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Ethno-territorial conflict and coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydan

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Chapter Five

5 Ethno-Territorial Groups and Encounters

The Caucasus, Central Asia, and Fereydan are all ethnically heterogeneous regions. However, not all ethnic groups can be labeled as ethno-territorial. In order to qualify as an ethno-territorial group, an ethnic group should live in a relatively compact area in which many largely ethnically homogenous villages, towns, or cities lie, and the ethnic group should be rooted. In other words, indigenous people, who have lived on a territory for generations and who have a historical claim of indigeneity on the land are ethno-territorial. In addition, when a people does not have a long historical presence in an area but is present in large numbers and inhabits many relatively homogeneous villages, towns, or cities in a contiguous area, they can also be labeled as ethno-territorial. The logic behind this is that because of their large number and ethnic concentration, they are able to lay potential claims on land. The criteria for identification of ethnic groups as ethno-territorial are described in the Chapter 4 (Methods).

Usually, ethno-territorial groups are peoples who get a color on maps of ethnic distribution. The making and correction of maps of ethnic distribution itself, however, requires time and skilled personnel, and in their absence certain reliable secondary sources. The best method for mapping ethnic distribution in an area is long-term fieldwork. However, due to the vast area covered by this study, this task is not possible in a limited time. I have relied on many sources in order to validate or correct and modify the available ethnic maps. In addition to my fieldwork, I have relied on information from other sources, such as other maps, books, statistical data, and documents, as well as information provided to me by experts and locals during my fieldworks in the regions. The best maps of ethnic distribution in the Caucasus and Central Asia so far have been from *Narody mira: Istoriko etnograficheskii spravochnik* [Peoples of the World: Historical and Ethnographic Directory], edited by the Soviet ethnologist, Bromley (1988), and those in *Atlas Ethnopoliticheskoi Istorii Kavkaza (1774–2004)* [Atlas of Ethnopolitical history of the Caucasus], by Artur Tsutsiev (2006). The maps of ethnic distribution in Central Asia

and the Caucasus made by the CIA also appear to be largely reliable and are in agreement with most other maps.⁸¹ It appears that those maps were largely in accordance with Soviet-made maps (for example, those included in many Soviet-made encyclopedias), corresponded to the ethnic categories of the Soviet censuses, and implicitly took Soviet ethnic statistics for granted.

In this study, the last Soviet census (1989) is chosen as the main source of demographic data, and its ethnic categories are largely maintained. In a few cases, however, new ethnic categories are introduced, and in a small number of cases some ethnic categories are merged together. In general the Soviet categorization is maintained if the groups were smaller than 20,000. A good reason to separate groups from each other is when they differ in language, religion, or both. Having the same religion while speaking (nearly) the same language were reasons to merge the formerly separated groups. In addition, in all cases the subjective feelings of the ethnic population are regarded as a very important criterion. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to correct the numbers of many ethnic groups, as it appears that the numbers of non-titular ethnic groups in some republics were underestimated. Such a correction could potentially affect the results of the analysis. These operations, however, appear not to have significant effects on the results of the analysis of this study. In addition, arbitrariness in identifying ethno-territorial groups, and hence ethno-territorial encounters, has almost no effect on the Boolean analysis and only minor effects on the statistical analyses. The Boolean analysis in this study can only be distorted in very rare situations, which did not arise in this study. There is a large number of cases of ethno-territorial encounters, with identical scores on the variables. Therefore, despite the possible shortcomings in the identification of ethno-territorial groups and encounters and shortcomings in the modification of maps of ethnic distribution, the results of this study are highly reliable.

Intimately related to the type of ethno-geographical configuration is the number of ethno-territorial groups and encounters in an area. A large number of ethno-territorial groups and encounters in a relatively small area suggests a mosaic type of ethno-territorial configuration. In the larger region of Central Asia, there are relatively fewer ethno-territorial groups than in the smaller Caucasus. In Fereydan there is also a relatively large number of ethno-territorial groups, when one considers its small size. The same can be said about the number of ethno-territorial

⁸¹ These maps are available online at the University of Texas Perry-Castañeda Library's Map Collection: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/> (Accessed 23 October 2011). On the website, it is stated that the maps there were produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, unless otherwise indicated.

encounters in each region. The map of the Caucasus, as well as that of Fereydan, is ethnically fragmented, as many ethno-territorial groups live there in relatively small pockets of ethnic concentration. On the other hand, in Central Asia relatively few(er) ethno-territorial groups (in comparison with the Caucasus) live over large areas. Aside from its southeastern part, the map of ethnic distribution in Central Asia is not as fragmented as is the case in the Caucasus and Fereydan. The mosaic type is the prevailing type of ethno-geographic configuration in the Caucasus, Fereydan, and the southeastern part of Central Asia, but not in other parts of Central Asia. The correction of the Soviet ethnic categories has decreased the number of ethno-territorial groups and encounters in the Caucasus. Nevertheless, the Caucasus still displays the mosaic type of ethno-geographic configuration. The numbers of ethno-territorial encounters in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Fereydan are presented in Table 5.1. The exact cases of ethno-territorial encounters are shown in Appendix 5, at the end of this book. This dataset (Appendix 5) specifies whether or not each encounter is situated in an area of the mosaic type of ethno-territorial configuration, measured by the criteria and instrument developed for that purpose (see the chapter on Methods, and Appendix 1). Except for a few minor cases, the maps of ethnic distribution represented in Chapter one (Figures 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4) show the location and encounters between the ethno-territorial groups in the region rather accurately.⁸²

Many sources,⁸³ such as *The Red Book of the Peoples of The Russian Empire*, [further referred to as the *Red Book* (1991)],⁸⁴ *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, [further referred to as *Ethnohistorical* (1994)],⁸⁵ *Natsional'nosti SSSR* (Kozlov

⁸² These maps (Figures 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4) are based on the so-called CIA maps available online at the University of Texas Perry-Castañeda Library's Map Collection: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>. I have modified and corrected them as much as possible, but there is still room for improvements.

⁸³ To name a few sources, other than those mentioned in the text, and different statistical services of different post-Soviet countries and different encyclopedias published in the former Soviet Union, the following sources were also consulted: Abazov (2007); Belozerov 2005; Bugay & Gonov (2004); Demoscope.ru; *Encyclopædia Iranica*; *Ethnologue* (2009, 16th edition); Isfahanportal.ir; MAR; Hovian (2001); Ilkhamov & Zhukova (eds) (2002); Minahan (2004); *Naseleniye Soyuznykh Respublik* [The Union Republics' Population] (1977); Sakaharov, Bugay, Kolodinkova, Mamraev & Sidorova (eds) (2006); Sepiani (1979); Sinelina (2006); Yunusov (2001; 2004; 2006); Wixman (1984).

⁸⁴ *The Red Book of the Peoples of The Russian Empire* is an encyclopedic book which lists and discusses the smallest ethnic groups of the former Soviet Union. Different entries are written by Margus Kolga, Igor Tõnurist, Lembit Vaba, and Juri Viikberg. It seems that its English online version, edited by Andrew Humphreys and Krista Mits, is a translation from the Estonian version published earlier. As its foreword is dated 1991, the source is referred to as *Red Book* 1991. As it is a source of encyclopedic nature, with a team of authors, the text of my study refers to the whole source rather than to the authors of each entry, followed by the name of the chapter. The names of the authors of each entry are not clearly mentioned, but can only be guessed from the initials placed after each entry. The links to different chapters are mentioned in the notes.

⁸⁵ *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires* is an encyclopedic book which lists and discusses the ethnic groups of the former Soviet Union. It has short and long entries. The

1982), and *Atlas Etnopoliticheskoi Istorii Kavkaza* (Tsutsiev 2006), were consulted in order to determine whether a group is ethno-territorial or not, to obtain an accurate picture of their encounters, and to obtain information on their predominant native language and religion. All data about ethnic groups and their languages and religions are in accordance with these sources. In cases when these sources disagreed with each other, experts were consulted or an attempt was made to collect data from informants in and outside the field.

Table 5.1. Ethno-territorial encounters in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Fereydan

REGION/UNION REPUBLIC	NO.
Armenia	5
Georgia	14
Azerbaijan	15
Russian Federation (the North Caucasian part)	46
Total Caucasus	80
Kazakhstan	11
Kyrgyzstan	7
Uzbekistan	9
Tajikistan	4
Turkmenistan	2
Total Central Asia	33
Total Fereydan	16

Further on, this chapter discusses the ethno-territorial groups which form the basis of these ethno-territorial encounters. The ethno-territorial groups in each region and their dominant religion and language (as well as its linguistic affiliation) are listed in Tables 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4. There are 28, 13, and 7 ethno-territorial groups, respectively, in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Fereydan (plus those ethno-territorial groups neighboring this region and forming ethno-territorial encounters with the Fereydani ethno-territorial groups). The attribution of either ethno-territorial or non-ethno-territorial label to most of the ethnic groups, especially the titular and larger ones, is evident. Below, however, a few cases are discussed which required clarification. In general, the ambiguities with regard to the ethno-territorial status of ethnic groups stems from three origins, and three questions should be answered: first, whether the Soviet census categories represented the (objective and subjective) reality on the ground; second, whether the numbers presented in the last Soviet census of 1989 were

book is edited by James. S. Olson, Lee Brigance Pappas, and Nicholas C. J. Pappas. The information in this book was collected and written by a team of authors. The text of my study refers to the whole source rather than to the authors of each entry, followed by the number of the page(s) on which the information can be found. I will provide in the footnotes the author of entries whenever they are mentioned below the entries in the dictionary.

correct; and third, whether each ethnic group living in those areas met the criteria of being an ethno-territorial group.

Ethno-Territorial Groups in the Caucasus

The ethnic landscape of the Caucasus is very fragmented. This ethnic fragmentation is higher in the North Caucasus, and notably in Dagestan, where many ethno-territorial groups live in a relatively small area. Twenty-eight ethno-territorial groups live in the Caucasus, rooted groups which form spatial ethnic concentrations and hence can be called ethno-territorial groups. Of these, no less than 20 live in the North Caucasus. (There are a few ethno-territorial groups who live both in the North and the South Caucasus.) Ethno-territorial groups in the Caucasus are listed in Table 5.2. Of the 129 ethno-territorial encounters, the Caucasus alone accounted for 80 ethno-territorial *encounters*.

As discussed earlier, the Soviet nationalities policies originated in the first years after the Revolution, but its territorial manifestations were largely consolidated in the later 1930s. The census categories, and hence the recognized ethnic groups, were also consolidated from the 1930s onwards and show a great deal of consistency (see e.g. Hirsch 1997; Hirsch 2005). In the last Soviet census (1989), some minor corrections were made and a few long-ignored ethnic categories were reintroduced. In this study, the last Soviet census (1989) is used to give an overview of ethnic diversity in the Caucasus. Only some minor corrections had to be made. These corrections related to the underestimation of non-titular groups in the Republic of Azerbaijan and also the issue of the Yezidis, as well as the Circassians and their Kypchak Turkic-speaking neighbors registered as Karachays and Balkars.

