irregular or regular ways, they aim to go to Greece by land, or Italy by sea. Put aside some not easily verifiable meetings and hints, only arrests that regularly occur, can give us indices concerning this profile. In almost all the cases, we note that the irregular migrants apprehended on the Aegean coasts or near the territorial borders with Greece or Bulgaria stayed for a while in Istanbul, which appears as a true pole of redistribution from which the networks of clandestine migration are reframed and

redeployed\textsuperscript{109}. It does not seem that the Maghrebis have their own network for clandestine passage of the borders. According to the interviews and to the list of the nationalities composing the groups that they are arrested, it seems that the Maghrebis are inserted into the networks which offer services to citizens of varied countries, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt and Palestine, for the most frequently mentioned (table 4.4). On the other hand, many have their own “national” relays in Greece.

Even if it was difficult for us to meet individuals identifying themselves as candidate for exile towards Europe, we can say that they consist in great majority of men, often young men. Thus the Tunisian that we met one evening in the lobby of a hotel in Laleli confessed towards the end that he was waiting for a good "plan" to pass by boat to Greece (for 800 euros). Another young Tunisian thus said us that he went to Izmir where he had met a compatriot settled there, to find out the conditions of passage to a Greek island (for 1,500 euros). Not having the required sum, he explained us that his intention was to go back to Tunisia to find the necessary amount, then to return and try the adventure with friends whom he would make come with him. Occasionally, one also finds individuals with very high educational levels, motivated by the idea of making the most of this cultural capital in a European country where salaries are eminently more appealing. In many cases, Turkey is clearly recognized - during interviews- as “the easiest way” to reach the EU irregularly. We take the expression of an Algerian of forty years met at Beyazıt\textsuperscript{110} which said us that he was transiting by Turkey seventh times since 1991, after being expelled six times from European countries which he had succeeded to attain from Turkey (crossing each time, after a passage in Istanbul, the Turco-Greek border by foot). Fifteen years after his first attempt, he is thus ready to repeat... with the ultimate objective of attaining the Netherlands.

What strikes in this typology is the extreme uncertainty to which the candidates are condemned in the irregular crossing to Greece (in any case those who do not have the proper means to do this, put the highest price at it). All is only rumors, gossips, inaccuracies, improvisations, hesitations, chances. Lastly, this picture of the "transitor" does not exist without its correlate, namely human smuggler and merchant of forged identity papers; they can be various nationalities. One evening, we could bump into one of these in the streets of Laleli. He was a Tunisian, living for more than four years in Istanbul, and he was wandering near the hotels where prospective customers could be. In another occasion, it was told us that one of the persons whom we had just met, having dual nationality (Turkish and Italian) was in fact a supplier of forged documents.

### 4.2.4 The nanny

Like the example of the Moldavians, who operate on another segment of the market (not in competition therefore), there exists in the domestic service market of Istanbul a genuine niche for the Maghrebi nannies, mostly occupied by Moroccan women to our knowledge. This Maghrebi network concerns single

\textsuperscript{109} Thus the irregular migrants, whose majority were Afghans, apprehended lastly at Gebze (oriental periphery of Istanbul urban zone) while they were preparing to go to the Aegean coast; \textit{Radikal}, 14.09.2005, p.3.

\textsuperscript{110} Interviews in Beyazıt/Laleli on 7.06.2005
young women, unlike what one observes in the case of Moldavian, Armenian or Georgian women in the same sector. This network is structured around a special milieu characterized by French-speaking professionals living in Istanbul, and seems to have taken its first emergence ten years ago in the surroundings of the French diplomats. Since then, it develops by word of mouth and expands larger with the arrival of new female candidates and their circulation by recommendation, from one family to another. These young nannies who are often without educational credentials are in a process of accumulation and emancipation from their family of origin.

4.2.5 The employee and the worker

We will not speak here about the Maghrebis engaged in formal business relationships under the title of Turco-Maghrebi trade which is significantly on the rise\(^{111}\) (Photo 2). There are indeed some import/export companies and counseling firms where Maghrebis work.

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\(^{111}\) On this subject, see studies conducted by the Chamber of Commerce on commercial relations with each countries of the Maghreb or the studies conducted by KOSGEB (Küçük ve Orta Ölçekli Sanayi Geliştirme ve Destekleme İdaresi Başkanlığı, Cezayir).
In Laleli, we could conduct a long interview in an import/export company specialized in Maghrebi countries. Among the employee there were a Lebanese, a French (converted to Islam and married to a Tunisian) and a Moroccan, all living in Turkey for a long time. Meanwhile, these companies, in Laleli or elsewhere, can also play informally the role of a social space full of resources, thanks to the possibility of meeting the experienced ones for the newcomers. We have witnessed several times the first contact between old and the new migrants in this company. In the margin of the legal structures there are non-declared persons, with a blurred status according to the Turkish and Maghrebi laws.

But in the shops of Osmanbey, Merter and Zeytinburnu one finds Maghrebis employed for their linguistic skills in a more or less stable way (Photo 4). They are especially young women, generally “settled down” for a certain time in Istanbul - the time of the acquisition of a Turkish level sufficient for the businesses. These young women, following the example of the Bulgarians or Russians recruited to serve for the Russian speaking clientele, are used to make the interface with all the Arabic-speaking customers, whether they are Maghrebi or not. It was very difficult to carry out interviews with these employees due to their owners’ protective manners making us understand clearly that they did not like such a questioning. However, we observed that the Maghrebis tend to be increasingly replaced by Iraqis, considered to be less expensive to ensure this type of linguistic interface in the trade. In Laleli, one finds nevertheless at certain periods of the year, one Tunisian woman by shop at the shopping centers and a Tunisian human advertiser at the entry of the han. To our knowledge, as opposed to what we observed for the Afghans or the Iraqis (even Rumanians until a certain period), the Maghrebis do not seem to invest all the crenels of informal labor in Istanbul (which one knows that it also touches massively the Turkish citizens). Construction and textile production are in the forefront of informal sector, together with and in a very discrete manner, restaurants and manufacture (Lordoğlu, 2005). Moreover, if the methods of fight against informal work are reinforced, like a series of laws (in particular the law n°4817 which came into
effect on September 6, 2003 and recently adopted measures seem to indicate, the number of the worker will certainly lose its importance.

4.2.6 The student and the apprentice

The number of Maghrebi students identified by their consular authorities, or among the scholarship holders of the Turkish State or a Maghrebi State, is very low. For Tunisia during the year 2004-2005, it was nine according to the vice-consul whom we interviewed: five in Ottoman History and Civilization, two in Medicine, one in Law School and one in Aviation. In addition to this type of student there is mobility of former students and of students who are not registered by their consular authorities. Thus, some employees met in import/export companies and counseling firms were thus registered, often in language or literature. For the Libyans too, the official presence of students is limited; according to the president of the Association of the Turkish-Libyan Friendship, a total of 180 Libyan students would have been educated in Turkey since the two countries have steady relations (and this until the end of 2004). Among the former students, one also finds Algerians having followed studies in the USSR or in the Federation of Russia, and never returned their country. It consists of relatively well settled people, “references” respected for their social and cultural capital. One of our privileged informants in 2001-2002, an Algerian graduate of Arab literature of the University of Damascus, with a fluent English (because he was married to English for a time) and fluent Turkish, enjoyed this kind of esteem by his compatriots, until he decided to return to Syria because of the impossibility of obtaining an appropriate residence permit. Besides, there are Maghrebi apprentices in at least two spheres of activity, namely in goldsmith sector and tourism (the latter less pertaining to Istanbul). Unfortunately, we could not know some more about this category.

