Rethinking the Lausanne Convention: beyond Myths and Legends

Repenser le traité de Lausanne : au-delà des mythes et des légendes
Lozan Sözleşmesini Yeniden Düşünmek: Mitlerin ve Efsanelerin Ötesinde

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Abstract: the year 2023 is an important turning for Turks and Greeks because it is the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne signed between Turkey and Greece in 1923. The Treaty of Lausanne is also the birth certificate of the Republic of Turkey. It initiated the first compulsory population exchange in world history. With the forced migration, not only the lives of millions of people changed but also their emotions and thoughts, as well as the identities they felt they belonged to have changed. In time, the nationalist ideology has alienated these two very similar societies that share a common past, from each other and declared them national enemies. This article was written in order to unite the Turkish and Greek nations again by learning and remembering their common past, which was separated by the population exchange, and to ensure a permanent peace in the Aegean.

Keywords: Treaty of Lausanne, Greek/Turkish nationalism

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Résumé : l’année 1923 est un tournant important pour les Turcs et les Grecs car c’est le 100e anniversaire du traité de Lausanne signé entre leurs deux pays en 1923. Le traité de Lausanne est aussi le certificat de naissance de la république de Turquie. Il décida du premier échange de population obligatoire dans l’histoire du monde. Par cette migration, non seulement les vies de millions de personnes ont dû changer, mais aussi leurs émotions, leurs pensées, tout comme leurs identités ont dû le faire. Avec le temps, les idéologies nationalistes ont rendu étrangères ces deux sociétés très proches et en ont fait des ennemis de la nation. Cet article a été écrit pour réunir les deux nations grecque et turque, en leur apprenant et leur rappelant leur passé commun brisé par l’échange de populations, et pour assurer une paix permanente en Égée.

Mots-clés : traité de Lausanne, nationalisme grec/turc
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Anahtar kelimeler: Lozan Antlaşması, Yunan/Turk milliyetçilik

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Συνθήκη της Λωζάνης, Ελληνικός/Τουρκικός εθνικισμός

Ключные слова: Договор о Лозане, греческий/турецкий национализм
The year 2023 is an important turning point for Greece and Turkey as it marks a century since the Lausanne Convention initiated the first compulsory population exchange in world history. It is also the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic, which was founded at the conclusion of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) on the 29th of October 1923. The second century of the Turkish Republic started with a catastrophe. As I was writing this article on February 6, 2023, two very destructive earthquakes, magnitude 7.7 and 7.6, struck Turkey on the very same day. Geologists were expecting an earthquake in that area, but could not imagine two on the same day. The first earthquake happened in Gaziantep early in the morning at 04:17 a.m.; the second one shook Kahramanmaraş (ancient Germenicia) at 1:24 p.m. Seventeen Turkish cities were badly damaged, including my hometown Şanlıurfa. Syria was also devastated by earthquakes, and thousands of people were killed in both countries due to poor quality building standards. Furthermore, the earthquake zone was swamped by heavy rain and floods. The international press announced it as a catastrophe because a huge area was reduced to rubble and millions of people were directly affected. The Turkish government asked for international aid as the destruction was beyond our imagination and preparation. People all over the world raised money for the victims of

2. I experienced both earthquakes in Urfa as a resident of this ancient city where Göbeklitepe and Karahantepe are located. After resigning from my post at Bingöl University in 2020, I moved to Urfa and started working as a professional tour guide.
the Great Catastrophe of Anatolia. Thousands of rescue teams, doctors, nurses, philanthropists and journalists arrived to help in the earthquake zone.

Before the Great Catastrophe of Anatolia, Greek-Turkish relations were tense due to the confrontational, populist discourse espoused by politicians. Nonetheless, Greece was one of the nations that offered humanitarian aid to its neighbour from the very first moments of the disaster. On February 8, ERT, the official state TV channel of Greece announced news of the earthquake with a very sentimental Turkish song with lyrics lamenting the victims of past catastrophes. I cried as I watched it, because I know how much we share and how much we resemble each other despite disputes that we unconsciously continue. A cartoon in the *Kathimerini* newspaper emphasized solidarity with Turkey and included the expression “We are all Turks.”

A rescue team arrived in Turkey, followed shortly by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece. He was warmly welcomed, and together with his Turkish counterpart announced that no more earthquakes are necessary for improved cooperation and friendship in the Aegean region.