De Waal (2003: 133) quotes his communication with Valery Tishkov, in which he states: “[The Union Republics] behaved much more harshly to minorities than Moscow did. When the breakup [of the Soviet Union] is described all attention is on Moscow, but the biggest assimilators were Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan (Armenia less so only because it had fewer minorities.)” [brackets and parentheses are in the source]. In reality, the ethnic demographics of Georgia appeared not to be very distorted and the assimilations there appeared to be of a different nature than in the other two republics. Indeed, all Kartvelian groups and Tsova Tush were registered as Georgians. This, however, was not very strange because these people adhered to the Georgian Orthodox Church, were all bilingual (and many even mono-lingual) in Georgian proper, Kartuli, and used it as their literary language and identified themselves as Kartvelian, i.e. Georgian. It is, nevertheless, true that many of these so-

called ethnographic groups of Georgians have lost their language and adopted Georgian proper after they migrated to bigger cities such as Tbilisi. According to Pelkmans (2002; 2005; 2006), many Muslim Georgians in Adjara were Christianized, until recent years. My own observation shows that this process is still continuing. One notes that the Christian flag, with its crosses, is also included on the Adjaran flag, after the so-called Rose Revolution.⁸⁶ Although there is no maltreatment of fellow Muslim Georgians, the Georgian Orthodox Christianity is still perceived as a pillar of the Georgian national identity. Somewhat similarly, owing to similarity in religion and culture—and hence intermarriages—Armenians have assimilated a number of Assyrians, who were, nevertheless, not present in large numbers. The situation in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan was very different and will be discussed in this chapter.

Using a wrong designation for an ethnic group is a form of inaccuracy and misrepresentation of ethnic categories. Such decisions are often politically motivated. The designation Azeri or Azerbaijani for the titular population of the Republic of Azerbaijan is not without its problems. The ethnonym Azerbaijani, for the predominantly Shi'ite Muslim, Turkic-speaking population of the South Caucasus, is a relatively modern designation (Tsutsiev 2006: 67). A 19th century Russian source describing the peoples of the Caucasus (Bronevskiy: 2004 [19th century]), does not use this ethnonym for this people. The area to the north of the river Araxes was not called Azerbaijan prior to 1918, unlike the region in northwestern Iran that has been called so since long ago (see Appendix 3). The areas to the north of the river Araxes were called Arran, Albania, Shirvan, Shervan, etc. (by different people at different times). Those areas were first called Azerbaijan during the briefly independent Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, and the name was preserved after the Bolsheviks took over political power in that republic. Their choice was in agreement with the Cold War discourse, in which “North” (in the cases of Vietnam and Korea) was usually associated with communism and “South” with capitalism (Hunter 1997: 437). A similar Soviet naming trick was also applied in Moldavia and Ukraine (see Cowther 1997: 317).

However, despite the fact that this ethnic designation is not based on historically solid grounds, in this book the predominantly Shi'ite Muslim, Turkic-speaking people of the South Caucasus are called Azeris or Azerbaijanis. All in all, even if their territory's name has not been called Azerbaijan before, it is not too far-fetched to call its titular ethnic

⁸⁶ The Rose Revolution (2003) toppled Shevardnadze's presidency, after which Mikheil Saakashvili became president (2004).

group—who have cultural similarities with Azeris in Iran—Azeris or Azerbaijanis, for reasons of consistency with the (post)-Soviet era.

There is also controversy with regard to a few other ethnic groups in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The information offered by Yunusov (2001; 2006) suggests that the numbers of Talysh, Tats, Kurds, Georgians, and Lezgins were underestimated in the last Soviet census (and in that of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan), while the Shahdagh people, small ethnic groups who spoke languages and dialects related to Lezgian proper, were totally ignored as an ethnic group. Regarding the fact that the Shahdagh people were small ethnic groups who spoke languages related to Lezgian (proper), it was not very strange that they were registered as Lezgins (and a number also as Azeris). This was not detrimental to the situation of Lezgins, who claimed their numbers were underestimated in Azerbaijan. Indeed, many sources and generally many people in the Republic of Azerbaijan do agree that the number of minorities is underestimated there. They even proudly say: “Unlike in the *homogeneous Armenia*, many minorities live in Azerbaijan *without any problems*”. The truth is, however, that there were separatist or autonomist sentiments and movements among the Talysh (De Waal 2003: 215), Lezgins (Cornell 2001: 268-272; Cornell 2011: 75; Walker 2001: 339), and also to minor extent among the Avars (Walker 2001: 345), whose actions, nevertheless, do not qualify as ethno-territorial conflicts. Indeed, many members of minority groups do not feel quite content with their situation in the Republic of Azerbaijan and will voice their opposition towards their neglect in the mainly Turkic discourse of the republic’s affairs. The figures [i.e. higher population numbers claimed by many ethnic groups’ leaders] “are denied by the Azerbaijani government, but in private many Azeris acknowledge the fact that the Lezgin—and for that matter the Talysh or the Kurdish- population of Azerbaijan—is far higher than official figures” (Cornell 2001: 269).

The Tsarist era census data (in Yunusov 2004: 346-352, Tables 1-5) suggest that Yunusov (2001; 2006) is right about the underestimations. Although his estimations are still generally lower than most other estimations (e.g. *Ethnologue* 2009, 16th edition), the information provided by him enables us to come to estimations closer to the reality. Therefore, in this study, the numbers of these ethnic groups are corrected and, therefore, deviate from the numbers of the last Soviet census, and even somewhat from those in Yunusov 2001; 2006). Using the information offered in Yunusov (2006) and other sources, the following (rather modest) estimations can be made: Talysh (380,000–500,000), Tats (82,000), Kurds (41,000), Georgians (24,000), and Lezgins (260,000–410,000) (see Appendix 3).

In addition to the underestimation of numbers of ethnic population, the simple misrepresentation of ethnic categories was a practice in the Soviet Union. Besides the case of Azeris and somewhat dissimilar from it were the notable cases of Yezidis, Karachays and Balkars, and Kabardins, Adyghes and Cherkess, as well as Pamiris (in Central Asia), which will be discussed further in this chapter. Even though the division of cultural groups into clear-cut and mutually exclusive ethnic categories is an arbitrary process, this can be achieved by examining certain criteria consistently in all cases. The Soviet policy makers regarded language as the main denominator of ethnicity (see the discussion in Chapter 3), but even they were not consistent in that respect. In many cases the Soviet ethnic categorization was consistent with the pre-existing self-identification of the people involved or their identification by others. In many cases the Soviet policy makers succeeded in creating new ethnic categories which became accepted and socially internalized by the people involved (see e.g. the discussion on Uzbeks and Tajiks in Central Asia further in this chapter). Owing to the effects of the Soviet legacy on ethnic and national identification, this study attempts to maintain the Soviet categories as much as possible.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, there were notable cases in which the pre-existing self-identification was stronger, and people resisted the arbitrary categorization. These were usually cases when the policy makers disrespected the existing sense of belonging together of certain people, or religion had been ignored as an ethnic marker although the people involved had a sense of identity owing primarily to their religious orientation. Such a case is that of the Yezidis.

Yezidis are an ethno-territorial group in the Caucasus. They are a close-knit ethnic group who follow their own communal religion, Yezidism, internally known as *Sharafdin* [the religion of dignity], which can be simply described as a heterodox and syncretic religion. Although different experts differ on its origins and constituent elements, it shows resemblances to Zoroastrianism and pre-Zoroastrian Iranian religions, as well as heterodox Mithraism, Zurvanism, and elements from other religions such as Christianity and Islam (see e.g. Allison 2004; Arakelova 2001; Arakelova 2004; Arakelova 2010; Asatrian & Arakelova 2003; Asatrian & Arakelova 2004; Guest 1987; Guest 1993; Kreyenbroek 1995). As Arakelova (2010: 3) states:

The peculiarities of this religious system are not only limited to its syncretism, some elements of which could be traced in Sufism, a number

⁸⁷ The Soviet ethnic categories are maintained as much as possible. Only in cases in which two people differed in two ethnic markers—be it language and religion or some other more subtle, but subjectively more stressed marker—will the new ethnic category be considered.

of Extreme Shi'ite sects, substrate pre-Islamic beliefs, Gnosticism, etc., but they also include specific features solely characteristic of the Yezidi faith, which define the belonging of its followers to the Ezdikhana (Ēzdīxāna)—the esoteric community of the Yezidis. In this case when providing characteristics of the Yezidism in its current state, it is quite legitimate to speak of the unity of both the Yezidi (religious) identity and the Yezidi ethnicity. Since the given particular form of religion is practiced exclusively within the frames of the Yezidi community, then as much as the Yezidism as a religious system and, generally, that of a Weltanschauung, determines the definition of its bearers, the Yezidis, to the same extent it can be determined by virtue of the latter.

Yezidis were in 1989 (and still are) an ethno-territorial group in Armenia. The case of Yezidis requires special attention. They constitute the vast majority of the Kurdish-speakers in Armenia and Georgia. They have been present in the South Caucasus since the 18th century but came in larger numbers in the late 19th and early 20th century from the Ottoman Empire (Komakhia 2005a; Szakonyi 2007; Asatryan (Asatrian) & Arakelova 2002). While the small community of (predominantly Shi'ite) Muslim (*Red Book* 1991: Kurds)⁸⁸ Kurds in Armenia resided mainly in the Azerbaijani enclaves, the Yezidis live(d) in ethnic enclaves and major urban centers in Armenia (Asatryan [Asatrian] & Arakelova 2002) as well as in major urban centers in Georgia (Komakhia 2005a). Yezidis were mentioned as a separate people in the Soviet census 1926 (*Red Book* 1991: Kurds), but after that date no Soviet censuses recognized the Yezidis as a separate category until 1989. Finally, in the 1989 census the Yezidi request was granted and the category Yezidi was introduced (Asatryan [Asatrian] & Arakelova 2002; IWPR 3 November 2006; Komakhia 2005a; Krikorian 2004), although they were apparently re-aggregated later in the all-Soviet census into the umbrella group of Kurds.⁸⁹ The result was that most Kurdish-speakers in Armenia identified themselves as Yezidis:

The Yezidi movement erupting in Armenia in 1988 appealed to the 3rd All Armenian Yezidi Assembly convened on 30 September 1989 (the two previous Assemblies occurred at the dawn of the Armenian Soviet Republic's history, in 1921 and 1923) to challenge the Government for the official recognition of their identity. As a result, the Yezidis were presented as a separate minority in the USSR population census of 1989. According to this very census, the total count of Yezidis in Armenia was

⁸⁸ *Red Book* (1991). Kurds. Available online: <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/kurds.shtml> (Accessed 7 April 2011)

⁸⁹ The Yezidi category seems to have been a question category, but in the published results of all-Soviet census they were regrouped as Kurds. I have seen no published results of the Soviet census of 1989 in which the Yezidis are mentioned separately. Professor Garnik Asatrian (Asatryan), however, provided me with an Armenian document in which Yezidis were included in the census. Possibly the reason behind introducing the Yezidi as a (question) category in the census of 1989 was not only to determine their actual numbers, but also to appease the Yezidi ethno-nationalists and ethnic enthusiasts.