4.2.7 The prostitute

The prostitute is a category that became inevitable and recurring in the representations and common talks on the foreigners’ presence in Istanbul. It corresponds to a status for the Maghrebis as well, even though we never noticed Maghrebis in the prostitution related deportation statistics published by the Security Directorate. Nevertheless, at the beginning of January 2005, a police operation revealed the existence of “massage saloons” where Tunisian women

112 Law titled “Law on the authorization of foreigners’ work”, see Dünva, 02.09.2003, p.4.
113 A telephone number aiming to inform against this kind of practices is already put on line. See Radikal, 12.02.2005 and Cumhuriyet, 7.12.2005, p.13
114 About the apprehension of eleven foreign undocumented workers in Laleli in October 2005, see Vatan 34, 19.10.2005, p.2
115 Interview
116 Interview published by the newspaper Sabah, 05.12.2004.
117 Newspapers excel to nourish the fusion between prostitution and foreign presence; for a recent example of tendentious information see the magazine Haftalik, n°140, 2005, pp.22-24.
worked (they had become Turkish citizen by marriage). Except some various facts of this type, published in the press, we are utilizing here only reported discourses. But when a discourse is reported so repetitively, one is tempted to grant some credit to it. It consists primarily of the talks of tradesmen in Osmanbey or Laleli, who differentiate among different nationalities and tend to stigmatize especially the Moroccan women and incidentally the Tunisians. They accuse them to perform this business in the hotels of Taksim or Lâleli. The prostitution can be practiced very temporarily, to secure an additional income to prolong their stay in Istanbul, like it was admitted to us one night at Laleli by a Tunisian young woman whom we had crossed a week ago in a small shop in the search of alluring clothing. The practice of prostitution with the tradesmen also makes it possible for certain Maghrebi women to pay in kind the products they choose.

4.2.8 The person in escape

Lastly, Turkey acts as a haven of peace for people having problems with the justice of their country, following various businesses of which we do not know the detail (bankruptcy, blank check, family difficulties, military service, political opposition...). In this case, it is not a question of “transiting” but rather searching of a refuge. For example, we could meet a Tunisian in his thirties who lived in Germany for three years, then in Switzerland (where he married a Swiss citizen of Slovenian origin), then stayed one year in Ankara before going to Istanbul where he has lived for four years. This man said to us that he has some problems and for the moment he is unable to return neither to Tunisia nor to Switzerland. It was thus out of constraint and obligation that he was in Istanbul, where he carried on the activity of advertiser for Maghrebi customers at the entry of one of the most known han at Laleli. We later on learned that he also carried on another activity, consisting of finding “girls” for men in search.

4.2.9 The articulation between the categories or the risks of classification

The categories that are presented, as we already said, are not exclusive from one another. None of the types correspond to an autonomous field of activity; they have relations with the others. They consist of states or roles sometimes successively endorsed, consistent with the opportunities and the constraints, as with the passing of time. A tourist may quickly become a transit migrant; a merchant may turn into a prostitute; an employee to a married. In the same way, there can also be co-presence of different categories in time and space. Thus, it was asserted to us during an interview that the suitcase trader would benefit from his back and forth movements and their experience in the Turkish territory, to build eventually an activity to deal with young compatriots and to connect them at Istanbul with clandestine migration networks towards Europe. This articulation between suitcase trade and clandestine emigration thus associates distinct categories at first sight but which, on the basis of familial, emotional or economic relation, can converge one moment. In the same way, certain candidates for the exile in Europe can become asylum applicants, like this Tunisian arrested in 1993.

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at the territorial border post of Dereköy where he tried to pass clandestinely to Bulgaria. Known for his opposition to the Tunisian regime, he wanted to go to France to solicit political asylum. Yet, he was presented by the Tunisian authorities contacted after his arrest like a criminal, and his expatriation had been considered, in accordance with the bilateral agreement of 1982 between Turkey and Tunisia.

4.3 STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED

4.3.1 The inscription in a network more or less pre-constructed and stable

Each migrant fits *de facto* in a system of informal reception which serves him as the first framework of “integration” (the term being employed here in a minimal sense). This system, which is always open to re-definitions and new complexities, perhaps regarded as a more or less dense, stable and integrated unit, with material or non-material (social) resources, that can be mobilized at the arrival and even before the arrival (thanks to the telephone). The access to this network always dealt with in one way or another, directly by differing money payment (what means contraction of debt from the beginning) or not, by work, or indirectly by formation of a moral debt (requiring a payment which takes multiple forms, on very variable temporalities). The access to an effective network is paid; and the construction of a network of integration or survival is always delicate and precarious. In every case, networks are thus set in motion, involving/mobilizing those which “are installed” for long time on the one hand, and those whose relative situation is better. These networks are nationally segmented, in spite of the intervention of Turkish people who ensure bridges or links. In other words, it is initially by applying for the segment of the Algerians of Istanbul that a recently arrived Algerian, whatever his profile, undertakes to invest in Istanbul. For the Moroccan nannies network for example, it has been possible for us to trace all the chain, from a true pioneer, originating in Casablanca and married to a Moroccan doing a declared activity in the historical peninsula. She makes come her close relatives from Morocco and she takes care of their lodging and work in the first phase, until they become relatively self-sufficient. This role of pioneer can be redistributed in time, as far as the material and legal situations evolve. Thus, an old newcomer can become an autonomous nanny at the end of a few years, being able to play in its turn the part of protective “pioneer”. Also, in each “national group”, as in the image of the young Algerian encountered at the Foreigners’ Bureau and at the Atatürk airport, more adept small leaders emerge. They sometimes become genuine “social contractors”, who can assert themselves near their compatriots – his “natural” clientele –, like a useful contact, and can convert their knowledge of the terrain and their social capital accumulated in the big city into cash.

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119 See *Evrensel*, 10.04.1993, p.3.
Furthermore, and it is for the moment a norm in Turkey, aside from some position takings, declarations and specific services, the implication of associations in the reception and integration mechanisms remains extremely limited, even non-existent, except in cases of some extreme events. Ultimately, only the Turkish office of Amnesty International develops a policy on the subject, regularly drawing the attention of the authorities to the file of the candidates to the transit. Likewise, we did not remark an exploitation by the Maghrebi of the Turkish religious networks as a component of the integration strategies, even though religious networks in Turkey are known to nourish all the society, businesses milieus and political circles. In other words, beyond the sometimes heard assertions about a common membership to a “community of believers”, the practice of religion seems to remain a private and “national” issue at the same time. If there is an inscription of the private practices in the collective calendar of Sunnite Islam, the intersections between these practices and the practices of the host country remain very limited, except for the frequentation of a “Turkish” mosque on some occasions. In the same way, we did not hear they speak about the Maghrebis going to charity associations with marked religious references, like Deniz Feneri or IHH (İnsani Yardım Vakfı: http://www.ihh.org.tr/cgi-bin/index.pl).

Lastly, what can be named as the visible community’s infrastructure, which would be made up of associations and well known meeting places is very reduced for the Maghrebs. Except high class Tunisian or Moroccan restaurants, it exists only, to our knowledge, the “Algeria” Restaurant at Beyazıt, at the first floor of a rather sordid building (see photo 5) in a street toward the Marmara Sea. It is the only hanging out place, known by Algerians, but also of the Moroccans and certain Tunisians, addressing to the newcomers. However, it was very difficult for us to conduct interviews there, since the owner then (the responsibility for management changes at an intensive pace) showed an extreme reticence at each time of our appearances/intrusions.