In 1999, the Marmara Sea region of Turkey suffered from destructive earthquakes when I was an undergraduate student in Istanbul. Gölcük was hit on August 17 with a magnitude of 7.4, and Düzce was hit on November 12 with a magnitude of 7.2. Thousands of people were killed. I remember Greece was helpful and open to cooperation with Turkey then. Three weeks later, Athens was rocked by an earthquake as well, and Turkey reciprocated by providing support to Greece. Greeks and Turks realized that both nations were ready to help at the moment of crises. As a Turkish citizen, I was surprised to witness the cooperation of Greece and Turkey in 1999. Damla Demirözü states that after the earthquakes, despite the negative image of Turks in Greek social memory and history books, Greeks empathized with Turkish people and could feel a common humanity.

We Turks also realized that Greeks are just like us and ready to help when needed. Obviously, we not only share the same culture and history, but also the same fault lines that cause destructive earthquakes. We, the people of the Aegean, desperately need peace and cooperation because natural disasters are unpredictable and very destructive; we always need the help of our neighbours in such moments of crisis. War is avoidable but natural disasters are unavoidable. This article will not only discuss the Lausanne Convention, but also my own experiences and understanding of Greek-Turkish relations from the point of view of a Turkish citizen and scholar.

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The clash between Greeks and Turks has a long history, accelerated by the rise of nationalism in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789. Nationalism contributed to the demise of empires such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire after World War I (1914-1918). Nations believed that a state consisting of their own nationals would finally bring happiness and social stability. In fact, people were in search of better opportunities and a happier, stable, more independent society. The idea of empire was going out of fashion after standing so long as the model of civilized organization in human history. People needed a new way of thinking, a new way of state building that would lead to a better future. Empires were cosmopolitan, consisting of many different ethnic groups, languages, faiths and cultures living together sometimes in peace, other times in conflict. This is a human condition. We always look for something different and better.

We still look for a better way of governing the masses. During the coronavirus pandemic (started at the end of 2019 and peaked in 2020-21), futurists began to express that nation states are insufficient to meet the needs of today’s globalized world. There is speculation that the doors of the digital age open too wide and artificial intelligence will finally dominate civilization. A new world order is necessary for a better future. The new millennium has already brought us pros and cons, and we still try to figure out survival in a digital age that seems easy on the one hand but is overwhelming on the other. Although nation states are threatened in the digital age and wary of artificial intelligence, there is nothing better yet. Millions of people were killed with the fall of empires and the rise of nationalism since the French Revolution. Therefore, for now, it is not possible to eliminate nation states because we are still too attached to our “imagined communities.” We think we are safer if we belong to a particular group of people even though we have never met each member personally. We think we share a common culture, religion, language, and history. As Benedict Anderson states, nation “is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”

Nations have decided that the nation-state system is the best form of government. Those who did not follow this fashion were outdated because nation states offered a better, honorable, self-governing, more contemporary model of government. These expectations mostly apply to Greece and Turkey, too. Greece had already gained its independence in 1829. During the disintegration process

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of the Ottoman Empire, the Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire, who were in conflict with Christians, had to migrate to Anatolia from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians had already established their own nation states. The peoples of Anatolia, mostly Muslims, remained without a nation state of their own. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his friends wanted to gather the Muslim refugees of the Balkans, the Caucasus and the local Muslims of Anatolia under one flag and state. The boundaries of the country were limited to Anatolia because Atatürk was not an expansionist.

Actually, the Turkish Republic was also multi-ethnic just like the Ottoman Empire at its foundation. However, in time, with the government’s Turkification policy, the minorities of Turkey were eliminated. For example, the September Pogrom of 1955 targeted minorities. Christians, Jews and Armenians left the country. This did not happen only in Turkey; other nation states have followed the same pattern. In Greece, for example, the westernizing dictatorship of Metaxas censored Anatolian music. He tried to abolish the distinctive musical culture of the Asia Minor refugees through a policy some decried as “genocidal.” Unification is normally the first goal of nation states, and Metaxas’ objective followed that course. The masses were unified for easy control and governing. Population exchange is also a project of unification because “it was thought of as a necessary measure correcting the incongruity of territory and nation, and it was accepted because it provided an accelerated route to nation-state formation.”