52,700. Thus, of ca. 60,000 persons formerly classified among the Kurds of Armenia, 88% identified themselves as Yezidi. (Asatryan [Asatrian] & Arakelova 2002)

Nowadays, it seems that Yezidis have been successful in portraying themselves as an ethnic group. Independent Armenia recognizes the Yezidis as an ethnic group and calls them officially as such, and the Yezidis were included as a census category in 2002 in the first census of Georgia after its independence (*Georgia's State Department of Statistics* 2003: 111-113, Tables 21 and 22).

Although Yezidis, similar to Muslim Kurds, speak Kurmanji Kurdish language, they usually identify themselves as Yezidis rather than Kurds.⁹⁰ Although their religion makes them distinguishable from (other) Kurds, speaking the Kurmanji Kurdish language is a reason which advocates in favor of classifying them as Kurds. It seems to be fair to reach this conclusion in light of religious diversity (Sunni, Shi'ite, and heterodox sects such as Alevi, Yarsani, Ahl-e Haq, etc.) among different tribes of Kurds who, nevertheless, all identify as Kurds. There seems to be a division among Yezidis about their identity as either Yezidi or Kurds, even among the Yezidis in Armenia (Armenian News Network/ Groong 11 October 2006; IPWR 3 November 2006). Nevertheless, there seems to be political motives behind the self-identification of Yezidis either as Yezidi or as Kurds, since those who reject a separate Yezidi identity seem to be connected to Kurdish ethno-nationalist movements. Moreover, it seems that the main opposition which exists among Yezidis in Armenia is with regard to the name of their language; the recently invented name *Ezdiki* versus the traditionally accepted Kurmanji Kurdish (see the discussions in IPWR 3 November 2006; Armenian News Network/ Groong 2006, 11 October). Although *Ezdiki* is a pure Kurmanji Kurdish patois, the Yezidis are an ethno-religious group whose main orientation is religious (Arakelova 2001: 320-321; Arakelova 2010; Asatryan [Asatrian] & Arakelova 2002; WRITENET 2008: 1-6). Nonetheless, the fact that they speak Kurmanji Kurdish does not form a barrier to their not identifying primarily as Yezidis. "Today, the Yezidi Kurds are one of the

⁹⁰ I visited a Yezidi village, in Armenia (June 2008), where I had ample chance to (informally) interview and communicate with the Yezidi leader Aziz Tamoyan (the President of the National Union of Yezidis in Armenia) and other members of the Yezidi community in Armenia. They—and not only the leader(s) but also others—regarded themselves as a nation and did not want to be associated with Kurds. Asking them questions about the Kurds, one often got the response: "I do not know about the Kurds. You should ask them. We are not Kurds, but Yezidis".

It seems that this is also the position of Yezidis in Georgia. Once I went together with an Iranian colleague to Tbilisi's Old Town to eat some traditional Georgian food. Our Persian speech (and Georgian language of Iran full of Persian words) attracted the attention of the doorman, who asked us whether we were Iranians. Noticing that he had recognized some similarities in language, I guessed that he might be a native Kurmanji-speaker, something that he answered positively. I asked him, then, whether he was a Kurd. He did not say yes or no, but answered, "I am a Yezidi" (Tbilisi, June 2008).

rare [sic!] peoples whose religion plays an ethnically forming role” (Komakhia 2005a). “Yezidis in Armenia and Georgia are a distinctive ethnic group.... Because of their religious rites the Yezidis were despised by the rest of Kurds and lived in isolation” (*Red Book* 1991: Kurds) (see also Guest 1987; Guest 1993). There is a schism between them and Muslim Kurds owing to their religious affiliation. According to Asatryan (Asatryan) and Arakelova (2002):

The Yezidi identity, in the course of its multi-century development, has elaborated the two clearly recognizable components: the distinct delimitation from Islam religiously and from the Kurds ethnically. That may have been spurred by the permanent harassment of the Yezidis along with Christian communities (Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians) in the Ottoman Empire on the part of the Turks and the Kurds. The persecutions suffered by the Yezidis have been mentioned in many sources, including the messages by the Christian missionaries of the late Middle Ages reporting on the miserable life of the non-Muslim minorities. Resulting from these persecutions was the migration of the Yezidis to Transcaucasia in mid-19th and later – early 20th century to Armenia, and thence further to Georgia. Those two countries with a friendly Christian environment have become the homeland for this small nation.

The harassment and massacre of the Yezidis were factors which made Yezidis flee from the Ottoman Empire to the Transcaucasus (Szakonyi 2007: 5). Aziz Tamoyan speaks of genocide of Yezidis in the Ottoman Empire at the hands of Muslim Kurds and Turks (Armenian News Network/ Groong 2006, 11 October). According to the Yezidi leader Aziz Tamoyan (in Krikorian 2004): “Nobody has the right to say such things [that we are Kurds]. If we are Kurds, why were 300,000 Yezidis killed along with 1.5 million Armenians during the genocide [in Ottoman Turkey]? Why did the Turks and Kurds deport us? The Kurds are the enemies of both the Armenians and the Yezidis”. Their isolation from Muslim Kurds and their harassment owing to their religion (with its peak in their massacre in the Ottoman Empire) (*Red Book* 1991: Kurds; Szakonyi 2007: 5) are factors which contribute to their self-perception as a self-aware ethnic group.

Other cases which require attention are those of Kabardins, Adyghe, Cherkess, Karachays, Balkars, Chechens, and Ingush. The most notable cases are those of the first five. Circassians are an ethno-territorial group in the Caucasus, who were artificially divided into three different ethnic groups by the Soviet policy makers: Kabardin, Cherkes, and Adyghe peoples. The naming itself is quite remarkable, because the self-designation of all Circassian peoples is Adyghe, while Chrekes, Cherkez, or Circassain are names which are given to them by outsiders. The designation Cherkes, like Circassian, is derived from the Turkish and

Persian *Cherkez* or *Cherkes* as a designation for the Circassian people. There is a genuine native movement to recategorize the Circassian subgroups into one single Circassian ethno-national category (Goble 2010).

The Soviet categorization proceeded despite the linguistic and religious similarity and despite the historical and subjective feelings of belonging together. Before the Russo-Circassian Wars, during which a large number of Circassians were massacred or fled to the Ottoman Empire (see Allen & Muratoff 2011 [1953]; Brock 1956; Henze 1983; Henze 1992), Circassian tribes lived to the north of their Turkic-speaking Karachay and Balkar neighbors and in the hill-lands and lowlands of the northwestern Caucasus. They consisted of many different tribes. After the Russian-Circassian Wars (18th–19th centuries), their numbers declined sharply and their settlements no longer formed a contiguous area. This and a *divide et impera* policy were probably the reasons which made the Soviet policy makers divide the Circassian ethnic group into three.

By the Circassian language is meant, in fact, the Circassian dialect continuum. The artificial, Soviet-made categories of Adyghe, Kabardin, and Cherkes do not correspond to these dialects. Adyghe is the self-designation of Circassian people, who call their language Adyghe. What in the Soviet Union was referred to as the Adyghe language was in fact a variant of many western Circassian dialects, while Kabardian was an eastern Circassian dialect (see e.g. Colarusso 1992; Kumakhov & Vamling 1998). What in the Soviet Union was called Cherkes was in fact the Besleney dialect of Circassian, a transitional dialect between Kabardian and western Circassian dialects but, nevertheless, closer to Kabardian.⁹¹

Also the Karachays and Balkars can be regrouped into one single ethno-territorial group. Karachays and Balkars speak closely related dialects of what can be regarded as the same language. Although Karachays and Balkar may have some Iranian Alan admixture, their language is a Turkic language of the Kypchak branch. Both ethnic groups are also Sunni Muslims. Karachays and Balkars are quite distinguishable from their Circassian neighbors. Although Minorities at Risks Project's data (MAR 2006a) claims that the ethnic group's cohesion is very low among Karachays and it is rather widely believed that ethno-nationalism is very low among Karachay and Balkars, they are easily distinguishable from Circassian peoples, who have historically a relatively great sense of collective identity (in any case since the Russian-Circassian Wars) and are quite recognizable as an ethnic group. In other words, the objective

⁹¹ Personal communication by email with John Colarusso, an expert on Caucasian studies at Macmaster University (November 2008).

markers and denominators of ethnicity suggest that they are one ethnic group. The ethnic cohesion may be low, if one understands by ethnicity the artificial Soviet categories of Karachay and Balkar. Both Karachay and Balkar, as artificial ethnic groups, are composed of many subgroups. Therefore, the first level of identification of most Karachays and Balkars may be, indeed, these subgroups, and the second one may be these Turkic-speaking (Karachay/Balkar) subgroups as a whole (as opposed to their Circassian neighbors) (see MAR 2006a). Although there is certainly self-identification among the members of these tribes with their respective tribes and the Karachay-Balkar people as a whole, there is no such clear self-identification with the Soviet-made artificial ethnic categories. It seems that the reason behind this arbitrary ethnic categorization lay in the Soviet policy of *divide et impera*. This view is valid especially when one looks at the political map of the North Caucasus (see also Chapter 6).⁹² According to the Minorities at Risk Project, discussing the situation of Karachays (MAR 2006a):

As part of the “divide and rule” strategy of the Communist rulers, two ethnically divided republics—Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria—were created in the 1920s. The Cherkess and Kabardins are closely related Circassian peoples living in the north of these republics, and the Karachay and Balkars are Turkic people living in the south. It would have been possible to create ethnically homogenous republics, but Stalin thought it better to create two divided republics⁹³ that would be easier to rule from Moscow. By doing so, he laid the foundations for ethnic strife that only began to assert itself with the first presidential elections in Karachay-Cherkessia in 1999.

The Ingush and Chechens are two ethno-territorial groups in the Caucasus. They are both the members of Vainakh ethnic groups, which means the Nakh-speaking branch of the speakers of Nakh-Dagestani-speaking ethnic groups. Despite their relationship they can best be categorized as two ethno-territorial groups. Vainakh roughly means “we the Nakh people”. The Vainakh people consist of the Chechens and Ingush in the North Caucasus. The Chechen, and Ingush, languages are closely related. Despite speaking a language belonging to the Nakh branch of Nakh-Dagestani family of languages, the Tsova Tush or Batsebi people in Georgia do not belong to the Vainakh group and are not considered as such by the Ingush and Chechens. The Ingush and Chechens are both Sunni Muslims. The Tsova Tush (Batsebi or Batsbi), on the other hand, are Orthodox Christians of the Georgian Orthodox Church and are either

⁹² Svante E. Cornell (2001: 261-262) has a similar understanding of the Soviet policy regarding the Karachay/Balkars and Circassians.