120 Like the Association of Affectionate Hearts (Şevkatli Kalpler Derneği), Human Rights Association (İHD) or Mazlumder

121 See for instance the daily newspaper Zaman, 4.06.2005, p.16 ( “Türkiye’deki mülteci hukuku yeni bir yol ayrırmında” by Taner Kilç”). Also Zaman, 9.08.2005, p.1, about the modification of the regulation on the granting refugee status (since March 2005, Turkey is actually in the obligation of taking into consideration of refugee status requests from the nationals of Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries). This change will certainly have implications on the migratory strategies.
4.4 COMPONENTS OF THE NETWORK

4.4.1 Invaluable family

Understood in a broad sense, it is one of the principal resources, providing essential services in the initial times of arrival and even a long time after, due to the compulsory refunding of the contracted debts (money makes relatives). They also become an important resource in the case of a serious problem (e.g. accident, disease). Let us take the example of A. originating from the poor peripheries of Casablanca, she arrived in 2000 to Turkey, to live with her elder sister. The latter married to a captain in the Turkish merchant navy, whom she met in Valence (Spain), under conditions which we are unaware of, thus regularized very quickly her status and invited her sister to come next to her. During three years, A. lived at her sister’s place, who made her meet L, working in the nanny network and married to a Moroccan settled for long time in Turkey. L, a friend of the A’s sister, quickly ensured the integration of A. in the network of the Moroccan nannies serving the French-speaking clientele; an important percentage of the money earned was being sent to Morocco. The sister of A. was also involved in the fake marriage of her younger sister, who, since 2003, started to gain her autonomy, in particular by moving to a place to live by herself. Having refunded her debts to her sister, A. in her turn invited friends from Casablanca, and some have lived for a while at her place. Since spring 2005, A., become Turkish citizen, married with a Turk, who is the cousin of the mother of a child whom she took care a time.

Thus when the family does not exist, it is “manufactured”, by the recourse to marriage which appears especially for the women like a major element in the integration strategies. Friends too sometimes provide a replica of family network.
4.4.2 The boss/protector

The participation into the informal labor market is one of the post sensitive stages in the process of local incorporation. It supposes informal relays and the possession of minimal information on the available opportunities. We have presented above the branches of economic activities where there are the most Maghrebis (in fact particularly the female Maghrebis). A central figure, the boss/protector is the provider of employment and because of this has a considerable power on them. Two types exist: in the case of an informal employment, and it is most of the time the case at least in the initial periods, the dependence is strong; in the case of a formal employment, the relations are clearer and less subjected to arbitrary attitudes of the boss. The boss is sometimes a Turkish citizen, sometimes a Maghrebi settled for a certain time, having a status that confers him a relative visibility in the eyes of his co-nationals. No philanthropy in the relations between boss and “subject”. The boss is often also the landlord of the migrant, and this a factor that reinforces the relation of dependence. In this case, accommodation is done on the higher floor of the shop or the workshop, often under very miserable conditions.

4.4.3 Housing

Except for those who are welcomed by a friend, a friend of a friend, a relative or the employee of a hotel - what is increasingly frequent for the tradesmen -, housing remains the principal enigma and the first problem to be solved. For the migrants who do not have a pre-existent family network, it was done mainly, until recently, in the small pensions and other “furnished” rooms held by slumlords in the historical peninsula (districts of Fatih and Eminönü) but also in certain districts of Beyoğlu. For the Maghrebis in transit, during the interviews we pinpointed some hotels, located in the bottom of Laleli and around Kadırğa, Nişanca or Cankurtaran. These neighborhoods are places to get in contact with providers of employment, as well as with the smuggling networks for Greece. They also constitute one of the privileged spaces of contact between Maghrebi and Turkish citizens, some of the latter who are themselves immigrants too in their own country, sharing the same living and working conditions. There is a hierarchy of hotels in terms of the quality and services offered. It is highly probable that the function of certain hotels is not only lodging. If we can speak about a hotel supply segmented by nationality, the hotels are nevertheless places of articulation between various categories specified above.

However, it should be noted that currently there is a movement of reorganization of the “hiding places”, in particular for the most precarious migrants, as the degraded districts of the inner city ceases being the principal poles of lodging. This redeployment is due at the same time to a change of clandestine lodging strategies (that seek a greater invisibility) and to the politics of “cleaning” of the historical peninsula by the local authorities. The district of

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122 In one example in Fatih where, 38 irregular migrants were caught in late May 2005 in a house abandoned by the smuggling networks (to whom they paid 2,000 to 3,000 dollars each, to attain Europe) were kicked out by the police; see Vatan-34, 29.05.2005.
Küçükpazar, in the historical peninsula (in the Eminönü district), is thus the object of such a re-conquest, as a result of the shutting down of pensions and other lodging (called as “rooms for single people”) where the foreign as well as internal migrants dwell. This re-conquest is accompanied by a stigmatization campaign in the media in particular in the daily newspapers with large audiences, towards foreign migrants who are presented to be at the origin of the insecurity in the districts concerned. Thus in April 2005, special teams of the Eminönü municipality, supported by the rapid deployment force (çevik kuvvetler) of the ministry for the Interior, proceeded evacuation by force and sealed tens of pensions considered to be suspect (for medical hygiene as well fiscal reasons). They thus initiated a genuine “cleaning” of the sectors in the city centre where irregular migrants, whether they are Turkish citizens or foreigners, dwell. Besides, the apprehension of 37 irregular migrants in Güngören, on November 19, 2005 and the arrest of 81 clandestine, Pakistani and Mauritanians, on November 29, 2005 in a low quality district of the Asian periphery - in Aydinevler, a neighborhood of Maltepe – confirm this assumption, in addition to the references made during the interviews (concerning for example the peripheral districts of Küçükçekmece or Gaziosmanpaşa). The solution adopted in this case is to rent an apartment in one of the innumerable buildings under-occupied in the urban periphery of Istanbul.

4.4.4 School, health and the question of “relationship with Turks”

We have little information about these two topics of the daily life of the Maghrebi. With regard to education, based on two interviews conducted with Maghrébis installed in Istanbul, we notice that the preference seems to go to private schools and for the girls, to Koranic courses which constitute the only form of education provided. In the two cases, Turkey is perceived to be more tolerant than the countries of origin in terms of religious education.

The discourse on “the Turks” oscillates according to our informants between a discourse of rejection and that of closeness. It is thus impossible to generalize, since the judgments are conditioned by the individual experience of each person and by the more or less adapted and spread discourses. So from one side, as can be signified by mixed marriages, Turks are seen like close people, particularly by the religion and the common history. From another side, they are presented as radically different people, rather Asian than Mediterranean at the origins. But the participation into a Turco-Moroccan wedding showed us that cleavages, even in this case, could remain rather strong (not only for linguistic reasons); at that night the two “camps” involved socialized very little with each other, even a crystallization appeared at some moments about the respective differences.

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123 Where, for instance, after an accusation, 30 Pakistanis had been arrested at the beginning of the July 2002.