The Lausanne Convention was signed between Greece and Turkey on 30 January 1923 and became part of the Treaty of Lausanne signed on 24 July 1923. Greeks and Turks fought for three years (1919-1922) for the control of the western part of Anatolia. Greece was then an independent country liberated from Ottoman rule in 1829. Therefore, their struggle was not for survival but rather a military strategy for an expansionist ideology that wanted to revive the Byzantium Empire. Turkey, by contrast, was not yet a republic at the time of the Lausanne Convention. The Turkish Republic was found on the 29th of October, 1923. The Ankara Government negotiated the Lausanne Convention on behalf of the Turks. After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was divided up between the Great Powers and Anatolia, the Ottoman heartland, was the only

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place for the Muslim Turks to establish a nation state of their own. After such a deadly conflict with the Greeks, the Lausanne Convention was a victory because it paved the way for a new independent nation state. As Louis de Bernières observes, “It is one of history’s little ironies that in one century the Greeks should have fought a war of independence against the Turks and in the following century the Turks should have fought a war of independence against the Greeks.”

For Turkey, minorities were a legacy from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans were no more, and the new Turkish state had adopted the most popular idea of the day: nationalist ideology. Therefore, the problem of minorities needed an immediate resolution. Minorities gave a lot of trouble to the Ottoman Sultans. European countries interfered in the Ottoman administration by using minorities. The Ankara government, which did not want to repeat the same problem in the Republican period, took to the issue of population exchange eagerly. Besides, the exchange is nothing but the solution found by European countries to regulate “the vast refugee flows created by the First World War and its aftermath.” War is the most important cause of mass migrations. For that reason, European countries wanted to solve mass movements through treaties and conventions in order to put everybody in their own place, from their own perspective and political agenda.

Renee Hirschon states that:

Separation of people who are caught up in deadly conflict is probably the only way of preventing further massacres and the only effective measure in the short-term.

The exchange may have provided short-term relief, but in the long term it was understood as an exile—no one returned to the homeland. It was also the first compulsory exchange of populations in world history.

It is natural for neighboring countries to have conflicts. People always have problems with those closest to them because living in close contact inevitably leads to disputes.

The Lausanne Convention has many implications for Greece and Turkey because the convention gave birth to two nation-states in the Aegean. As Hirschon states:

11. de Bernières, 2005, p. 503.
12. Clark, 2007, p. 44.
This event constituted a major defeat, known as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, a greater disaster even than the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, for it ended with finality the millennia-long Hellenic presence in Anatolia.\(^\text{15}\)

Therefore, it was a failure and tragedy for the Greeks when the Orthodox Christians of Asia Minor left their motherland. For Turkey, the convention paved the way to the birth of the Turkish Republic.\(^\text{16}\) It was a victory and a great success to be proud of rather than lament, as in the Greek case. Catastrophes are unforgettable because they cause trauma and loss. That is why Greeks named it the “Asia Minor Catastrophe.” The exchange of populations has always been a hot issue in Greek society. Greeks have been questioning the \textit{Megali Idea}, whereas Turks have been trying to build a nation state from the ashes of an empire. For that reason, Turks concentrated on the Turkification of Asia Minor.

I am always asked whether I had refugee origin or not because this topic is generally discussed by the children and grandchildren of refugees in Turkey. They were raised listening to stories of the population exchange and the homeland. I do not have such a family history as I am from the Southeast of Turkey. It was my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Agnes Clare Brandabur, an American scholar of comparative literature, who directed my attention to the exchange of populations. She handed me \textit{Birds Without Wings} by Louis de Bernières and advised me to work on the population exchange topic. Doctor Brandabur was an exceptional scholar who lived in the Middle East and Turkey for more than 20 years. Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain and Turkey, as the last stop, were the countries where she lived and taught. She always encouraged her students to learn and promote their own history and culture.

Before reading \textit{Birds Without Wings}, I had very limited information about the exchange of populations because it was not included in our national history curriculum. Because of this lack of formal education, Turks do not have much knowledge about the population exchange and its consequences. For example, in 2012 I interviewed Kemal Yalçın, the author of \textit{The Entrusted Trousseau, Peoples of the Exchange}. In that book, he documented oral history accounts of both Orthodox Christians and Greek Muslims. Yalçın is originally from Honaz/Denizli, where Orthodox Christians used to live together with Muslim Turks. With the Lausanne Convention, Greek Muslims were settled in Honaz in 1923. Greek Muslims were singing folk tunes in Greek whilst working farmlands

\(^{15}\) Hirschon, 2004b, p. 14.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
alongside Turks. However, Yalçın never understood why they were singing and lamenting in Greek. Furthermore, it never occurred to him to ask the reason of that pain. When he became an adult, his father tasked him with returning his old playmate Sophia Minoğlu’s wedding trousseau that was left behind during the exchange of populations. Yalçın was very surprised to have such a family history and immediately began a search for Sophia in Greece in the 1990s. This was a turning point in Yalçın’s life. He devoted his time and energy to documenting the lives of Turkish minorities by making face-to-face interviews in Greece, Turkey and Germany.