⁹³ It is important to note that Karachayev-Cherkessia’s status was elevated to that of an autonomous republic only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It was an autonomous *oblast’* (AO) before.

bilingual in Tsova Tush and Georgian or monolingual in Georgian (*Red Book* 1991: Bats;⁹⁴ *Ethnologue* 2009, 16th edition).⁹⁵ In 1926, for example, only 7 individuals declared being Batsebi, while 2,459 still spoke their native language (Wixman 1984: 24). The Batsebi belong to the Georgian cultural domain and are culturally distinct from the Ingush and Chechens. They are being assimilated by Georgians and mostly identify themselves as Georgians. It is, therefore, appropriate to regard them as Georgians.⁹⁶

Although a debate is ongoing about whether the Ingush and Chechens are two different ethnic groups or just two branches of the same ethnic group, their history and notably their recent political history shows that the Ingush and Chechens profile themselves clearly as two distinct ethnic groups. Generally it is argued that Chechens and Ingush are two distinct ethnic groups, not only due to the differences in their languages and histories but also because they have developed different political orientations over time, something which is tangible to date. “The Ingush and their eastern neighbors the Chechen are distinct ethnic groups with distinct languages, histories, and political identities” (Nichols 1997). According to The Minorities at Risks Project’s data (MAR 2006b; MAR 2006c), both Chechens and Ingush have strong internal ethnic cohesion, which indicates that the Chechens and Ingush consider themselves to be members of respectively the Chechen and the Ingush ethnic groups. It is often stated that the split between the Chechen and Ingush is of a strategic nature and lies in the fact that the Ingush, unlike the Chechens, needed Russia to deal with the Ossetians, hoping to get back the Prigorodny district from North Ossetia. Even though this argument may be true, it does not exclude the earlier evidence of the different political orientations between the Ingush and Chechens. The smaller Ingush, bordering the Christian Ossetians, who are traditionally favored by Russia, and the Chechens, who border the Muslim Dagestani peoples, would understandably develop different political orientations and strategies, and hence ethnic self-identification over the course of time.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Red Book* (1991). Bats. Available online: <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/bats.shtml> (Accessed 23 December 2008).

⁹⁵ See *Ethnologue* report for Georgia. Available online: http://www.ethnologue.org/show_country.asp?name=GE (Accessed 23 December 2011).

⁹⁶ Although I have not met many members of the Tsova Tush community, those whom I met did identify themselves as Georgians. It should be said, however, that Tsova Tush, with a few thousand souls, are not a large group either. Estimates of their numbers are 3,420 in 2000 (*Ethnologue* 2009, 16th edition), and 2,500–3,000 in the 1960s. The fact that Batsebi’s (Tsova Tush) ethnic identification is a Georgian one is in accordance with the information given to me by Professor Merab Chukhua, a well-known Caucasologist. (29 November 2008, Malmö Sweden). In any case, as their numbers are lower than 20,000, I cannot modify the Soviet categorization.

⁹⁷ It is, nevertheless, important to note that the Ingush and Chechens might develop their political orientation in the opposite direction when other rationales are at stake, or when feelings of ethnic kinship get the upper hand.

The Avar and Georgian ethnic categories include subgroups who do not speak Georgian or Avar proper. Nevertheless, they speak related languages and dialects and confessed the same religion. In this book the Soviet categorizations of Avar and Georgians are maintained. One reason is that this book attempts to preserve the Soviet categorization when the potentially separate groups were smaller than 20,000 souls according to the last Soviet census (1989). Many small communities were registered as members of the Avar ethnic group. Although these small groups had and have their own languages and dialects, which were related but still distinct from Maarul (i.e. Avar proper), they were bilingual in it and in Avar proper, used Avar as their written language, and were registered as Avars.⁹⁸ In fact, they were politically represented as Avars in multi-ethnic Dagestan, where ethnic belonging was an important attribute in its (quasi-) consociational local politics. Similarly, Mingrelians, Svans, and a small group of Laz were registered as Georgians. These groups are often called ethnographic groups of Georgians, in Georgia. Mingrelians, Laz, and Svans spoke vernaculars related to Georgian proper but used Georgian proper as their written and literary language. Mingrelians and Svans were Georgian Orthodox Christians, and Laz were, similar to the Muslim Georgian Ajarians, predominantly Sunni Muslims. A lot of them, especially when they lived in areas other than their native areas, spoke Georgian proper as their vernacular. In these cases the Soviet categorization is also maintained, and these peoples are regarded as Georgians.

In brief, the Soviet categorization of Avars and Georgians is maintained and, in addition, the Karachays and Balkars are grouped together as a single Karachay/Balkar⁹⁹ ethnic group, and the Circassian subgroups of Kabardins, Adyghe, and Cherkes are grouped together as a single Circassian ethnic group. Although these mergers make the map of the Caucasus ethnically less heterogeneous, it still remains quite heterogeneous, and the ethno-geographic configuration still displays a mosaic type throughout the Caucasus.

Most ethnic groups in the Caucasus, except those who were migrants from other parts of the Soviet Union and lived mainly in the larger urban centers and scattered among larger ethnic groups there, have a long history of inhabitation in the Caucasus. Unlike Central Asia, the Caucasus was not a region to which many migrants from other parts of the Soviet Union arrived. It was not a receiver of deported peoples but itself

⁹⁸ Generally, multilingualism is very common in Dagestan. Most speakers of Nakh-Dagestani languages are trilingual in their native tongue, Russian, and another language spoken in Dagestan (see Grenoble 2010: 125-131 and 137-138).

⁹⁹ The designation Karachay/Balkar is preferred above "Mountain Tatar", because Tatar was a designation and served as an umbrella ethnonym for many different Muslim Turkic-speaking groups in Russia and the Soviet Union in general.

was a region from which many peoples were deported. These were the Ingush, Chechens Karachays and Balkars, and Meskhetians. Only Meskhetians were never formally rehabilitated and their re-settlement in their original living area in southern Georgia is not proceeding successfully.

Table 5.2. List of ethno-territorial groups in the Caucasus and their main religions and languages

ETHNIC GROUP	MAIN RELIGION	MAIN LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE FAMILY	LANGUAGE BRANCH
Abaza	Sunni Islam	Abaza	Northwest Caucasian	-
Abkhazian	Orthodox Christianity	Abkhaz	Northwest Caucasian	-
Agul	Sunni Islam	Agul	Nakh-Dagestani	Lezgi
Armenian	Orthodox Christianity	Armenian	Armenian	-
Avar	Sunni Islam	Avar proper (Maarul)	Nakh-Dagestani	Avaro-Andi-Tsez
Azerbaijani	Shi'ite Islam	Azeri (Azerbaijani)	Turkic	Oghuz
Chechen	Sunni Islam	Chechen	Nakh-Dagestani	Nakh
Circassian	Sunni Islam	Circassian	Northwest Caucasian	-
Dargin	Sunni Islam	Dargin	Nakh-Dagestani	Lak-Dargwa
Georgian	Orthodox Christianity	Georgian (Kartuli)	Kartvelian	-
Greek	Orthodox Christianity	Urum (Anatolian Turkish)	Turkic	Oghuz
Ingush	Sunni Islam	Ingush	Nakh-Dagestani	Nakh
Karachay/Balkar	Sunni Islam	Karachay/Balkar	Turkic	Kypchak
Kumyk	Sunni Islam	Kumyk	Turkic	Kypchak
Kurd	Shi'ite Islam	Kurmanji Kurdish	Iranic	Northwestern
Lak	Sunni Islam	Lak	Nakh-Dagestani	Lak-Dargwa
Lezgin	Sunni Islam	Lezgin	Nakh-Dagestani	Lezgi
Mountain Jew	Judaism	Tat	Iranic	Southwestern
Nogay	Sunni Islam	Nogay	Turkic	Kypchak
Ossetian	Orthodox Christianity	Ossetian	Iranic	Northeastern
Russian	Orthodox Christianity	Russian	Slavic	Eastern
Rutuls	Sunni Islam	Rutul	Nakh-Dagestani	Lezgi
Tabasaran	Sunni Islam	Tabasaran	Nakh-Dagestani	Lezgi
Talysh	Shi'ite Islam	Talysh	Iranic	Northwestern
Tat	Shi'ite Islam	Tat	Iranic	Southwestern
Tsakhur	Sunni Islam	Taskhur	Nakh-Dagestani	Lezgi
Udin	Orthodox Christianity	Udin	Nakh-Dagestani	Lezgi
Yezidi	Yezidism	Kurmanji Kurdish	Iranic	Northwestern

The ethnic groups who speak a language belonging to one of the Caucasian language families have historical roots in the region. Most of

those who speak Turkic, Armenian, and Iranic languages also have a long history of inhabitation in the Caucasus. Nevertheless, there are a few cases which need further discussion. The case of Yezidi Kurds and their inhabitation of the South Caucasus since the 18th century has already been discussed. Other cases which require attention are those of Russians, different groups of Jews, and Meskhetians.

Although Russians in the South Caucasus are relative newcomers and were concentrated mainly in the major urban centers there, they were present in the lowlands to the north of the Caucasus mountains as early as the 16th century. Gradually and after wars they expanded Russian authority more to the south of their original homeland and built new settlements (see. e.g. Bennigsen Broxup 1996: 1-11).

Most Jews in the former Soviet Union were urban dwellers and lived among other peoples. Russian-speaking Ashkenazi Jews resided mainly in the larger urban areas. The number of Jews was already dwindling before the collapse of the Soviet Union, owing to emigration which peaked in 1979 and the late 1980s (Gorlizki 1996: 447). The number of Georgian-speaking Jews in Georgia (mostly in the cities of Kutaisi and Tbilisi) was also dwindling. Another group of Jews in the Caucasus was the Mountain Jewish community, who were in material culture similar to their predominantly Muslim Caucasian neighbors. Dissimilar from other Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union, the Mountain Jews accounted for significant rural communities (see *Red Book* 1991: The Mountain Jews,¹⁰⁰ Saffron 1998). The Mountain Jews, recognized as a separate census category, are a group of Jews native in the Caucasus who speak the Tat language, a language close to archaic types of Persian. Similar to other Jewish groups, the number of Mountain Jews in the Caucasus was already dwindling before 1989. Nevertheless, there was a group of Mountain Jews in the Republic of Azerbaijan, who could be identified as an ethno-territorial group (see e.g. Saffron 1998).¹⁰¹

There is a question whether the Meskhetians are an ethnic group, are Turks, or are an umbrella group consisting of different ethnic groups, each with a different history of habitation in the Caucasus. Even though different theories exist about their origins, their own names and family history testify that they are of diverse ethnic origins and admixtures, mostly of Islamized (Sunni) Georgian origins (Baratashvili 1998: 5-9; Johanson 2001: 17), and that among them exist also many Kurds, Hemshin (Sunni Muslim Armenians), and Turkic-speaking groups

¹⁰⁰ *Red Book* (1991). Mountain Jews. Available online: http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/mountain_jews.shtml (Accessed 7 April 2011).

¹⁰¹ It can be assumed that Mountain Jews were also an ethno-territorial group in Russia (notably in Dagestan) prior to their mass exodus from the region in the 1970s. On the other hand, it is not certain that they were an ethno-territorial group in the late 1990s, after their exodus from the independent Republic of Azerbaijan.

(Baratashvili 1998: 4-16).¹⁰² They were deported in 1941, mainly to Central Asia, and were never formally rehabilitated. They were registered under the umbrella name Meskhetian. As there is still no mass resettlement of Meskhetians in their original living area, the problem of viewing them as a single ethno-territorial group or many different ones is somewhat premature.

Another ethno-territorial group in the Caucasus are the Greeks, often called Urums, who preserved their Christian Orthodox religion and spoke (and probably still speak) a Turkish dialect (Urum) as their language. Although, even in the earlier times, Greeks from the Byzantine Empire or even classical Greece may have moved to the Caucasus, the roots of the contemporary people are in Anatolia. Their migration to the Caucasus started in the 18th century (Gachechiladze 1995: 93; Komakhia 2005b). These were Greeks who migrated to Georgia from the Ottoman Empire, from Gumushhane in the 18th century and from Erzurum Pashalik (the largest part) in the early 19th century (1829–1830). The migration of Pontic Greeks proceeded later in the 19th century (Gachechiladze 1995: 93). The number of Greeks in Georgia exceeded 100,000 in 1989, forming a large majority of the population in the Tsalka area of central Georgia. All Ethno-territorial groups in the Caucasus are listed in Table 5.2.