124 See Sabah, 31.05.2005.

4.5 STRATEGIES TO EXIT

4.5.1 The regular exit from the country and intra-urban mobility

For the Maghrebs who only have a tourist visa, the solution is to leave the Turkish territory every three months - and it is the same solution for the other foreigners, including the Europeans – so as to, to some extent, rebuild their statutory virginity vis-à-vis the Turkish authorities. It comes out from our observations that one of the most privileged destinations to proceed these steps is the Northern Cyprus. Many of our informants thus go regularly to Cyprus, generally by plane but also by boat, in order to carry out these formalities. Generally, they only make a two-ways and the Turkish and Cypriot customs officers accept to close their eyes on this repeated exits/re-entries in return of some money taken below the table. For the most deprived Moroccan and Algerians, Syria\(^{126}\) constitutes also a solution for this type of action.

4.5.2 The exit ways of the transit

In addition to the pure and simple return, which is not always possible, we note two main exit routes of the transit: the marriage on the one hand, and formal work on the other. The two ways, which concern mostly the women, are also very frequently linked one to another. In the network of the nannies, observed since the late 1999, we already attended several marriages; the same woman being able to marry twice, the first time on the “fake” way with a Turk and with the complicity of a civil servant, the second time on a more serious mode with a Turk or not. Until the early 2003 the first marriage made possible to acquire Turkish nationality at the end of one year. From then on, three years are necessary. In a Turco-Moroccan counseling and import/export company, we have thus met a woman married to a Turk for five years, who worked in the company of his brother. Graduate from the University of Marrakech in geology, she wanted, at the moment of the interview, to continue her studies at the University of Istanbul. To survive, she was tutoring French and Arabic courses.

4.6 THE REIGN OF CONTINGENCY AND SUBVERSION OF THE CODES

Even if the Maghrebs do not constitute the most representative “populations” of the transit migrants in Istanbul, their case, which presents sensitive differences according to their countries of origin, once more makes it possible to evaluate the appeal of Istanbul, the gigantic pole and switch in the system of circulations and international mobilities. In all the cases, the term “transit” to qualify certain forms of foreigners’ presence should be used with a great prudence, since the trajectories are dubious and since the scales of time and space of this transit are variable. We will thus be careful not to draw very generalizing conclusions. The experience of transit in Istanbul is an experience individual and collective at the same time, struck by the precariousness, full with risks and difficult to communicate, except for perhaps that of the suitcase traders. The continuously contingent character of the transit experience in the complex of

\(^{126}\) Interview on 12.04.2005 with V.
multiple opportunities that the Istanbul metropolitan environment provides, prevails. For those who want to pass clandestinely towards the European Union, the transit is everybody’s own business, the solidarities mobilized limit themselves to the closest companions of adventure, in a universe where information poorly circulates\textsuperscript{127}, are segmented and always suspect.

In the same way, legal changes which profile the Moroccans and the Tunisians are thus likely to modify these persons’ conditions of stay in Turkey and to result in the change of direction of the strategies, toward other territories of transit..., just like the better prospects of taxes at certain borders on the goods of the suitcase traders. The likely result of the bilateral negotiations in progress between Turkey and each Maghrebi country (Kirişçi 2004: 19-20) about the readmission procedures can also have consequences on the migration practices. What strikes is on the one hand the reproduction, even reinforcement, of the national differences in transit situation; differences which, one could believe in the beginning that do not constitute a determining factor. However, nationality seems, if not to determine, at least largely to condition the modes of presence of the Maghrebis in Istanbul (which do not constitute anything like a “community” structured by common interests and practices of solidarity). In other words, far from erasing and transcending them, international circulations even seem to exacerbate the criteria of nationality. Besides, the transit stay and circulation in a foreign metropolis cause to redistribute gender roles, by upsetting the dominant division of labor, responsibilities and initiatives and while proceeding in fact to a (temporary?) emancipation of women. And finally, to try to answer the question asked at the beginning, the construction of “transit societies” remains very limited, and in any case function of the time and the conditions of transit, the candidates of exile appearing to be the last concerned about the forms of “other integration” still to be explored (Tarrius, 2001: 47).

\textsuperscript{127} For instance, the accident that took place in late July 2005 in the Aegean sea, which caused the death of two Tunisians, did not seem to be known by the Maghrebis interviewed at the same period.
CHRONOLOGY
-24-03-2000 : Moroccans and Irakis are arrested in a two-stages-bus in Kadiköy.
-01-05--2000 : a Libyan sailor outlives with difficulty from one year in Turkey in writing signs in arabic at Beyazit and Taksim.
-18/20-06--2000 : Moroccans are arrested at the land border between Turkey and Greece
-21-07--2000 : Moroccans (together with Afghans, Iranians, Egyptians, Palestinians…) are arrested in Edirne province, trying to reach Greece by the terrestrial border.
-23-08-2000 : Moroccans are arrested at Kadiköy with Afghanis : they expected to leave Turkey for Europe.
-05-05-2001 : 40 Moroccans among a total of 449 people including Iraqis are arrested at Pendik in a boat leaving for Europe ;
-13-12-2001 : 5 Moroccans are arrested on a pneumatic boat off Cesme; they lived one year in Istanbul, working as waiters, cleaners,…
-22-05-2002 : 12 Moroccans are arrested at Silifke on a boat, among 233 kaçak.
-2/9-06-2002 : 9 Algerians, 4 Moroccans and 2 Tunisians are arrested at Edirne.
-7-01-2002 : One Moroccan is arrested in Edirne when trying to go across the terrestrial boundary with Greece.
-12-08-2002 : Moroccans are arrested at Marmaris, on a boat, among 222 kaçak, including Afghanis, Iraqis, Egyptians and Palestinians.
-28-08-2002 : Algerians are arrested trying to go across the Turkish/Greek terrestrial border.
-Beginning of 2002 : 4 Moroccans and 2 Algerians are arrested.
-01-01-2003 : 2 Algerians are arrested at Edirne, in the road-station. They were with 5 Somalis and each of them had given 400$ for Greece were they wished to go, from Istanbul. They were passportless.
-11-02-2004 : 4 Moroccans and 1 Mauritanian are arrested in the province of Edirne (with Iranians, Somalians…), when trying to cross the Turkish-Greek boundary ; See : Evrensel, 12/02/2004, p.3.
-04-10-2004 : 130 alien irregulars, including Moroccans, are founded crushed together in a building at Ayazaga/Sisli. They have paid 2500$ for Europe.
-28-03-04 : Mauritanians are arrested near the Greece-Turkey boundary in Ipsala and Meriç districts ; see Özgür Gündem, 30/03/2004, p.3.
-19-01-2005 : A Turkish woman of foreign origin is arrested in a suspected massage’s center. Some irregular Tunisian girls were working with her.
-18-02-2005 : robbery in the house of a partner of the company “Tarablus Dis Ticaret Limited Sirketi”
-29-05-2005 : 4 Mauritanians died between Ayvacık (Çanakkale) and the Greek island of Midilli, after the shipwreck of their boat ; see: Zaman, 30/05/2005, p.3.
-26/06/2005 : 2 Tunisians died in a boat accident between Dikili (İzmir) and the Greek island of Midilli. See : Cumhuriyet, 27/06/2005, p.4.
5. IRANIANS IN ISTANBUL:
Changing Migratory Patterns and Modes of Incorporation

The models and chronologies of Iranian migration have significant implications on their patterns of socio-economic incorporation in Turkey. Iranians have a lot of similarity with the Iraqis in Turkey, as they both include documented as well as undocumented migrants. Their migration started as a result of political turnover in the country that led to the flow of large numbers of Iranians in the 80s who perceived Turkey merely as a transit country. It later on changed shape and continued mostly as irregular migration, even though it always consisted of asylum seekers as well.