I presented research on the exchange of populations in a literary conference held in Erciyes University in 2014 in Kayseri, Cappadocia region. The audience was very surprised to learn that once upon a time, Orthodox Christians resided in Cappadocia before 1923. My paper described something different from what they had learnt at school. They were unaware of the ex-residents of Cappadocia. In summer 2022, I guided a Syriac Orthodox of Şanlıurfa, whose grandfather migrated from Şanlıurfa to Lebanon in 1924 at the age of 17. He was born in Lebanon and his family migrated to Australia in the 1960s. At the age of 60, my guest decided to visit Turkey and his hometown with his wife, an Orthodox Christian of Antioch (Antakya in modern Turkey). Before arriving in Şanlıurfa, they had spent some time in Istanbul and Antakya as well. During their travels they also realized that Turks have limited knowledge of the ethnic diversity of their country.

During my 2012 research fellowship at the University of Oxford, St. Peter’s College, my first encounter with a Turkish Armenian in a seminar was a big surprise for me. After learning that I was from Turkey, she approached me with a big smile on her face, introduced herself and informed me about her family origins. She was originally from Şanlıurfa, but her family had moved to Adana and she was speaking just like Adana folks. That was an extraordinary moment in my life. Behold an Armenian—the “national enemy”—hugging me with love and care and trying to feel the home country through me. She was such a lovely woman who was so happy to meet somebody from Turkey. Since that episode, I have learnt that Turkish citizens abroad are welcomed first by the Turkish minorities. My direct personal experience has shown me how much those people long for the motherland.

Human beings are social animals, and we can always find a way for reconciliation. However, we are divided by the ideologies that we follow. It is a way of distancing ourselves from the “Other.” Ideologies are never enough to solve the problems we face. Furthermore, ideologies are monotonous and exclusive. When the Syrian Civil War broke out in 2011, Syrian Arabs started to migrate to Turkey, first to
the border cities on the southeast, then to the whole country. Turkish people were very surprised to see fair-skinned and blonde Syrians; they expected them to all be swarthy. That was an eye-opening moment for all Turks. Now, we have millions of Syrian refugees in our country and Turkish people’s attitudes are changing. During the first years of the Syrian War, nobody was irritated by their arrival and Turks were willing to help the victims of a war. However, as the conflict extended longer and longer, more and more Syrians entered Turkish cities radically and rapidly alter the demographics. Most of the time in the old city center of Urfa, Arabic is the only language you hear as you walk around Abraham’s Pool on a sunny day. Moreover, there are a lot of shops run by Syrians in our city. As the Arab population grows due to their high birth rate, Turkish citizens feel threatened and uncomfortable. Some even explain it as a silent invasion. I am afraid the Syrian war exacerbated nationalist sentiment among the Turks.

I had an undergraduate Syrian student who was 36 years old and married with two children. Her husband was an Assistant Professor of Arabic Literature at a Turkish university. The family had arrived in 2009 or 2010 before the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. They were often worried about their family whom they could not visit at all. Luckily, their hometown Hama never became a battlefield, but still some of their relatives migrated to Turkey to earn a living. Their daughters started primary school in Turkey, and of course they are very fluent in Turkish. I always advised my student to teach Arabic to her daughters. They were doing fine when the children were younger, but at our last meeting in January 2023, I was surprised to learn that the girls were not willing to learn their mother tongue. They could not openly explain the reason for their reluctance, but I figured out that they resisted learning Arabic because they were ashamed of it and distanced themselves from Arabic culture. Those kids were alienated and humiliated at school because of their ethnic identity and language. Teenagers lack sympathy and empathy towards disadvantaged people around them; they can be very cruel in their criticism or humiliation because they are taught to perceive the world in binary opposition.