Ethno-Territorial Groups in Central Asia

The largest ethno-territorial groups in Central Asia are the diverse ethnic groups who speak Iranian or Turkic languages. Slavic-speakers also formed large ethno-territorial groups in Central Asia, and there are a few other ethno-territorial groups speaking other languages. The ethno-territorial groups in Central Asia are listed in Table 5.3. In Central Asia, ethnic groups live spread over relatively large areas. Large areas remain uninhabited, while many areas (both urban and rural)¹⁰³ are ethnically heterogeneous. Ethnic groups also share large areas where none of them possess the overwhelming majority.¹⁰⁴ The ethnic heterogeneity in Central Asia is not only constituted by the indigenous ethnic groups of Central Asia but also by migrants from other parts of the former Soviet Union. Most migrants came to Central Asia in the Soviet period to work in

¹⁰² Marat Baratashvili is the son of Latifshah Baratashvili, a Meskhetian leader pleading for their repatriation to Georgia. He is one of the founders of the Society of Georgian Muslims, KHSNA, and was the president of the NGO “Union of Georgian repatriants” at the time of the above-cited publication.

¹⁰³ In the reports about the minor (ethnic) clashes in Central Asia, it could be clearly read that the villages were quite ethnically heterogeneous. It should be noted that most non-titular, but non-Russian, rural populations live in southern parts of Kazakhstan.

¹⁰⁴ These are usually shown on maps by areas covered by stripes, composed of colors of two different ethnic groups, or are shown by the symbols of an ethnic group which lives dispersed over the area.

industry or agriculture. There are also migrants belonging to ethnic groups which were deported from the Caucasus and elsewhere in the 1940s. Although most of them left Central Asia after they were rehabilitated, small numbers, probably for the same reasons of livelihood and work, have stayed in Central Asia. Although there were deportees who were not rehabilitated (e.g. the Meskhetians), none of these deportees (except Germans) formed ethno-territorial groups in Central Asia (as they did not meet the criteria described in this study).

Kazakhstan, and to certain extent also Kyrgyzstan, were the main destinations for the deported “punished” peoples. The titular peoples in these two republics were nomadic and land was scarcely settled or cultivated. The land in those republics was also rich in minerals and had great economic potential. The reason behind these deportations was indeed to punish those peoples, but the choice for their destination seems to have been based on the Soviet desire to exploit these lands and probably also in order to create a model Soviet man (*homo Sovieticus*) in an ethnically diverse, and automatically Russianized, environment. This desire and the push towards its realization differed in different periods and among different Soviet leaders, but was generally not successful.

Russians and Ukrainians were two Slavic ethno-territorial groups in Central Asia. They (notably Russians, but also Ukrainians) were present in northern Kazakhstan as early as the 17th century, and their numbers grew rapidly in the 19th and early 20th century (see e.g. Abazov 2007: 16-17; Bohr & Crisp 1996: 385-387; Huskey 1997: 655-656; Olcott 1997: 550-551; Svanberg 1996: 319-32). Aside from northern Kazakhstan, also the Semirechye (Semirech’e) area located in the southeastern part of contemporary Kazakhstan and large parts of contemporary Kyrgyzstan (Zhetysu and Jetysuu in, respectively, the Kazakh and the Kyrgyz languages) was an area of early Russian Cossack, and later on peasant, settlement (see e.g. Bennigsen Broxup 1996: 5). The Kyrgyz and Kazakhs became largely sedentary in the 1920s and 1930a (Stalinist period), when they were forced to give up their nomadic life. As the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs were traditionally nomads, nearly all cities and towns in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, except those in the south, which were largely inhabited by Sarts (the sedentary ancestors of the modern-day Uzbeks and Tajiks), were founded by the Slavic migrants. After the abolition of serfdom (1861), Slavic migrants began to cultivate lands on the territory of what was later to be called Kazakhstan. Already by the end of the 19th century, they had established more than 500 villages there (Svanberg 1996: 320). Some Russian nationalists, among whom Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was internationally the most famous, argued that the northern parts of Kazakhstan were in fact southern Siberia and part of Russia (Zevelev 2009: 82).

In no union republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia, other than Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, had there been Slavs (Russians, and Ukrainians) present in such large concentrations prior to the 20th century. The only two republics in which the percentage of Russians in the total population (1989) were higher than 20% were Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Russians (and Ukrainians) lived primarily in the urban centers in the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus. There were, however, differences between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on the one hand, and other republics on the other. Only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had significant rural Russian populations. Only in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was the proportion of Russians in the rural population relatively large and significant. The proportion of Russians in the rural population of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (1989) were respectively 19.9% and 10.5% , as opposed to 0.5–1.9% elsewhere in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Grenoble 2010: 203, Table 30).¹⁰⁵ Only 70% and 77% of Russians in, respectively, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were urban dwellers, while between 94% and 97% of Russians in other Central Asian republics were urban dwellers. Russians made up over 20% of the population in republican capitals in the Central Asian and most other republics and were usually confined to the largest cities of non-Russian republics (Aasland 1996: 479). Remarkably, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are also the only two republics in Central Asia (and the South Caucasus) that have retained Russian as an official (though not the state) language after their independence.

One of the “punished” ethnic groups that was deported to Kazakhstan were Germans, who settled largely in northern Kazakhstan, although they were present in Central Asia already before their deportation from the neighboring Volga German ASSR (abolished in 1941). The settlement of the first group of Germans in Central Asia goes back to the Tsarist era (1897). Their numbers grew gradually into significant numbers. Already in 1897 more than 7,000 Germans lived in the territory of modern-day Kazakhstan. Their number increased to more than 51,000 in 1926 (Diener 2006: 202). During the Second World War, the German ASSR on the Volga River was abolished by Stalin, and Germans were largely relocated to Central Asia, especially to the neighboring northern Kazakhstan in the so-called “special settlements”. The German ASSR on the Volga was never reestablished, and Germans were virtually forbidden to return to their towns there. It was also largely

¹⁰⁵ In Kyrgyzstan (August 2008), I asked where Russians live. People answered they are mostly in the cities, notably in Bishkek and in *Dolina* [valley] around Bishkek. By *Dolina* they meant the Chuy valley in northern Kyrgyzstan. This information was indeed consistent with most maps and other sources of information on Kyrgyzstan I had consulted until then. I myself was able to see rural Russian population there.

impossible because their homes had already been settled by others. They settled down, however, in the Central Asian towns (especially in northern Kazakhstan). During Gorbachev's era it was proposed to create a German autonomy within Kazakhstan. This idea was neither welcomed by the Kazakhs nor was largely supported by the German community (see Diener 2006: 202-204). Reportedly similar schemes of German autonomous territorial units were proposed in the 1960s but were denounced in 1967 (Hyman 1996: 467). Although they never formally formed territorial autonomies, Germans formed large concentrations in many northern areas of Kazakhstan, as well as in the neighboring Siberian territories of the Russian Federation (Klüter 1993). They also lived among other ethnic groups in the large urban centers of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics. There were about one million Germans in Kazakhstan in 1989, but their number reduced gradually in the 1990s after Kazakhstan's independence because of their emigration to Germany and elsewhere. The number of Germans in Kazakhstan is still quite significant (about 200,000) but has declined sharply in other Central Asian countries, especially in Tajikistan after the Tajikistani civil war began. As the integration of Central Asian Germans in Germany was problematic, Germany decided to invest in the German community in Kazakhstan, and as a result, German emigration from Kazakhstan is now reduced (Rezvani 2007: 167).

During the Second World War, there were many more deported ethnic groups in Central Asia. Most of their members, however, returned to their homelands after they were officially rehabilitated. Nowadays, members of these groups can be found in lesser numbers scattered all over Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan. Among these groups were Poles, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, and Meskhetians. Meskhetians, who were mainly settled in the Fergana valley, were never formally rehabilitated. After the Meskhetian pogroms in 1990, most of the Meskhetians in Uzbekistan (Fergana Valley) left. Unlike the Germans, however, none of these newcomers in Central Asia can be recognized as ethno-territorial groups, according to the criteria discussed before.

Koreans are a group whose deportation to Central Asia goes back prior to the Second World War. Large number of Koreans from the Russian Far East were deported in 1937 to Kazakhstan and the rest of Central Asia. This was allegedly a "preventative measure", as they were suspected of being potential agents of the Japanese. Upon their arrival in Central Asia, they were predominantly rural and lived in the so-called "areas of compact living". Their pattern of settlement, however, changed later on. Although still visibly present, Koreans in Central Asia (the Koryo Saram), and their traditional areas of compact living, are nothing like they were before and they do not form an absolute majority of the

population even there (Diener 2006: 213; Kim 2004: 983-984; personal communication by email, with Professor German Kim, December 2008).¹⁰⁶ Therefore, they cannot be regarded as an ethno-territorial group as they do not meet the criteria for being such a group in this study.

In addition to these deportees, there are people in Central Asia originating from earlier waves of migration. Uyghurs and Dungans (Chinese Muslims) are natives of neighboring China who settled in Central Asia in the 19th century (Rezvani 2008b). Uyghur merchants have probably been present in China since long ago, but their migration and settlement to what was to be the Russian Empire's Semirechye area began in the late 19th century. There were at that time more than 60 Uyghur settlements established, of which 45 still exist (Svanberg 1996: 325). Similarly, Dungans settled at that time in the Semirechye and Chuy area of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Dungans are related to the Hui people of China and have preserved their language and culture in Central Asia very well. Dungans in Central Asia prefer to live as segregated communities in relative seclusion from other peoples in all-Dungan villages (*Ethnohistorical* 1994: 203; Rezvani 2008b: 168-169). Both Uyghurs and Dungans meet the criteria for being ethno-territorial groups.

Two other ethnic groups in Central Asia are Kurds and Baluchis, two West-Iranic-speaking groups that can be found in southern Central Asia, mainly in Turkmenistan. Baluchis came to Khorasan and Turkmenistan in the 20th century searching for jobs and pastures and because of political turmoil. Although hypothetically possible, the lack of demographic data about them in the 19th century and their small number in the early 20th century suggest that there were most probably no Baluchi communities living in Turkmenistan prior to the 20th century. By 1917 their number was fewer than a thousand. Their number grew, however, between 1923 and 1928 (*Ethnohistorical* 1994: 102;¹⁰⁷ Wixman 1984: 25-26).