5.1 MORE THAN A MILLION TRANSIT MIGRANTS!

The Iranians’ initial massive movement to Turkey has been instigated by the fall of the monarchic regime and continued all along the 1980s. According to some estimates the overall number of Iranian migrants who transited through Turkey is around 1.5 million (Kirişçi 2000). However it is probably an exaggerated estimation, if we think that overall number of Iranian immigrants in the United States, the most favorite destination, is around 1 million (Roy 2003 cited by Koser-Akcapar 2004: 6). If Turkey was the only transit country for the Iranian emigration in the 1980s, 1.5 million estimation could be reasonable, yet Cyprus and Dubai were also used as transit stops in that period. Ahmet İçduyuğu (2003) seems to provide a more reasonable estimation and argues that between half a million and one million Iranians have transited through Turkey.

Thus, in the 1980s, Istanbul served as a stepping stone to the West for many Iranians. Among them, there was a large group of Iranian professional middle classes who used official channels to attain their preferred countries, mostly in Europe and northern America. Yet there were also some who benefited from the newly flourishing human smuggling networks located mostly in Aksaray.

Even though many of these early migrants were merely in transit in Turkey, there remained a small legally established community as a residue of this massive flow. İçduyuğu (2003) estimates that some 10,000 persons have remained in Turkey. Among the remnants of the pioneer group in Turkey, most have acquired Turkish nationality or long term residence and work permits and settled in Istanbul. Many of those are educated, professional, middle class. Iranian Azeris (i.e. Turcophone Iranians) acquired Turkish nationality relatively easier thanks to the Settlement Law of 1934.

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128 A. Didem Danış. Lecturer, Sociology Department, Galatasaray University and Ph.D. candidate, Ecoles des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Galatasaray University, Sociology Dept., Ciragan Cad. No.36, Ortakoy, 34357 Istanbul, Turkey. ddanis@gsu.edu.tr. Cherie Taraghi. Cultural orientation trainer, ICMC-Turkey. Poyracik sok. No.35, Nişantaşı, Şişli, Istanbul. taraghi@icmc.net
Some of these naturalized Iranians as well as the members of a small Iranian expatriate community have contacts with some key Iranian institutions in Istanbul, such as the primary school in Sultanahmet next to the Iranian Consulate, Iranian National Bank in Şişli. The life in Istanbul is quite comfortable for them and they do not face serious problems in their socio-economic incorporation thanks to their legal status in the country as well as their middle class positions. Another significant institution is called “Iranians Charity Association” (Iranlılar Hayır Derneği), a long-standing Iranian association established in the mid 1940s. The association does not seem to be active except organizing events during special dates such as Nevruz (Iranian spring festivity) and contributing in kind and money to the needy. According to the responsible of the association “99% of their members consist of Iranians with Turkish citizenship”\textsuperscript{129}.

Among these early transit migrants of the 1980s, there were also some persons who used clandestine ways to cross to Europe. At those years, irregular border crossings were relatively easier and cheaper. The cost and risks of such an alternative was much less compared to today, thanks to the relatively flexible border controls in Europe and Turkey.

5.2 SINCE THE 1990s: ETHNIC and RELIGIOUS MINORITIES on the ROUTE

In the 1990s, obtaining refugee status or realizing irregular migration became tougher for Iranians, like other Middle Eastern and African migrants. The emphasis put on “the control against illegal migration” in the EU agenda and increasing European pressure on Turkish authorities to improve border controls against irregular entries made things harder for new migrants.

Since the 1990s, Iranian emigration continues in small but consistent numbers. Iranians are the largest group among the asylum applicants in Turkey, even though they cannot acquire refugee status in Turkey due to the geographical limitation. Between 1997 and 2001 14,615 Iranians applied for asylum in Turkey. Among the Iranian asylum applicants, there are particularly ethnic and religious minorities, such as Kurds, Bahais, Christians and some others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>APPLICATIONS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,979</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3,843</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14,615</td>
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\textsuperscript{129} Interview on January 2006.
Iranian Kurds are in most difficult conditions among the Iranian minorities seeking asylum. Turkish authorities are anxious about accepting Iranian Kurds as in the case of the Iraqi Kurds, due to the ongoing Kurdish problem in the country. Concerned about their possible collaboration with Kurdish dissidents in the country, Turkish authorities kept Iranian Kurdish recognized asylum seekers in satellite cities where they can be watched closely. From time to time, Iranian Kurds organize protests angry of being stuck in the east of Turkey or in satellite cities and they criticize what they call “polities of cruelty and discouragement”. The hunger strikes organized in the summer of 2005 by a group of Iranian Kurds is very revealing in this sense. These Iranian Kurdish refugees had passed from Iran to Iraq and then into Turkey in 2001, running away from internal war among Iraqi Kurdish parties. They had applied for a refugee status on their arrival in Van, the famous entry point for many Iranians, and were granted right of asylum. However, until now they have not yet been sent to a third country, which made them to go to hungerstrike in front of the UNHCR Van office.

Van is one of the most significant localities for Asian and Middle Eastern migrants in Turkey. It is the first entry point for many foreigners, particularly Iranian. The majority of the population consists of Kurds, both national and foreigner. Van is seriously impoverished due to the massive flow of Kurds in the 1980s from the rural areas surrounding the city and thus has very little to offer to Iranian asylum seekers and migrants. The conditions are tough, particularly for undocumented Iranian Kurdish migrants.

Another minority group from Iran is the Bahai. Bahais are typical transit migrants, or to put it more correctly transit refugees. They submit their asylum application as soon as they enter into Turkey and almost all of them eventually leave the country with refugee status. The Bahai applicants receive a positive answer and acquire refugee status in particular from the USA. Thanks to the success of this procedure administered by the UNHCR and ICMC (International Catholic Migration Commission) most of the Bahais go to satellite cities as recognized refugees and they wait there until their paperwork is completed.

Christians are another group among Iranian religious minorities in Turkey. They are mostly newly converted just before departure in homeland or in Turkey. The antagonistic attitudes against converts in Islamic Republic of Iran become a strategy for some Iranians who seek to get accepted by Western countries. The persons who are baptized in Iran have more chances, than the ones who are converted in Turkey. The latter is often treated as a suspicious case by UNHCR officers and migration departments of embassies. Iranian Christians in Istanbul benefit from services provided by Christian charity organizations, in particular by Istanbul Interparish Migrants Program (IIMP). IIMP organizes courses to teach


131 A documentary prepared by Serkan Şavk, Barış Şahin ve Şevket Onur Cihan from Ankara University Short Film and Documentary Center provides striking scenes about the difficulties Iranians are enduring in Van (“Arka Bahçenin İnsanları” – people of the backyard).

132 ICMC Turkey also administers a “fast-track” program in Istanbul for Iranian Bahais. http://www.icmc.net/docs/en/null/turkeyback#4
English and Turkish to migrant children and serves food twice a week in the
garden of an ancient church in Beyoğlu.

IIMP, similar to the Caritas, is not officially recognized by Turkish
authorities. The restrictions to acquire a formal NGO status create problems for
these organizations. The unwelcome attitude by the authorities is mostly related to
their anxiety toward a possible missionary activity, as well as the intention of
limiting the activities of these organizations which relieve difficulties of survival
in Istanbul and thus become a pull factor for Middle Eastern Christians. The
attacks against Christian organizations have also been supported by the media,
who accused missionaries of “seducing Turkish Muslims in dire economic
conditions”133. Finally in 2005, Turkish authorities insisted that IIMP serves only
non-Muslims and do not receive any Muslim foreigners at their locale in Beyoğlu.