As for the Asia Minor refugees, they were also discriminated by the local Greeks. Dido Sotiriou documented her life story in a film titled *Taste of the Memoirs*, in which she explained the reaction of local Greeks toward the refugees just after the Catastrophe. Sotiriou arrived at the port of Piraeus with her aunt when she was a little girl. The Smyrna Fire occurred the day before their arrival in Greece. Sotiriou and her aunt observed the local Greeks gathering at the port, desperately waiting for their sons who were conscripted into the Greek army for the Asia Minor campaign. Sotiriou observed:
Greek mothers, who sent their sons to Asia Minor to occupy the western coast, were at the port, waiting for their sons’ arrivals in Greece. They were staring at us with hatred as if we, Asia Minor Greeks, killed their sons. Besides, we were “Turkish seeds” for the local Greeks.  

Obviously, even before the arrival of the refugees in Greece, there was tension between the refugees and locals because the locals blamed refugees for the loss of their sons and relatives in the Asia Minor campaign. Sotiriou’s life story is crucial for understanding how that trauma affected relations between refugees and the locals in Greece.

Oral testimonies of refugees in The Entrusted Trousseau are also informative about the humiliation of the refugees called tourkosporoi (seeds of Turks) by locals. The local Greeks did not want the refugees. Vasili Karabas said that they were despised as the “seeds of Turks” and that locals refused to marry the refugees. Hirschon notes that “[e]ven in 1972 it was clear that marriages were preferably contracted from within the ‘refugee’ population. People in Kokkinia often used the common Greek proverb, ‘Shoes from your homeland, even if they are mended’.” Marantzidis notes that the Turkish-speaking refugees, who married among themselves, were alienated and their foreign identities became more apparent. As I have discussed in my book Imagined Communities in Greece and Turkey, Asia Minor refugees preserved their imperial or Ottoman identity in Greece, which was cosmopolitan and inclusive. With the Lausanne Convention, Asia Minor Greeks were neither the protected millets of the Ottoman Empire nor the minorities of the Turkish Republic. They became refugees, and the integration of the refugees into Greek society could not be accomplished completely because they were the last Ottomans on Greek soil. They had imperial identities that differentiated them from the locals. The attitudes of the local Greeks and the nationalist policy of the Greek state also had a negative impact on the refugees and their integration.

Research has shown that Asia Minor refugees identified themselves as Mikrasiátes, meaning Asia Minor people, when they encountered the locals. Mikrasiátes was the legacy of the Millet-i Rum that was perpetuated in Greece.

18. Yalçın, 2008, p. 82.
after the Lausanne Convention. The *Millet-i Rum* used to have imperial identities, an Ottoman legacy, which became their social, cultural, and political identity in contrast to the locals. Hirschon observes, “the inhabitants of Kokkinia had a clearly developed sense of identity, separate from that of metropolitan Greek society.” Guided by Hirschon, I clarified the identities of Asia Minor refugees. Imperial identity is a term that I use in my book to describe Asia Minor Greeks who were the subjects of an imperial tradition first under the reign of the Eastern Roman Empire, then later under the Ottomans.

A representative declared to the Pan-Refugee Congress: “We will never cease being aware that we are refugees and will never stop transmitting [this sentiment] to our children and to the children of our children.” Refugee identity was a means of survival for the Asia Minor refugees and the homeland was the center of their identity. As Malkki indicates, “[i]dentify is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories.”

With the rise of digital age and globalization, I believe Greeks and Turks can make peace if they are sincere in their intention. The pandemic and other major events of this century have already shown that the globe is getting smaller day by day. We are not as independent from other people as we think we are. We are linked to each other whether we like it or not. As Elizabeth Tonkin notes in *Narrating Our Past*, “We live in other people’s pasts whether we know it or not and whether or not we want to do so.” As simple as that. There is a past over which we have no control, yet we suffer from that past. It still haunts us because we keep it alive in our memories. The new generation needs to learn how to cope with the history of their ancestors. We need reason more than lamentations and growing hatred. We should read more but be very careful not to study issues through a nationalist lens. We need to distance ourselves from myths and legends and concentrate on the possibility of making peace on both sides of the Aegean. I believe it is possible —if we speak and communicate— to see how much we are alike. The young generation of Greeks and Turks have no idea how much we share because of prejudice instilled in every young boy and girl at school.