¹⁰⁶ I have contacted German Kim, a Kazakhstani Korean professor, who was working in Hokkaido University (Japan) at the time of writing. As a response to my question regarding the areas of settlement of Koreans in Central Asia, he stated: "As I have mentioned in my studies there are no any towns, cities, villages in Central Asia with a majoring share of Korean population. However, there are some places, residential areas with more or less visible Koreans. In Kazakhstan: the cities Usttobe and Almaty and Bakhbakty village. In Uzbekistan: Bektimir, Bekabad, former Politotdel Kolkhoz. In Kyrgyzstan: Bishkek. In Turkmenistan and Tajikistan: a small number group of Koreans are living in capitals" (communication by email, December 2008). It is notable that in Central Asia not only cities and large towns, but also small towns and villages and even Kolkhozes [collective farms] could be multi-ethnic. Also Professor Atabaki, Professor of Social History of the Middle East and Central Asia at the University of Leiden and Senior Research Fellow at the International Institute of Social History, who could localize Koreans as a dispersed ethnic group in his book (Atabaki & Versteeg 1994: 8), stated that he does not know any relatively homogeneous Korean settlements in Central Asia. He also noted that ethnicity has not been a criterion in the formation of Kolkhozes. (Communication by email, December 2008).

¹⁰⁷ The entry on Baluchis is written by Ross Marlay.

Unlike Baluchis, Kurds in Central Asia have rather deep roots in the regional history and are an ethno-territorial group in Turkmenistan. These so-called Khorasani Kurds are distinct from the Kurdish migrants and deportees from the Caucasus. The Kurdish migrants from the Caucasus are not a single group. Shi'ite Kurds came there mainly from Azerbaijan and Armenia. There are also Sunni Kurds, an unknown number of whom were registered under the umbrella name of Meskehtians. The Caucasian Kurds in Central Asia live scattered in Central Asia, mainly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The Kurds in Turkmenistan are Khorasani Kurds and are related to those in the adjacent Iranian region of Khorasan. Three Iranian *ostans* still bear the name Khorasan. Khorasan, however, is the name of a rather large area, which also encompassed modern-day Turkmenistan. Khorasani Kurds are those Shi'ite Kurmanji-speaking Kurds, originally from eastern Anatolia, who were settled in Khorasan in the 17th century by Shah Abbas I in order to defend this region from hostile Sunni forces (Afghans, Uzbeks, and to some extent the Turkmens). They live in northeastern Iran, and in southern Turkmenistan¹⁰⁸ along the Iranian border (see *Ethnohistorical* 1994: 409;¹⁰⁹ Madih 2007;¹¹⁰ Shekofteh 2008). Soviet statistics probably underestimated, or perhaps even intentionally obscured, the real number of these Kurds in Turkmenistan. It is difficult to give a reliable estimation of their numbers, especially because they may be confused with the Persian-speakers of Turkmenistan (often called Tats, but distinct from the Tats in the Caucasus), who are also Shi'ite Muslims. Also, they may hide their identity and identify themselves (for materialistic benefit) with the titular nation. The correction of their numbers, however, would not drastically change the ethnic picture in Central Asia. Kurds meet the criteria for being ethno-territorial. Baluchis, on the other hand, do not.

Although many (Ashkenazi) Jews arrived later from elsewhere, Central Asia also has a native Jewish community: the Bukharan Jews, who lived mainly in the city of Bukhara. Their presence in the region is

¹⁰⁸ A main Kurdish town in southern Turkmenistan is the town of Firoozeh (Firuze, Firuza, and other spellings are also used), which was under Tsarist Russian and Soviet control since the late 19th century but was disputed by Iran. Iranian governments had always protested the occupation of the city of Firoozeh by Russians and claimed it back. Finally, after the independence of Turkmenistan, Iran silently accepted Firoozeh as part of Turkmenistan's territory (see Aghai Diba 2008).

¹⁰⁹ The entry on Kurds is written by Ross Marlay.

¹¹⁰ I met Abbas-Ali Madih, then the mayor of the Iranian city of Neyshabur, at a conference in Yerevan (June 2008). He was there to take part in a conference and present the statue of the Persian poet *Attar Neyshaburi* to Yerevan's Arya University. Although originally from Yazd in central Iran, he knows a lot about the Khorasani Kurds owing to his familial relationships. He also had an interesting hypothesis about the tolerance of people living in the Iranian desert and its outskirts, where his native city of Yazd is located, towards the Zoroastrian minority there, something which was not very visible towards the Yezidis in the Ottoman Empire. He said that the harsh arid climate of Yazd compels people to be tolerant and coexist peacefully. Although it is not my hypothesis, his logic is clear: conflict makes everyone a loser.

believed to date to the Achaemenid Persian Empire's era, when Cyrus the Great liberated them from their Babylonian captivity (Abazov 2007: 75). The Jews, whether the Ashkenazi or the Bukharan Jews, did not form an ethno-territorial group. As elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, the number of Jews was dwindling in Central Asia, and the few remainders were urban dwellers living among other ethnic groups.

Uzbekistan was one of the republics, next to the Republic of Azerbaijan, in which the number of non-titulars were underestimated. Unlike the case of Azerbaijan, this is not only a statistical matter. The Uzbek ethnic group itself is very diverse. A part is comprised of the sedentary Sarts, who were very often bi-lingual but among whom Persian language was more dominant than diverse Turkic languages. The other groups which were registered as Uzbeks during the Soviet era were the nomadic groups, who spoke Turkic but, nevertheless, were not homogeneous (Abazov 2007: 15).¹¹¹

The contemporary standard Uzbek language is a newer version of the earlier Jaghatay (or Chaghatay) Turkic language. Nevertheless, there are other languages distinct from this language, spoken by the people who are registered and often also identify as Uzbeks. In some areas the local tongues reveal some Kypchak Turkic features similar to the languages of Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, while in Khorezmia the local tongue reveals Oghuz features, similar to the Turkmen language. According to E. Umarov (2002: 308-311), in the *Etnicheskiy Atlas Uzbekistana* [Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan] (Ilkhamov & Zhukova 2002), next to the Karluk dialects of Uzbek, upon the basis of which the Standard Uzbek language is defined, there exist also Kypchak and Oghuz dialects of Uzbek. As Karluk, Kypchak, and Oghuz are different branches of Turkic, not all these dialects, or more precisely, languages, belong logically to the same language. Of course, multilingual nations do exist, but it is impossible for a language to belong to several linguistic branches at the same time. It is, nevertheless, not far-fetched to view these Turkic varieties and the Tajik/Persian language in Uzbekistan (and Tajikistan) as a *Sprachbund*—that is, a collection of (genealogically unrelated) languages and dialects which, owing to geographical proximity, show many similar features.

Uzbekistan is one of the very rare cases in the former Soviet Union in which nation-building has proceeded mainly on a territorial basis rather than on an ethno-linguistic one. First a nation was defined, and then an official language was imposed upon it. It is understandable that the Uzbekistani population, at least the sedentary/ sedentarized population,

¹¹¹ According to Rafis Abazov (2007: 15), the Uzbek nation was formed by two groups: the sedentary population, which was Persian-speaking, and the nomadic pastoralist population, which was Turkic. Nevertheless, it is more likely that Turkic-speaking people also lived in the cities, where the Persian language was the dominant colloquial and literary language.

most of whom were known as Sarts, can be defined as a single nation. They are culturally very similar, and they may feel they belong to the same nation. Nevertheless, it is fair to acknowledge the multilingualism of this nation. As Abazov (2007: 15) puts it:

The Uzbek nation was formed by two quite different groups of people. The first group was the Persian-speaking settled population of Bukhara, Samarqand, and other large and small cities and towns in the valleys of the Syr Darya, the Amu Darya, and other rivers. The second group was the Turkic-speaking pastoral-nomadic population that lived largely to the north of the settled oases but, like all other Turks, traced their ancestry to the major Turkic tribal confederations.

In the central part of Uzbekistan, notably in the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, the main language is Tajik/Persian. Many Tajik/Persian-speakers were registered as Uzbeks in the censuses and in their internal passports. Many Tajik/Persian-speakers may identify themselves as Tajiks, but many others as Uzbeks.¹¹² According to Namoz Hotamov (2001: 271), a self-aware ethnic Tajik historian from Uzbekistan registered as an Uzbek, there are three categories of people in Uzbekistan who could be registered as Tajiks but are, nevertheless, registered as Uzbeks. The first group consists of self-aware Tajiks. The second group consists of those who do not care much about their background and are often enrolled in political positions in Uzbekistan. They speak the Tajik language whenever they can or have to but at other times they identify with the Uzbek nation. The third group are those who are already assimilated into Uzbeks. It is fair to regard the first group as Tajiks and the third groups as Uzbeks. It is not very clear how to regard the second group. Many are culturally Tajiks but politically Uzbeks, in that they identify themselves with the Uzbek nation. The picture is even more complex, because many in Uzbekistan belong to the families of mixed marriages, and many whose origins goes back to the nomadic Turkic tribes speak both Tajik and Uzbek. Although there are higher estimates of the number of Tajiks in Uzbekistan, Hotamov's (2001: 264) numbers are closer to the reality. While the official 1989 Soviet census counts the number of Tajiks in Uzbekistan at slightly less than one million, according to Hotamov (based on many documents and insider information) the number of (self-aware) Tajiks in Uzbekistan could be between 3 and 3.5 million (see also Appendix 4).

¹¹² In 2008 in Kyrgyzstan I had communication about this with a scholar from Uzbekistan. Calling himself an Uzbek, he said to me in Persian that the language in those (central) parts of Uzbekistan is Tajik or Persian, but many would call themselves Uzbeks. He himself added that his grandmother was a Tajik from Bukhara. Indeed, Tajiks and Uzbeks, owing to similarities in culture and religion, often do intermarry. In my communications with them, many Tajiks and Uzbeks acknowledged having ancestors or family members other than the "nationality" they are registered as.

Pamiris, also called Ismailis and Badakhshanis, are an ethnic group that did not appear in the Soviet censuses since 1939. In the Soviet censuses prior to 1939, different Pamiri groups were listed separately, but after that date they were counted as Tajiks. Whereas in the literature they are called Mountain Tajiks, Tajiks themselves call Pamiris people of Pomir or Shughnis, the name of the most populous subgroup (*Red Book* 1991: The Peoples of the Pamirs).¹¹³ Shughni is the largest Pamiri language spoken in Gorno-Badakhshan, and even though not a literary language it serves as a lingua franca in Gorno-Badakhshan among the Pamiris.¹¹⁴ The categorization of the Pamiris as Tajik is very problematic. Unlike Tajiks who speak Tajik (a Persian dialect) belonging to the Southwestern branch of the Iranian languages, Pamiris speak East-Iranic (Southeastern branch) languages and dialects, which are unintelligible to Tajiks or Persians. In addition, unlike Tajiks, who are Sunni Muslims, Pamiris are Ismailis (a Shi'ite Muslim sect) that, unlike the Twelvers and Alevis, do not believe in twelve Imams [saints] but in seven Imams. Their speech, and notably their Ismaili faith in a predominantly Sunni environment, are sources of distinction and identity for them (see e.g. Dodikhodeva 2005; Monogarova 1972). Investments of the Ismaili Agha Khan foundation in this region is increasing and will continue to increase the Ismaili identity among the Pamiris.¹¹⁵ It seems that the Soviet policy makers did regard them silently as a distinct ethnic group, because the Mountainous Badakhshan (Gorno-Badakhshan) province, where the Ismaili Pamiris made up an absolute majority of the population, was offered autonomous status (The Gorno-Badakhshan AO). Nowhere else in the Soviet Union were autonomies offered based on environment and habitats. Nowhere else in the Soviet Union were mountainous “subgroups of an ethnic group” offered autonomy. The creation of the non-ethnic autonomous units of Adjaran ASSR and the Nakhichevan ASSR were based on geopolitical motives: on the agreements between the Soviet

¹¹³ *Red Book* (1991). The Peoples of the Pamirs. Available online: http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/pamir_peoples.shtml (Accessed 10 December 2008)

¹¹⁴ *Red Book* (1991). The Shughnis. Available online: <http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/shughnis.shtml> (Accessed 10 December 2008)

¹¹⁵ Many times Pamiri informants told me that although they are self-aware of their Ismaili identity, they do not appreciate it when the Indian Ismailis come to Gorno-Badakhshan and tell them what to do. However, as a result even this attitude has increased their Ismaili awareness, because of the fact that they try to keep their local Ismaili traditions. One of the projects of the Agha Khan foundation was the establishment of the University of Central Asia. The Agha Khan foundation also offers scholarship for research. All indications are that the Pamiri identity is strong in Gorno-Badakhshan. Once (August 2008) I met a young Kyrgyz man from Gorno-Badakhshan. He was a Sunni Muslim and spoke Kyrgyz and Tajik as well as some Pamiri languages, and he informed me that the Sunni Kyrgyz have a good relationship with the Ismaili Pamiris and largely also speak the Pamiri languages and dialects. I visited many Pamiris, in Central Asia and outside (2006–2008). All of them identified themselves as Ismaili Pamiris. The Tajik informants I met do not deny that the Pamiris are a distinct group, but they add to it that in Gorno-Badakhshan there live not only Pamiris, but also Tajiks.