These non-Muslim religious organizations are very significant
particularly in an environment where there are limited, if any support provided to
foreigners by mainstream organizations. Nevertheless, mechanisms such as
religious networks that help migrant incorporation or survival are always delicate
and precarious, as is recently observed in the unexpected closing down of the
IIMP, after the murder of a Catholic priest in Trabzon in January 2005.

5.3 IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE

Aside from Iranian Kurdish and non-Muslim recognized refugees, there is an
ongoing migration from Iran by persons who are “seeking a better life”. Once
more it is very difficult to differentiate economic and political migrants (see the
section on Iraqi Christians for a critic of political vs. economic migrant
distinction). The repressive political and social conditions in Iran push many
Iranians out of their country and Turkey attracts many of them thanks to the
geo graphical and cultural proximity in addition to the “extent of freedoms” it has
to offer.

Iranian students provide a remarkable example for this category. Even
though Turkey is not the most favorite destination for affluent families who want
their child to study abroad, it still serves as an attractive option for those having
limited money but still wanting to “taste the freedom for a while”.

A larger group “in search for a better life” is the Iranian transit migrants who
are trying to reach “Western paradise” (Koser-Akcpar 2004). They are often
benefiting from human smuggling networks, since border crossings have become
more difficult as a result of the rapprochement between Turkey and the EU. Under
the pressure of the EU member states, Turkey increased its border controls in the
Eastern provinces, in particular around Van. Unlike the middle and upper class
Iranians who smoothly transited through Turkey in the 1980s, the migrants of the
1990s are less moneyed and use different travel networks and arrangements. The
key location in Istanbul for many of those Iranians, together with others from the
Middle East and North Africa is Aksaray.

133 See especially articles by Ali Bulaç “Misyonerlik ve azníklar”, Zaman, 05.02.2005;
“Misyonerlik” Zaman, 26.01.2005; “Yeni Hristiyan azníkl’ oluşturmak!” Zaman, 26.01.2005
and Hulki Cevizoğlu (2005) Misyonerlik ve Siyasal Hristiyanlık, Ceviz Kabuğu Yayınları:
Istanbul, for a compilation of accusations against Christian missionaries broadcasted in the
television program called “Ceviz Kabuğu”.
Aksaray is a very famous spot for most Iranians. Whether they are tourists or migrants, they know it much before their arrival to Istanbul. A variety of services offered in Aksaray is the main reason of its appeal for Iranian, as well as other foreigners in the city. Travel agencies, restaurants, hotels, leather and garment shops, nightclubs, all are welcoming the strangers in the city, including the Iranians. Aksaray also serves for accommodating some undocumented migrants of Iranian, African, Afghan or Iraqi origin. The relatively cheap rents for dilapidated and miserable lodging attract mostly single men in destitute, but also families, even though in smaller numbers.

Despite the increasing significance of undocumented transit Iranian migrants in Turkey, the total number of Iranians that are arrested by security forces is relatively low. The total number between 1995 and 2001 was 22,704. It was only 252 in 1995, 362 in 1996, 364 in 1997, and 1,116 in 1998 (İçduyuğu 2003, see also table 1.1 in the introduction for a comparison). After 1999 there occurred a sharp increase and it reached 5,281 in 1999, 6,825 in 2000 and 8,502 in 2001. According to the statistics provided by Koser-Akcapar (2004: 9) these figures are much lower for 2001 (3,514) and 2002 (2,508). In any case, compared to the Iraqis (77,643) who are apprehended for the same period between 1995 and 2001 and Afghans (22,158), it is certainly a small number, particularly if we remember that Iranians have always been on the top of the asylum seekers list in Turkey. One of the explanations for the low number of Iranians that are apprehended by Turkish security forces is related to the liberal visa regulation for Iranian nationals.

5.4 VISA-FREE REGULATION BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAN

An important factor that facilitates Iranians’ entry into Turkey was the visa-free travel that was signed between Turkey and Iran in 1964 (Apap, Carrera & Kirişçi 2005: 47). Many Iranians who transited through Turkey in their emigration have benefited from this regulation, which allowed them to enter and stay in Turkey for three months without visa obligation. Thus despite the low number of Iranian undocumented migrants apprehended by Turkish authorities, there have been hundreds of thousands Iranians who entered officially into country. As seen in the table below, official entries of Iranians in 2003 were almost half a million in 2003.

The visa-free arrangement with Iran has contributed to the commercial relations between Iran and Turkey. Iranian merchants, in particular Iranian Azeri, have been one of the pioneers in the suitcase trade. They have been shuttling between Turkey and Iran for suitcase trade or for border trade around Van. Some of these Iranian cyclical migrants have later on overstayed their visa-free time and slipped into clandestinity. Some of these undocumented Iranians are the persons who do not want to return to Iran, which they describe as a “prison life”. Today, Iranians are among the foreign undocumented workers in Istanbul. In addition to construction, they have been working in textile, in the same conditions with other undocumented migrants.
The liberal visa regime has also increased the touristic appeal of Turkey, especially its Mediterranean shores for Iranian middle classes who cannot travel easily to European countries because of the visa restrictions. The increase in the number of Iranian tourists has been observed by media as well. It is estimated that there were around half a million Iranian tourist in 2004. The favorite destinations of Iranian middle and upper classes are mostly the five star hotels or holiday villages in Bodrum, Antalya and Alanya. The increasing attractiveness of Turkey can also be observed by the increase in the airline companies that carry passengers between Iran and Turkey. While, in 1999 there was only one company (the Iranian, Mahan Air), it later on joined by Turkish Airlines, Iranian Airlines and Kish Air. In 2003, there was a boom in the airline transportation between Iran and Turkey, and the number of companies rose to ten.

The flexible visa policy with Iran does not seem to last very long due to new regulations to be implemented for Turkey’s harmonization with the EU acquis. Within the framework of the harmonization process, Turkey decided to abolish its visa free travel for six countries including Iran in 2005 (the others are Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Morocco, and Tunisia). Aware of its possible negative consequences on tourism and trade, the minister of foreign affairs declared that they will implement some special facilities to the citizens of these countries by bilateral agreements.

5.5 NETWORKS FOR SURVIVAL, NETWORKS FOR INCORPORATION

Şebnem Koser-Akçapar (2004), an expert on Iranian migration, argues that there is no form of integration for Iranian transit migrants in Turkey, because they perceive Turkey as a “waiting room”. According to her, Iranian undocumented migrants are enduring a multi-faceted exclusion due to their political, legal, social and economic vulnerability. Based on our observations in the field, we agree to her argument. Nevertheless, we believe that there are still some social networks that Iranians utilize either as a survival or incorporation strategy.

134 “İranlılar Türkiye’de tatilde” Hürriyet, 25.07.2004
135 “Türkiye vizede AB’ye uyacak”, Radikal, 11.2.2005
The networks that Iranians mobilize in Istanbul are mostly familial and ethnic-religious ones. Familial ties provide a crucial resource for Iranians, as for other migrant groups. They utilize and mobilize contacts with family members who are in Istanbul or relatives abroad and at home. Relatives furnish a social, mental as well as economic assistance that relieve to some extent migrants’ vulnerability and thus facilitate their survival in Istanbul.

