

Hajji Ibrahim wishes that “everyone can declare his identity freely, without fear” (p. 354). In fact, it was a Kurdish cleric, Mullah Chelebi (Çelebi), who encouraged him to reveal his true identity now in Germany. However, Mullah Chelebi has a different conception of Hajji Ibrahim’s identity. For him, Ibrahim is a Kurd whose religion is Islam and whose origin is Armenian, and that is nothing to hide. How many Kurds or Turks of Armenian origin are aware of their roots and are willing to acknowledge that? More importantly, how many are those in whose identity the Armenian element overwhelms to the extent of pushing them to come forward and identify themselves as Armenians, that is, Muslim Armenians?

Aside from these Islamized families, as Kirkor Ceyhan attested and as was discussed earlier, there were also Armenian families who lived as Christians, especially in the Gerger region. These Armenians were entirely acculturated and religion was the only element marking the difference in their identity. Obviously, in their case too the memory of their past lingered and was passed on.

The transference of historical memory occurred in most Islamized or Christian Armenians, especially in those who were not completely absorbed by the politically prescribed Turkish identity. But those who were, the ones presumed to be the majority, have been able to successfully bury the past and live like many Turks do, aloof and ignorant of that past. The Armenian ancestors of these people were either very young, without recollection of the events of 1915 and their origin, or they kept the memory secret and refrained from passing on the memory or its pain. The family history of people with that kind of a buried past begins with the Republican era.