I interviewed Louis de Bernières in London in 2012. We discussed his personal history of writing *Birds Without Wings*. The author has both Greek and Turkish friends, and he recalled having Greek friends who used to say: “My best friend is a Turk but Turks are barbarians.” This contradictory and complicated sentiment or idea actually stems from the national education curriculum. It is not uttered consciously but rather unconsciously due to formal lessons that make students memorize national history without reasoning. This also shows the ignorance of our societies towards the “Other.” Turks are not very different in that sense, either. With the exchange of populations, the peoples of the Aegean have lost “familiarity which carries with it the possibility for understanding and respect, and this is all too often replaced by suspicion, hostility and the inability to cooperate.” However, it is never too late for reconciliation. As a professional tour guide, I always visit museums and archaeological sites in Turkey. Just visiting those places will tell us more than high school textbooks. Greek and Roman artefacts are everywhere in Turkey, and there is an Ottoman legacy in Greece that one cannot ignore. I believe Greece and Turkey need to concentrate on art history and archaeology more than they concentrate on the political history that divides the Aegean peoples.

Peter Englund claims:

> Those who lived at the center of things know everything about how it felt but little about what it was: this is their tragedy. As their successors, we know a great deal about what it was, but nothing about how it felt: that is ours.

We, the successors of the Greco-Turkish War, *know* what it was from a distance. Thousands of books and articles are written about it. However, it is not possible for us to *feel* how it was as we have never experienced a war and subsequent population exchange. War is a trauma in itself, but compulsory migration of masses is perhaps worse because people were uprooted against their will. Yes, we have no idea of exile, loss, and longing, but through empathy we can at least try to feel the traumatic displacement of millions of people. There is always a solution if we are willing to cooperate.

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26. de Bernières.
Greeks and Turks are sentimental nations in their nature. They can be easily manipulated by the discourse of politicians who want to save the day for their own benefit. Authors and academics such as Dido Sotiriou, Renee Hirschon, Hercules Millas, Kemal Yalçın, Louis de Bernières, Yaşar Kemal, Yunca Anzerlioğlu, Pelin Böke and Bruce Clark provide an antidote to daily, mind numbing, political manipulation. There are, of course, several distinguished scholars writing on Greek-Turkish relations that I could not include here due to space limit.

To have a broader view of the issue, oral history accounts are crucial, too. Oral history is becoming more popular since World War II because official history cannot project the past as a whole. Elie Wiesel claims that witness literature is the literary invention of our time: “If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony.” Witness Literature is becoming an important literary genre because of growing interest to “hear” the voices of the sufferers. For that reason, a wider perspective of an incident is achieved through oral history and witness literature. Tonkin claims that people have a “history-as-lived” and a “history-as-recorded.” Recorded history is the official history of states and kingdoms. However, “history-as-lived” is the life story of victims who were directly affected by wars and disasters. These accounts are more naturally democratic because they inject alternative voices into the discourse. Oral history provides researchers and audiences a different perspective to evaluate the story of the witness because, as Alessandro Portelli observes, “Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.” Oral history allows the eye witnesses to express themselves, their thoughts, feelings, agonies, dilemmas, hopes, disappointments and intentions. Readers (or listeners) of oral history can more easily develop an empathetic connection to the sufferers, and that is what we need to establish peace in our countries. A fabricated history of myths and legends will no longer do well for the future of our geography and people.

As I conclude this reflection, I want to thank Prof. Dr. Joelle Dalegre for the opportunity to voice my own understanding of the population exchange as a Turkish citizen and scholar. I personally feel sorry there is no chance to live with the Orthodox Christians of Asia Minor in the same country. I believe they would

enrich my culture and society. If the Asia Minor Campaign were not initiated, the exchange of populations would not have taken place and people would not have been deported from their motherlands. Turkey would be a multi-ethnic country and other ethnic groups would not suffer due to the official Turkification policy. Although Greece and Turkey wanted to avoid problems caused by minority populations in their territory, they could not escape from this. Cyprus is another conflict that they cannot solve even in the 21st century. Perhaps, it would be much easier to solve if there had never been a population exchange? Dividing people is not a long-term solution because people lose familiarity and capacity to reconcile. It plants ignorance and hatred for the next generations and then, like a snowball, problems get bigger and bigger each day. We are social animals and without getting closer, we will not be able to establish peace in our region.

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**Papers and contributions to books**


Film


Newspaper