Religious networks in Istanbul seem to offer more institutionalized services than other types of social networks. Both Bahai circles and Christian charity organizations such as IIMP provide an environment of security and solidarity for Iranian migrants. IIMP office for instance, provides material assistance including serving of food in special days, financial support for medical care, as well as educational services such as language courses in their domicile in Beyoğlu. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, they have been accused of missionary activities and forbidden to provide services to Muslim foreigners. Such non-Muslim religious organizations work in precarious conditions, as observed very recently in the closing down of the IIMP office for security reasons after the murder of a Catholic priest in Trabzon.

These networks help more the survival of newly arrived Iranian migrants rather than their integration. It is particularly more difficult to talk about incorporation in the case of undocumented transit migrants. Their main objective being to reach the Europe, even though it becomes harder day by day, they perceive their stay in Istanbul as temporary. Besides, prevalence of a deep lack of trust among Iranians prevents the construction of a wider social space that Iranians, regardless of their ethnic, religious or legal background, can participate. Despite the significance of the networks that serve different Iranian groups, there is no appearance of a diasporic community. Instead, what is observed is a segmented community, where each segment is very small in numbers and there is an established suspicion among each communal segment. Iranians do not trust one another and rumors within the community worsen the in-community suspicion. Thus, long-established Iranians who acquired a regular status owing to their Turkish citizenship or long-term residence permits seem to avoid lending a hand to the newcomers. This communal fragmentation is also related to the authoritarian rule in Iran which promotes an environment of suspicion and untrustworthiness among the nationals. In short what is observed in the case of social networking of Iranian migrants is a pragmatic relationship constructed and maintained out of necessity.
6. CONCLUSION

During the fieldwork, we constantly questioned the validity of our project title, ‘integration in limbo’. One of our questions was whether we may really talk about integration (or socio-economic incorporation more precisely) in the case of undocumented migrants in Turkey whose conditions are extremely precarious. Besides, the Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants that we focus on in our research constitute ‘unstable’ groups, since some of their members change continuously. Nevertheless, during the fieldwork we realized that even though some of their members are merely transiting, these communities are slowly settling in Istanbul, or are already settled, as in some cases such as Iraqi or Afghan Turkmen. Thus, we were convinced on the title ‘integration in limbo’ connoting an unofficial incorporation where the migrants are inserted by mobilizing their own resources without state assistance.

As fieldwork proceeded it was discovered that our initial plan to study whole populations of Iraqis, Afghans, Maghrebi and Iranians was too ambitious, given the heterogeneity of each migrant population in terms of their legal status and the effect this has on their ability to integrate. There are overlapping characteristics between the migrant populations from each different country and it must be pointed out that their migratory and legal profile determines the features they have in common with other groups than with their co-nationals having different legal status and migratory plans. In other words, the categorization according to nationalities is not exhaustive to understand Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants’ modes of incorporation in Istanbul. As we have presented in the above chapters, each nationality has inner differentiations regarding their ethnic, religious and other characteristics. For instance Kurds from Iran and Iraq have more resemblance to each other than they have to their Turkish-speaking or Christian co-nationals. Above all the ethnic or religious affiliations are the distinguishing characteristic for many migrants is their official status: whether one is legal or not (thanks to acquiring refugee status, residence permit or citizenship; or owing to have a non-expired tourist visa) mean a lot for socio-economic, as well as mental relief.

Another question was to what extent we may talk of a successful integration for the migrants concerned. We should put it clearly that our findings on Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian migrants do not illustrate a fully accomplished socio-economic integration for all of them. As a matter of fact, it is out of question to accomplish a full incorporation for the migrants who do have limited material or non-material resources, insecure legal status and no state-assistance. As we observed, migrants’ incorporation necessitates some sort of bond between the migrants and the receiving society, or more correctly with a fragment of the society. In this sense, what we observe is a ‘segmented incorporation’, whenever

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136 In this research we utilized integration as a short-hand for the migrants’ socio-economic incorporation and ‘limbo’ signifies the vagueness and fluidity of the status of migrants that we concentrate on.
we may talk of integration. For instance, Iraqi Christians’ incorporation through the link of Syriac community in Istanbul or the Iraqi and Iranian Kurds’ insertion via their contacts with Kurdish political milieus indicates a ‘segmented incorporation’. The segmented incorporation points also at an ‘integration from periphery’ in terms of participation into labor and housing market: A large proportion of these migrants work in informal sector and dwell in residential locations that can easily be called as ‘periphery of the center’ or ‘center of the periphery’.137

The strength and success of the migrants’ incorporation depends on the capacity of each social segment they incorporate. For instance, the remnants of the Syriac community in Istanbul can offer employment opportunities to their Iraqi co-religious thanks to their relatively well-off economic standing, even though the population and the societal infrastructure of Christian minorities of Turkey have substantially diminished in the last century. On the other hand, Kurds of Turkey, another segment of the receiving society in Turkey are socio-economically and politically incapacitated, particularly because of the involuntary migration that they had to endure in the last decades. Thus, the integration of Kurds from Iran and Iraq is feeble since they are inserted into the deprived and disadvantaged setting of their co-ethnics in Istanbul. Their conditions have further been worsened due to their ethnic identity which is perceived as a threat against the integrity of Turkish state and society.

6.1 Social networks facilitating ‘segmented incorporation’

Given the weakness of state assistance or authorized non-governmental organizations providing services for regular or irregular migrants, social networks of migrants become primary importance for their survival and incorporation in Turkey. Since the first moments of their arrival every migrants get into contact with an informal reception mechanism. The components of these networks both carry similarities and differences for different migrant groups.

In the absence of formal organizations, family -in its extended and imaginary form- is the foremost resource to ease the migration, incorporation and survival of undocumented migrants. Various members of the family play an active role in the migration process: first of all, they make possible the dissemination of information, even though it sometimes consists of incorrect information, about opportunities in different countries and cities. Thus, for instance Iraqi Christian transit migrants learn about whether Turkey, Syria or Jordan is better to head off in order to submit their application for Australia and Canada. For all migrants groups, family members, whenever they exist, provide a shelter and help their relatives to find an employment. They thus incorporate newcomers into an already constructed employment network, such as the Afghan tannery network, Maghrebi nanny network or the Iraqi Turkmen trade niche in Laleli.

If the migrants do not have relatives in Istanbul as the primary basis of networking, they look for other resources of sociability and mobilize their social capital to build social networks to get in contact with the segments of the

137 It is no coincidence that the neighborhoods that these migrants are clustered (e.g. Tarlabaşı, Kurtuluş, Dolapdere, Zeytinburnu, Künkapi) have been characterized by internal migration waves much before the arrival of the foreign migrants.
receiving society. Types of social capital benefited are various, depending on the resources and needs of migrants. As in the case of Iraqi Assyro-Chaldeans it can be a religious network enhanced in contact with the local Syriac in Istanbul, or as in the case of Iraqi Kurds it can be an ethno-political network built around Kurdish political and solidarity ethos. What seems interesting in terms of networks is that they are always built thanks to a special tie that migrants may mobilize to construct a relationship with a segment of the receiving society.

Linguistic, religious and ethnic capitals are the most significant resources that migrants mobilize for their survival and incorporation. Linguistic capital which also signifies an ethnic affiliation in the case of Iraqi and Afghan Turkmen or Iranian Azeri, creates a sense of cultural closeness with the receiving society. The benefits of linguistic capital for migrants’ incorporation are not limited to the knowledge of Turkish language. Knowledge of Arabic, for instance, becomes a remarkable skill for Iraqi and Maghrebi migrants who look for a job in the economic sphere flourished around the suitcase trade in Laleli and Osmanbey which attracts cyclical migrants from Arab countries.