Union and Turkey as well as on such motives as *divide et impera*.

Table 5.3. *Ethno-territorial groups in Central Asia and their main religions and languages*

ETHNIC GROUP	MAIN RELIGION	MAIN LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE FAMILY	LANGUAGE BRANCH
Dungan	Sunni Islam	Dungan Chinese	Sinic	(Mandarin) Hui
German	Western (mainly Protestant) Christianity	German	Germanic	Western
Karakalpak	Sunni Islam	Karakalpak	Turkic	Kypchak
Kazakh	Sunni Islam	Kazakh	Turkic	Kypchak
Kurd	Shi'ite Islam	Kurmanji Kurdish	Iranic	Northwestern
Kyrgyz	Sunni Islam	Kyrgyz	Turkic	Kypchak
Pamiri	Shi'ite Islam	Mainly Shughnani (with other Pamiri languages)	Iranic	Southeastern
Russian	Orthodox Christianity	Russian	Slavic	Eastern
Tajiks	Sunni Islam	Tajiks	Iranic	Southwestern
Turkmen	Sunni Islam	Turkmen	Turkic	Oghuz
Ukrainian	Orthodox Christianity	Ukrainian	Slavic	Eastern
Uyghur	Sunni Islam	Uyghur	Turkic	Karluk
Uzbek	Sunni Islam	Uzbeks	Turkic	Karluk

Although there are no precise data about the number of Pamiris, there have been some studies on them and certain estimations of their numbers are available. According to *Ethnologue* (2009, 16th edition)¹¹⁶ (based on figures from 1975 until 1994), there were 98,000 Pamiris. According to Atabaki and Versteeg (1994: 80), there were approximately 152,000 Pamiris living in Tajikistan in 1989.¹¹⁷ Hence, the Pamiris made up approximately between 61% and 95% of Gorno-Badakhshan's total population (160,900) in 1989.¹¹⁸ The Tajik-speaking Vanji people in Gorno-Badakhshan were also Ismailis and spoke a Pamiri language before being incorporated into the Emirate of Bukhara and converted to Sunni Islam. The addition of their number to the Pamiris results in slightly higher numbers of Pamiris but does not affect the general picture significantly. Pamiris in Tajikistan meet all the criteria of being an ethno-

¹¹⁶See *Ethnologue* report for Tajikistan. Available online: http://www.ethnologue.org/show_country.asp?name=TJ (Accessed 23 December 2011).

¹¹⁷ According to Atabaki & Versteeg (1994: 80), 3% of the Tajikistan's population in 1989 were Pamiris. According to the Soviet census, the population of Tajikistan was 5,092,603 in 1989. A calculation of the number of Pamiris results in 152,778.

¹¹⁸ As it appears from the results of fieldwork studies among Pamiris in Gorno-Badakhshan, the lower percentages apparently count only Pamiris inside the Gorno-Badakhshan AO. Other estimations, however, may also include Pamiris living outside the Gorno-Badakhshan AO.

territorial group.¹¹⁹ All Ethno-territorial groups in Central Asia are listed in Table 5.3.

Ethno-Territorial Groups in Fereydan

Most ethnic groups in Fereydan have a long history of habitation and are in that sense ethno-territorial. Armenians and Georgians are relative newcomers, but even they have a long record of habitation in Fereydan. Armenians and Georgians lived in the territory of modern-day Iran even prior to the 17th century, but their mass settlement in Iran and specifically in Fereydan occurred in the 17th century (see e.g. Bournoutian 1998; Chaqueri 1998; Gregorian 1998; Hart 1998 [1932]; Hovian 2001; Muliani 2000; Rahimi 2000; Rezvani 2008a; Rezvani 2009a; Rezvani 2009b; Sepiani 1979). They have put their mark on the regional Fereydani history. Armenians, for example, have old churches in Fereydan, and Georgians fought against Afghan invaders there. Unless otherwise specified and certainly in this chapter, Fereydan in this book refers to the region of Greater Fereydan, including the Shahrestan-e Khwansar. This region consist of the *shahrestans* of Fereydan (proper), Fereydunshahr, Chadegan, and Khwansar. All these *shahrestans* belong to the Ostan-e Esfahan. Occupying the western part of that *ostan*, Fereydan is a medium-sized Iranian region.

Fereydan is in many aspects a model Iranian region, scoring an average in most aspects. It is neither rich nor poor, is similar to most other predominantly rural regions in Iran, not densely populated, and has produced many emigrants who left Fereydan searching for jobs. The religious, linguistic, and hence ethnic maps of Fereydan, however, are more heterogeneous than most other Iranian regions.

Today, Shi'ite Islam is the largest religion in Iran. Then follows Sunni Islam. Other religions are adhered to by relatively small numbers of people. Estimates of the proportions of Shi'ites, Sunnis, and adherents to

¹¹⁹ The case of Pamiris is very different from the small groups of people who speak the Yaghnobi language in the Yaghnob Valley and are registered as Tajiks. They are bilingual in Tajik and Yaghnobi, a ortheast Iranic language and a remnant of Soghdian, the ancient language of Tajik's ancestors. They are a very small group, perhaps less than 3,000 souls, and decreasing in number. Similar to other Tajiks, Yaghnobi Tajiks are Sunni Muslims. In addition, emigration from their valley contributes even more to their assimilation into and identification with the mainstream ethnic Tajik people. While the Pamiris have a strong sense of Pamiri Ismaili identity, the Yaghnobis can best be defined as local Tajiks of the Yaghnob area. (A similar case is, perhaps, that of the Frisians in the Netherlands. They can be described as the local Dutch, despite their different language.) There are, however, contradictory claims. Even if Yaghnobis' peculiarities were enough reason to regard them as a distinct ethnic group, they could not be regarded as an ethno-territorial group in this study because, as a rule, the Soviet ethnic categories are maintained in this study as long as they are smaller than 20,000 persons.

other religions in Iran are respectively 89%, 9%, and 2%, according to the CIA (2009),¹²⁰ and 90%, 8%, and 2%, according to the Library of Congress Federal Research Division (2008: 5). My own estimates, based on the aforementioned method, also come close to these figures. Although the Shi'ite group is undeniably the largest religious group in Fereydan, the “remaining category” in Fereydan has been historically more prominent than in most other parts of Iran.

The most notable religious minority group in Fereydan are Armenians, who are Orthodox Christians. The overwhelming majority of Christians (about 300,000 in 2008)¹²¹ in Iran are Armenians. The other Christian groups (for example, Assyrians) are smaller communities. The number of Armenians in Iran can be estimated at over 250,000.

There are many Christian churches in the Armenian villages of Fereydan. Regarding the date of construction of these churches and comparing them with those in Esfahan, one can conclude that Fereydan is one of the oldest Armenian centers in the central part of Iran. According to Vartan Gregorian (1998: 39-41), the Armenian settlement in Esfahan took place in the period 1603–1605, and the first Armenian church in Esfahan was built in 1606. According to Hovian (2001: 141-142), Armenians settled in Esfahan in 1605 and the first Armenian church in Esfahan was built in 1607. According to him, the oldest church in Fereydan, the Holy Hohanes (St. John) Church in the village of Upper Khoysan, dates not much later and was built in 1610 (Hovian 2001: 157). From the list of the Armenian churches in Iran offered by Hovian (2001: 156-157), it can be concluded that after Western Azerbaijan, no other predominantly rural areas in Iran have such a high concentration of (old) Armenian churches. The Holy Ghukas (St. Lucas) church in Zarne (Boloran) is among the oldest historical buildings in Fereydan (Isfahanportal.ir 2007a). The locals and people from Esfahan report that this church is visited during certain Armenian religious ceremonies by large numbers of Armenians from outside Fereydan, notably from Esfahan, and that the ceremonies and services are often broadcast by the Ostan-e Esfahan TV channel.¹²²

Sepiani (1979) identified 17 Armenian villages and one mixed Armenian/Turkic-speaking village in Fereydan. Many villages which were identified by Sepiani (1979) as Armenian do not have an Armenian majority of permanent population any more.¹²³ Portal-e Ostan-e Esfahan,

¹²⁰ Although below the page was stated that it was last updated on 5 February 2009, the information offered is usually older.

¹²¹ According to the Library of Congress Federal Research Division (2008), the number of Christians in Iran could be estimated at 300,000, and the number has been decreasing rather rapidly since the 2000s. Therefore, it seems that the number of Christians was larger in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

¹²² Information obtained from locals and people from Esfahan (2000–2008).

¹²³ Even though many (former) Armenian villages are deserted, Zarne (Boloran) still remains

the website of Ostan-e Esfahan (Isfahanportal.ir 2007a), mentions 11 Armenian villages in Fereydan.¹²⁴ In 1856, Fereydan, with its 21 Armenian villages, was the second-largest rural Iranian Armenian center in Iran, after the region of Western Azerbaijan (Hovian 2001: 210). Of 70,000 Armenians in Iran in 1932 (or shortly before that date) approximately 13,000 lived in the rural areas around Esfahan (Hart 1998: 371). Fereydan is the largest rural Armenian area around Esfahan and, therefore, it can be assumed that most of those 13,000 persons were Fereydani Armenians. If we assume that the ratio of Fereydani Armenians in the total population of Iranian Armenians (>18.5%) has been stable over time, the number of Armenians with Fereydani Armenian origin can be estimated at over 45,000. Nevertheless, not all these persons are (permanent) inhabitants of Fereydan.¹²⁵

Although the case of Armenians is more prominent, emigration from rural Fereydan, especially by the youth, is a common feature among all ethnic groups of Fereydan. This is somewhat similar to the case of the mountainous Caucasus (see Eldarov et al. 2007; Eldarov 2008; RREC 2005: 46; WRITENET 1995).

