

## 博士學位論文要約

論文題目： Everyday Ethnicity of Kurmanji Speaking Kurds in Iran; A Case in Political Anthropology

政治人類学的事例研究;イランにおけるクルマンジー方言話者クルド人の日常のエスニシティ

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要約：

Kurds are among the most studied ethnic groups in the world today. However, the huge interest in the study of Kurds has usually been marked by political events and conflicts in any of the four countries they reside: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The dominance of the political perspective and the eventful interpretation of history among either scholars or Kurdish nationalists and states has limited Kurdish studies to moments of political mobilization, turmoil, or conflict. This eventful understanding of history would be relevant if it were limited to the political realm or applied to specific branches of political science, security studies, or a research tradition. But it raises a red flag when it tends to be the only image portrayed of Kurds.

This dissertation is an attempt to pose a challenge to the reified image of Kurdishness and *Kurdayeti* (awakening Kurdish nationalism), from an ethnographical perspective. The focus group is the comparatively understudied Kurmanji-speaking Kurds of Urmia county in Iran, both in rural and urban contexts. I have relied on ten months of ethnographic research together with multiple un- and semi-structured interviews to investigate the questions: *When does Kurdishness matter for the*

*Kurmanji-speaking Kurds of Urmia county? How does it appear in the daily preoccupations of ordinary Kurds? And why do the Kurds of this study, in particular, and Kurds all over the Middle East, in general, have a high potential for mobilization during politically charged moments?*

Iran's Urmia city, one portion of the region under study, is an area where two separate minority groups have a major presence: Kurds and Azeris; this aspect adds more variables to the study of the Kurds, who are usually studied within center-periphery frameworks. Additionally, studying rural Kurds who reside in a convergent border region of three states, and comprise diverse tribal and ethnoreligious orientations, presents an interesting case for the study of transnational Kurdishness.

Theoretically, this work relies on Rogers Brubaker's notion of *ethnicity without groups*, according to which any formulation of the situation that takes for granted the existence of an ethnic group based on a predefined set of characteristics fails to comprehend the dynamics of the field. This framework armed me with a powerful conceptual tool and methodological approach to the study of Kurdishness: distinguishing between the everyday and the political realms, or in Brubaker's terms, ethnicity from below and ethnicity from above.

This dissertation has been organized into three parts. Part I initiates the research by providing an overview of the fields of Kurdish and ethnic studies. Part II, voices from below, captures the dynamics of ethnicity in the everyday lives of ordinary Kurds, from their historical memory to their daily preoccupations both in rural and urban contexts. Part III first captures the dynamics of the

political field, ethnicity from above, and then attempts to situate this work in the fields of Kurdish as well as ethnic and nationalistic studies.

To enable capturing the unheard voices of the *forgotten* Kurmanji-speaking Kurds of Iran from below, both in rural and urban contexts, a detailed description of the diverse configuration of Kurdish tribes, ethnoreligious groups, and non-tribal families is provided. Most notably, how the socio-political events and economic structures have changed the structure of the Kurdish society within my focus region has been explored. The fieldwork has revealed that ethnicity seems to be less present in the everyday lives of the Kurds in rural areas where they comprise the ethnic majority. Instead, people are more affected by the social transitions stemming from the social and economic setting of the region, such as illegal border trades or the dynamics of power relationships in the realm of politics. As an example, the Iranian state usually tends to retribalize the Kurds to have better control over the region, while the national-wide policies of decentralization of power, especially during the reformist era (1997-2005), led the Kurds to rely more on modern local councils. Therefore, the policies of the state influence the regions differently, based on factors such as the strength of tribal ties, geographical features, and the economy of each area. Still, securitization of the Kurdish regions, make the rural Kurds feel the exclusion on an everyday basis, but this does not appear to result in the high degrees of sympathizing with the Kurdish political parties. Moreover, transnational family ties have not necessarily unified the Kurds living on the borders; on the contrary, due to different educational and

cultural policies of each country, cross-border communications more make them distinguish themselves from Kurds of the other sides of the border.

Among the urban Kurds in Urmia city, ethnicity reveals itself in more complex manners. On the one hand, it is present in the form of social stigma, but it does not usually evident in the everyday affairs of the city. Nevertheless, the ethnic consciousness is on the rise among the young and educate middle-class Kurds. Unlike in the field of everyday life, ethnicity is the central discourse and distinctive element in the field of power. While the Kurds struggle to get a small share of power through local elections, Azeri activists attempt to mobilize Azeris based on ethnic lines by propagating against the Kurds and portraying them as looters who aim to capture their ancestral land. These tensions, 'momentarily, but powerfully,' manifests itself in the field of power occasionally, when the dream of 'ethnopolitical entrepreneurs' comes real by a stark division of the city between the Kurds and Azeris during the local elections.

This dissertation argues that if not necessarily politicized, Kurdishness is being shaped and reshaped in relation to and under the influence of political discourses and structures. Kurdishness exists at different levels, from the level of discourse, which is produced and reproduced by ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, to the level of everyday life, as experienced in the flow of social interactions. There seems to be a significant difference between how Kurdishness manifests itself among the rural Kurds and the urbanized middle-class Kurds of the city. In rural areas, Kurdishness is shaped in less-politicized ways due to various structural factors. The situation in the city is rather

different; the strong presence of the Azeri “ethnic other,” the emergence of an educated Kurdish middle class, and the structural inequalities that favor Azeris over Kurds have led to the construction of an ethnically-conscious Kurdishness in the city.

The main contribution of this dissertation to the field of Kurdish studies may lie behind its emphasis on the existence of multiple identities of the Kurds, which can be easily overlooked, especially when Kurdish nationalism, and not the Kurds themselves, is adopted as a starting point, as it is in many academic works of Kurdish studies. However, what I consider to be generalizable from my study in Urmia county to the field of ethnic studies lies mainly in my criticism of Brubaker's theoretical framework: *ethnicity without groups*. While I thoroughly agree with Brubaker that ethnicization of one's identity happens differently at different social levels, I believe the importance of ethnicity at the everyday level, which Brubaker treats as less significant, depends greatly on to what extent citizenship rights are protected. The prevalent sense of deprivation and exclusion that the stateless Kurds are facing on everyday bases can be the ground for developing imagined nationhood among them. Therefore, I have proposed that, for this model to be generalizable to a greater number of cases, we need to consider the grounds and roots behind the rise of ethnic tendencies. Also, structural factors and the state of democracy should be analyzed within the society we wish to study.