Another social capital that is mobilized is the religious affiliation. In this sense, non-Muslim milieus seem to offer more than its Islamic counterpart, as observed in the Assyro-Chaldean networks of the Iraqis, Bahai or Christian affiliations of Iranians. This is also related to the non-Muslim character of a few charity organizations and to the stronger solidarity among Christian communities in Istanbul, probably due to their minority identity. Surprisingly, the fact that Maghrebs in Istanbul are mostly Sunni Muslim do not help them to get in contact with Sunni Turkish society, maybe because they cannot find a particular niche to fit in.

Lastly we may talk of ethnic networks, as in the case of Kurds. However, we observed that Kurdish ethnic ties are not as fruitful as other networks, unless it is combined with some sort of political affiliation. Thus in the case of Iraqi or Iranian Kurds one needs to talk about an ethno-political network rather than a purely ethnic network. One explanation for the failure of the Kurdish ethnic networks is probably related to the unfriendly attitudes of Turkish authorities and the weakness of Kurdish communal infrastructure in Istanbul.

### 6.2 Incorporation into housing and labor sectors

One of the significant contributions of these networks for the newly arrived migrants is to find an accommodation and they mostly resort to their co-nationals to solve this problem. This is why there is a particular spatial clustering for certain migrant groups in Istanbul. For instance, while Maghrebs as well as Iraqi Kurds (in addition to other foreigners such as sub-Saharan Africans) inhabit Kumkapı-Yenikapı, Afghans dwell in Zeytinburnu and Iraqi Christians prefer the surroundings of Tarlabası-Dolapdere-Elmadag. One should note that despite this concentration in certain neighborhoods, many of the migrants are trying to keep low profile, owing to the precariousness of their legal status. This is also observed in the weak communal infrastructure of certain groups, in particular of Maghrebs who do have a very small community and very limited resources to initiate particular associations and meeting places. Unlike them, Iraqi or Afghan Turkmen have been able to build a social space, with some representative spots such as Iraqi Turkmen association in Aksaray or Afghan coffeehouses in Zeytinburnu.
Networks do certainly play a role for the participation of newly arrived migrants into the employment market. This is realized sometimes by a simple from-mouth-to-ear, sometimes a more organized (via migrant associations) dissemination of information regarding employment opportunities. This preferential dissemination of employment news results in clustering of certain groups in certain jobs and creation of ethnic niches. Accordingly there appears a domestic labor niche for Maghrebi nannies working for the francophone ex-pats, or Iraqi Christian girls working at the houses of local Syriac families. Niche formation is much weaker for the men. The newly arrived undocumented migrants whatever their ethnic or religious background have the most precarious conditions; they work mostly in low status, low paid jobs in construction or textile. Then comes the more settled ones, such as Iraqi or Afghan Turkmen: After all those years since their initial migration, they have been able to build special employment sectors, also thanks to their various competences or capitals brought from homeland. Thus many Afghans are employed in tanneries and Iraqis have their own business in export-centers of Laleli and Osmanbey. The few Iraqi Turkmens who arrived for educational purposes and eventually acquired Turkish nationality have surely been fully integrated both economically and socially and are now working in high-status professions, as doctor, engineer, academician or pharmacist.

One significant leg of the migrants’ networks is the ‘pioneers’, or those who are ‘already settled’ in Istanbul. They construct a social milieu that provides necessary contacts for the newcomers particularly in the employment and accommodation problems. These pioneers are of course benefiting from their intermediary or bridging role between newcomers and the reception society. These bridges are often Turkish citizens, sometimes with a migrant background, like in the case of the Turkmen who have acquired Turkish citizenship before 1990s; or sometimes these persons may be members of an ethnic or religious minority group, like the Kurds or Syriacs of Turkey. In the case of suitcase traders, they become ‘social entrepreneurs’, as observed in the Maghrebis.138

6.3 School, health and other social services

The requirement for enrollment into public schools in Turkey was to have an official residence permit; this was changed in late 2004. Thus the children of undocumented migrants may attend public educational institutions, however registering for school requires the provision of an address and most of the irregular migrants do not wish to risk such an exposition of their whereabouts. For that reason, the parents try to find alternative solutions, wherever possible. During the fieldwork we observed that the most successful solution is religious or religious-affiliated educational institutions. For instance some Moroccan families opt for Koranic schools, Iraqi Christians attend the unofficial school in Caritas same as Iranian Christian children who attended courses that was offered by IIMP –until this latter was closed down by IIMP administration, because of the murder of a priest in Trabzon in January 2006.

138 Among these intermediaries there are also persons who are mediating not for integration but for the continuation of the migration; they are the dealers between smuggling networks and the potential clients, i.e. candidates to exile. These “unlawful” bridges can be Turkish as well as foreigner, like the early-arrived undocumented migrants who work for smuggling networks.
Access to health services is better than access to schools, owing to the abundance of private clinics offering health services to anybody who has sufficient money to pay the bill. However, as a matter of fact many undocumented migrants do not have enough economic resources to pay the high cost of medical services. In this case, either the familial and communal solidarity (sometimes through the money transfers sent by relatives abroad), or in rare cases charity organizations involve to pay the costs.

In Turkey there was almost no possibility for undocumented migrants to benefit from basic social services such as health and education unless they acquire an official status. During the recent discussions on the social security reform in Turkey it has been mentioned that asylum seekers will be able to benefit from public health services, still this new law seems to exclude undocumented migrants and rejected asylum seekers. It is likely that this approach in Turkey will change during the EU harmonization process.

6.4 Implications of state policies for ‘integration in limbo’

The policies adopted and implemented by states have certainly an important saying in the migration and incorporation strategies of new migrants. First of all, they affect the volume and morphology of migration flows. For example, the visa-free entry right of Iranians and Maghrebis until recently, has pulled many of them into Turkey; yet similarly new visa laws in line with EU regulations will certainly decrease the intensity of these flows. Moreover, the intensification of Turkish authorities’ ‘struggle against illegal migration’ leads to a re-arrangement of irregular migratory routes and diminishes the volume of undocumented migrants in the country. Yet it should be reminded that the improvement of border controls results also in the besieging of more and more undocumented migrants in Istanbul.

The policies have also an effect on modes of socio-economic incorporation of new migrants. The attempts of the Turkish authorities to regularize the so-called ‘suitcase trade’ in Laleli and Osmanbey diminishes the volume of this trade and thus restrains the employment opportunities for some migrants. Besides campaigns against informal foreign workers, supported both by new laws and media coverage, pushes foreign undocumented workers into invisibility and worsen their work conditions due to their increased precariousness.

State policies and institutional arrangements bound the limits of migrants’ social networks. The segmented incorporation of migrants via social networks in the environment of limited financial and institutional capacities and weakness, if not absence, of reception policies in Turkey, is very precarious and contingent on policies as well as on the official treatment of foreigners in the country. Thus such an incorporation, even though it is highly important for the survival of undocumented migrants, is condemned to stay ‘in limbo’, unless an improvement in the migrants’ status does not occur. Mechanisms that help migrant incorporation or survival are always delicate and precarious, as is recently observed in the unexpected closing down of the IIMP, one of the most significant non-official Christian charity organization providing services for African and Iranian Christians.
In a word, in line with the instability of transit or undocumented migrants’ stay in Istanbul, their social networks are unsteady and jeopardized of quivering in consequence of legal or political changes.
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