There have been historically notable communities of Jews and Bahais in Greater Fereydan. Khwansar has traditionally been one of the Jewish centers of Iran. Rabbi Davoudi, the former spiritual leader of Iranian Jews, was from Khwansar (*Khabarnameh-ye Khwansar* 2007). Similar to the number of Jews, the number of Bahais is also dwindling. Since Bahaism is a non-recognized religion in Iran, many Bahais left Iran after the Islamic Revolution (1979). Those who remained are concentrated in large urban areas such as Tehran, Esfahan, and Shiraz, where they can live in relatively more anonymity. Although it is hypothetically possible that there still live Bahais in Fereydan who deny their religious affiliation in public, it is more likely that the remaining Bahais converted to Shi'ite Islam after the Islamic Revolution. During my fieldwork in Fereydan, people, especially in those towns and villages that are known to have had

completely Armenian. In 2000 I even met Fereydani Armenians, who had lived for a time in Esfahan and had returned to this village, or those who had lived in Tehran but spent their summers in this village. Many Fereydani Armenians residing in other parts of Iran return to Fereydan during their summer vacation.

¹²⁴ These villages are: Qal'e-ye Gregor, Darabvard, Arigan, Movakkel-e Senegerd, Punestan, Zarne (Boloran), the Lower Khoysan, the Upper Khoysan, Khong, Haran [or Hadan?], Suran [or Savaran?], Namagerd, Milagerd, Shurishkan, and Sangbaran (Isfahanportal.ir 2007a).

¹²⁵ Fereydani Armenians are relatively active and aware about their culture. Two books which introduce their culture and dialect are those by L. Minasian (1998) and B. S. Ghazarian Senegerdi (1991). The first book is about Fereydani Armenian folklore and the second one is a Persian-Armenian dictionary, based on the Iranian-Armenian (Parskahayeren) dialect of Armenian, and contains many words used by Fereydani Armenians. Both authors are Fereydani Armenians. The first author, whom I know personally, is affiliated with the Armenian Museum of Esfahan, and the second one's name suggests that he is from Senegerd, an Armenian village in Fereydan.

significant Bahai populations, downplay or totally deny the historical existence of Bahais there.¹²⁶

As there are no censuses or other official categorization of ethnic groups, the identification of ethnic groups in Iran requires a certain knowledge of Iranian ethnic and inter-ethnic realities. Ethnic categories in Iran are fluid and much hybridity exists. Consequently, the identification of ethnic groups, ethno-territorial groups, and hence also the identification of ethno-territorial encounters is difficult. There is no legal definition or delimitation of ethnic groups in Iran. Ethnic groups are not politicized but are a cultural category. The differences between tribes and ethnic groups are not always clear, not even in the colloquial or official languages. Self-awareness of different groups varies to a certain extent. It is not surprising that many people in Iran, especially in the larger cities, identify themselves simply as Iranian, without a clear reference to their ethnicity. Sometimes people refer to their ancestral locality. One will, for example, say: “Well, I am Shirazi”, which can also mean: “I am from Ostan-e Fars”. Many will say: “I am Shomali [Northerner]”, which may mean that he is from either Gilan, Mazandaran, or Golestan, and hence can be Gilaki, Talysh, Mazandarani, etc. It is not uncommon to refer to a region as a whole, even though that region does not correlate perfectly to a single *ostan*. For example, someone may say he is a Khorasani, Azerbaijani, or Larestani. The first two regions are divided into many *ostans*, while the latter is a region in Ostan-e Fars. It is not very uncommon to hear phrases such as: “I am Tehrani but my parents are Mashhadi”. In such a context it is not very uncommon to hear: “Do you know? I am Tehrani, but my father is Tabrizi and my mother is Shirazi. Her father was Hamedani. He was there for work when he married my grandmother”.

Indeed, intermarriages, especially between the members of the same religion, are very common. In particular, the members of Shi'ite ethnic groups—that is, mainstream Iranian society (virtually the same as “titular” group in the Soviet context)—very often intermarry. Intermarriages result in a lot of hybridity and uncertainty about people's local or ethnic affiliations. This uncertainty is especially found more with regard to locality than ethnicity. People do not know if they are Mashahdi or Esfahani if each of the parents are from either city. In these cases they will identify most likely with their own place of birth or residence, but as both parents are Persian-speakers, they will identify with that ethnic group. A person is, for example, an Azeri if both parents are. A more difficult case is, for example, if one's father is an Azeri and one's mother an ethnic Persian-speaker (a Fars). In such cases people will identify themselves by the place of birth or the language they speak. People will

¹²⁶ Information obtained by fieldwork (Fereydan 2000–2006).

also say they are ethnically mixed and are half Azeri and half ethnic Persian-speaker (or Fars).

Despite its fluid nature and ambiguity in many cases, ethnicity, even in the case of Shi'ites, is still traceable and identifiable to a high degree. Ethnic groups are cultural groups in Iran and are mainly defined and distinguished from each other on the basis of their language and religion (see Amanollahi 2005). Even though the ethnic identification of many individual persons may be hybrid, there is still general awareness of the fact that ethnic groups, as collectivities, exist in Iran. It is not very uncommon to hear someone is Lur, half Lur, Kurd (that is, Sunni Kurd), Khorasani (Shi'ite) Kurd, Azeri, Talysh, Tork (i.e. a Turkic-speaker, a general name for all Turkic speakers, except for the Turkmens), half Talysh half Gilaki, etc. Very often the ethnic categories used in colloquial encounters are those that are implicitly recognized by a large segment of Iranian society. Usually these ethnic categories are based on the groups' native language or an combination of the spoken language and religion.

A list of towns and villages and the number of their inhabitants and oral information given to me by Fereydan proper's Governorate (*Farmandari-ye Fereydan*), Sepiani's book (1979), and my fieldwork gave a good basis for the location of ethnic concentrations and, hence, encounters between ethnic groups in Fereydan. It is relatively easy to identify ethnic groups and hence ethno-territorial groups in Fereydan. Armenians, due to their distinctive religion, are very easily distinguishable from other groups there. They not only speak their ethnic language, but they also practice a different religion and are easily distinguishable from their neighbors in Fereydan, who are predominantly (almost 100%) Shi'ite Muslims. It is also not very difficult to distinguish ethnic groups from each other who speak different languages. Georgian is a very different language than Persian or Turkic, and hence they are easily distinguishable from each other. The Khwansari language is a Northwest Iranian language belonging to a dialect continuum of languages of central Iran.¹²⁷ Such languages were once widely spoken in central Iran before being supplanted by Persian and are called the "Median dialects" of Esfahan by the linguist Habib Borjian (2007). More difficult cases are when languages are close to each other. For example, Bakhtiari and Standard Persian are very close languages. Nevertheless, owing to the differences in lifestyles and of course memory, kinship, and familial ties, one can recognize one's own and others' ethnic affiliation.

Language can also be a basis of distinction even if one does not speak that language. Indeed, there are many people who do not speak their

¹²⁷ Asaturian (Asatrian) (2011: 12-17) regards the speakers of these languages as being each an ethnic (or ethno-linguistic) group.

ethnic language or are not very fluent in it. It is not uncommon that Georgians, Bakhtiari, etc. who are born or raised in large cities do not speak their ethnic language anymore; nonetheless, by virtue of kinship and their memory, they know to which ethnic group they belong.

In Fereydan, the cities, towns, and villages are still largely homogeneous. Shahrestan-e Chadegan, for example, is a mainly Turkic-speaking *shahrestan*, except for its *bakhsh* called Chenar-Rud, which is predominantly Bakhtiari. Shahrestan-e Fereydan (proper) is ethnically mixed. While its administrative center Daran and the town of Damaneh are Persian-speaking, its rural areas, with the notable exception of the Bakhsh-e Buin-Miandasht, are predominantly Turkic-speaking. That *bakhsh* and a large part of the *shahrestan* of Fereyduhshahr is inhabited by Georgians. Most large settlements in Shahrestan-e Fereyduhshahr are Georgian. Georgians are the largest ethnic group in that *shahrestan*, and they probably also constitute a large majority of its population, almost all speaking the Georgian language (Isfahanportal.ir 2007b). The mountainous southern part of Fereyduhshahr, however, is predominantly Bakhtiari. Despite its relatively large area, the southern part of Shahrestan-e Fereyduhshahr is sparsely populated.¹²⁸ Khwansaris are mainly concentrated in Shahrestan-e Khwansar.

Consequently, most ethnic groups in Fereydan live in more or less ethnically homogeneous settlements. There are only a few groups who do or did not. The number of Jews is dwindling. Like the other religious minority group in Fereydan, the Baha'is, and unlike Armenians, Jews lived mainly in towns and villages among other groups. As most newcomers to Fereydan and Khwansar are temporary residents (mainly students) in the larger urban centers, none of their respective ethnic groups are and have the potential to become an ethno-territorial group. Therefore, only the Fereydani Turkic speakers, Persian-Speakers, Bakhtiari, Khwansaris, Armenians, and Georgians are ethno-territorial groups (see Table 5.4). Despite not inhabiting Fereydan, another group forms ethno-territorial encounters with Fereydani groups: the Lurs of the neighboring Ostan-e Lorestan (Luristan). Therefore, Table 5.4 also includes these ethno-territorial groups. Next to these Lurs, there are also other ethno-

¹²⁸ Once a native of this area—whose aunt was married, by the way, to a Georgian from Fereyduhshahr—told me that his ancestral village, called Masil, is the largest village in those mountains and counts only 200 inhabitants. Many other people confirmed this, but others think there are larger villages there. Others, notably residents of large cities elsewhere in Iran, thought that although it is a small village and relatively unpopulated, still 200 inhabitants was a very small number. Such claims are not very strange in a country where people often claim that its capital has 15 million inhabitants, i.e. much more than Ostan-e Tehran's population altogether! Residents of large urban metropolitan areas in Iran often do not have a true picture of the reality in the rest of Iran, a relatively sparsely populated country. Still, they do recognize this lack of population in the "provinces" or "villages". Regardless of the veracity of this claim—which was and is not very difficult to investigate, by the way—it indicates that this area is indeed very sparsely populated.

territorial groups whose living areas border those of Fereydani ethnic groups. These are often the same ethnic groups as are found also in Fereydan itself. They are, notably, the Persian-speakers of Ostan-e Esfahan to the east of Fereydan and the Bakhtiari in the neighboring Ostan-e Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari. All ethno-territorial groups in Fereydan and the Lurs of Luristan are listed in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4. List of ethno-territorial groups in Fereydan and their main religions and languages

ETHNIC GROUP	MAIN RELIGION	MAIN LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE FAMILY	LANGUAGE BRANCH
Armenian	Orthodox Christianity	Armenian	Armenian	.
Bakhtiari	Shi'ite Islam	Persian	Iranian	Southwestern
Georgian	Shi'ite Islam	Georgian	Kartvelian	.
Khwansari	Shi'ite Islam	Khwansari (Central Iranian)	Iranian	Northwestern
Lurs	Shi'ite Islam	Luri	Iranian	Southwestern
Persian-speaker	Shi'ite Islam	Persian	Iranian	Southwestern
Turkic-speaker	Shi'ite Islam	(Fereydani) Turkic	Turkic	Oghuz